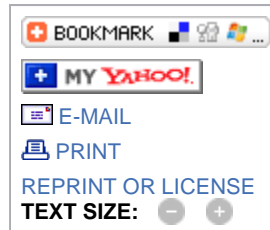


## Biloxi preps for hurricane season

By MARY PEREZ - meperez@sunherald.com



Biloxi — The same day the first tropical depression formed in the Atlantic and water spouts swirled on the Mississippi Sound, Biloxi Mayor A.J. Holloway met with the head of every city department to review hurricane preparedness and now will do the same with the casinos.

“Every year we bring the casinos in and go over what we expect of them,” Holloway said, particularly the ones that are still partially on barges.

Hurricane season begins Monday, and Biloxi already has business interruption insurance that will pay if the casinos are closed more than a few days.

**LINK:** [Sign up for Biloxi alerts](#)

Last year lots of evacuees from Louisiana came to Biloxi and wanted to stay at the casinos. The storm track of Hurricane Gustav forced all the casinos and their hotels to close. Holloway said the city works

with the Mississippi Gaming Commission to determine when they can safely reopen.

“We learned that we have higher tides than expected,” he said. With Hurricane Gustav and to a smaller degree with Hurricane Ike last September, streets near several of the casinos were flooded.

More people are expected to stay close to the Coast rather than evacuate north if a storm hits the Coast this year due to the economy. “Gas prices are going back up,” said Holloway. “It wouldn’t surprise me if more people stayed.”

Biloxi Patrolman Brian Kestner said the state is not bringing buses to transport people from the Coast to Jackson as it has done in past storms. For those who don’t have transportation to a shelter, Coast Transit Authority will provide curb side service, especially for the elderly and handicapped.

Biloxi’s plan is for an emergency operations center to open 24 hours before a hurricane is expected to make landfall and equipment and supplies will be staged on both sides of the Back Bay. Contracts are in place for debris removal and to clean the streets for emergency vehicles immediately after any storm.

City engineer Damon Torricelli said “a lot of people” left boats and vehicles at the Biloxi harbor as Hurricane Gustav approached in hopes of collecting insurance money. He suggested the city post a notice at the harbor that boats and cars will be towed at owners’ expense.

“Everyone — families and businesses, large or small — should have a working storm plan that they update every year before storm season,” Holloway said.