



**United States Senate**  
**Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**  
Senator Joseph I. Lieberman

**Statement Delivered by Sen. Joseph Lieberman**  
**Hurricane Katrina: Homeland Security Department's Preparation and Response**  
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Madam Chairman, the many hearings we have held, the witnesses that we have interviewed and the documents we have reviewed have brought us to today's important hearing with our sole witness, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Michael Chertoff.

This Committee's Katrina investigation is moving now toward conclusion, reckoning and, I hope, reform.

According to law, it is the responsibility of the Secretary of Homeland Security to lead the federal government's preparations for, and response to, disaster – natural or terrorist.

The Secretary is the national official most directly responsible for protecting the safety of the American people here at home in times of danger.

That is what the law creating the Department of Homeland Security says, what Homeland Security Presidential Directive Number Five directs, and what the National Response Plan mandates.

And that is why today it is our responsibility to ask Secretary Chertoff some tough, direct and critical questions based on the jarring lack of preparation for Katrina that our investigation has found.

Among the most important questions are:

Mr. Secretary, why did you do so little in the months after you became Secretary to make sure that the agencies of our government, particularly your own, were ready to carry out their responsibilities to protect the American people under the National Response Plan and President Bush's Homeland Security Directive Number Five?

How could you have left us with so many of those agencies so unprepared that when Katrina struck too many of them ran around like "Keystone Cops," uncertain about what they were supposed to do, or unable to do it?

Why in the days immediately before Katrina made landfall – as the National Hurricane Service and agencies within your own Department warned over and over that this was the long-feared hurricane that would break the levees and drown the city of New Orleans – did you do so little to mobilize the resources of the federal government to protect this great American city and its people?

With all the information coming into your Department's Operations Center on the day that Katrina struck New Orleans – that the city was flooding and people were trapped or drowning – how could you – the Secretary of Homeland Security – go to bed that night not knowing what was happening in New Orleans, and get up the next morning and proceed, not to New Orleans to oversee the response, but to Atlanta for a conference?

Respectfully, those are some of the hard and perplexing questions that are emerging from this investigation that you, Mr. Secretary, and we have a responsibility to answer so that next time when disaster strikes – as it surely will – the federal government are totally ready to protect our country and our people.

