

BALDWIN REGISTER

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Survey studies the impact of Hurricane Ivan

► Storm caused average of \$36,000 damage to homes in Orange Beach and kept residents away for 11 days

By GUY BUSBY
Staff Reporter

Hurricane Ivan continues to have psychological effects on the Baldwin Gulf Coast, although most residents coped well with the storm, a study by the University of South Alabama found.

The survey was conducted in February and March 2005, several months after Ivan came ashore in Gulf Shores with winds of up to 130 miles an hour, causing extensive damage in parts of Baldwin County and Florida.

A random sample of 800 addressees was selected in Orange Beach and survey forms sent out. Of the 800 forms sent, 125 were returned as undeliverable and 268 surveys were filled out and returned.

The responses gave an indication of how Gulf Coast residents fared during the storm and their conditions about six months later, said Steve Picou, chairman

of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work at USA, who conducted the study.

Some findings of the survey included:

■ Most residents — 81 percent — evacuated when Ivan approached. Of those, 18.2 percent went to other areas of coastal Alabama, 44.3 percent to other parts of the state, 34.9 percent to other Southeastern states and 2.6 percent to other areas, including Arkansas, West Virginia and Colorado. Picou said the evacuation rate of about 81 percent was

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the same as that by New Orleans residents for Hurricane Katrina.

The average evacuation trip was six hours. Residents were away from their homes for an average of 11 days.

■ More than nine out of 10 residents, 91.2 percent, had damage to their homes, while 82.8 percent also reported damage to trees and landscaping. Other damage included storage buildings, 25.3 percent; piers, 10.7 percent; boats, 9.9 percent; and piers, 6.2 percent.

■ Damages from the storm in Orange Beach included an average of \$36,430 for homes, \$27,962 for other property, \$13,404 for piers, \$10,615 in lost income and \$7,910 for boats.

The highest amount of losses was reported on Beach Boulevard with a total average of \$113,000, followed by Ono Island with average damage reported at \$48,198. The lowest figures reported were on Canal Road west of Alabama 161, where the average for damages was \$18,253.

■ Respondents said they were without electricity for an average of 12 days and did not have telephone service for nine days. The average for cable television customers was 52 days without service, however, many respondents said that after three or four weeks, they switched to satellite providers.

■ One question on the survey involved the statement "Orange Beach will never be the same," after Ivan. When asked their opinions, 23 percent said they strongly agreed with the statement, 35.5 percent said they agreed, 19.9 percent said they did not agree and 21.5 percent said they

strongly disagreed.

■ Another question asked if residents agreed with the statement, "since Hurricane Ivan, I have worried about living on the Gulf Coast." In response, 12.1 percent said they strongly agreed, 34.6 percent said they agreed, 33.1 percent did not agree and 20.2 percent said they strongly disagreed.

■ About one out of three respondents said they had more difficulty trusting others since Ivan. Of the total, 10.6 percent of the respondents said they strongly agreed, 18.8 percent said they agreed, 41.2 percent did not agree and 29.4 percent said they strongly disagreed.

■ Family tension increased in about one out of four homes, according to the survey. Given the statement that more arguments have taken place in their families since Ivan, 8.7 percent said they strongly agreed, 14.6 percent said they agreed, 42.1 percent did not agree and 34.6 percent said they strongly disagreed.

■ Almost half said that working with their insurance company "has been a stressful experience," with 20 percent strongly agreeing with the statement while 21.7 percent agreed, 36.6 percent not agreeing and 21.7 percent saying they strongly disagreed.

■ Perceptions of recovery efforts were positive in regard to Ivan. Asked if various agencies and community members had been helpful, 94 percent said police had done a good job, 89.1 percent for the Red Cross, 96.2 percent for neighbors, 90 percent for relatives. Two-thirds of the overall respondents said FEMA had done a good job based on their experience, while the local utility company, Baldwin EMC, re-

ceived a 94.1 percent approval rating and the National Guard 94.8 percent approval.

■ More residents who needed some form of financial or other assistance were unsatisfied. Of those who received unemployment, 46.9 percent said they were satisfied with the result, while 25 percent were satisfied with food stamp aid. FEMA received a 38.4 percent satisfaction rating for assistance, while utility services got a response of 22.1 percent.

■ Most respondents were satisfied with recovery efforts six months after the storm. Debris removal got a 91.9 percent approval rating, while road repairs received 93.7 percent. Beach restoration received a rating of 76.1 percent, condo repairs 69.9 percent and dredging 75.4 percent.

■ More than three-quarters of residents felt that Orange Beach was at least half recovered by early 2005. Percentages of recovery included 23.7 percent of the respondents saying that the community had recovered to 75 percent of its pre-storm level, while 55.3 percent said Orange Beach was half recovered and 19.7 said the community was about a quarter recovered. Other responses were 1.2 percent of the total.

■ Other findings in the survey were that the average respondent was 54 years old with an average annual income between \$40,000 and \$50,000. About half the respondents, 49.8 percent, lived in the area of Canal Road east of Alabama 161, while 16.6 percent were on Ono Island, 16.3 percent on Canal Road west of Alabama 161, 10 percent in Terry Cove and 7.3 percent near Beach Boulevard.