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« [Chem and Nuke Weapons Docs New on The Memory Hole](#) | [Main](#)

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Infectious Disease Research in and Around New Orleans

Summary: At the very least, there are two Level-3 biolabs in New Orleans and a cluster of three in nearby Covington. They have been working with anthrax, mousepox, HIV, plague, etc. There are surely other labs in the city.

Here's a great tip for all reporters looking for a completely new - and extremely important - angle on the situation in New Orleans. As far as I can tell, no one has yet mentioned the biological research labs located in and around NOLA. For example, in nearby Covington, Tulane University runs the Tulane National Primate Research Center, a cluster of [Level-3](#) biological labs containing around 5,000 monkeys, most of which are housed in outdoor cages. According to an article in Tulane University Magazine, "The primary areas of focus today at the Tulane National Primate Research Center are **infectious diseases, including biodefense related work**, gene therapy, reproductive biology and neuroscience. The Tulane primate center is playing a key role in the federal strategic plan for biodefense research." [[Google cache](#) | [Memory Hole mirror](#).]

So what happened to these diseased monkeys living outside in cages? Granted, Covington didn't get hit nearly as hard as NOLA, but it still got hit.

According to the Sunshine Project, which digs up grant proposals and other primary documents from the US biowarfare effort, "Tulane scientists are working with anthrax, plague, and other biological weapons agents." [[read more](#)]

And how much of this kind of research was going on within New Orleans itself? Apparently quite a bit.

-- Louisiana State University's Medical School has a Level-3 biolab in the Clinical Sciences Research Building located at 533 Bolivar Street. According to grant applications,

LSU's facility was the site of research involving anthrax and genetically-engineered mousepox. And that's just what we know about.

-- The State of Louisiana has a Level-3 biolab in New Orleans. [[see this PDF document](#)]

-- It seems highly likely that an institution the size of Tulane has biolabs in New Orleans itself, not just Covington.

-- Then there's the University of New Orleans, Loyola University, Xavier University of Louisiana, and others. I don't know whether they've been engaged in bio research or have high-level biolabs, but it'd be worth finding out.

-- And let's not forget the New Orleans Medical Complex, which contains over 40 blocks of hospitals and biomedical research facilities. According to this [website](#), it's been severely flooded.

So with all the known and probable Level-3 biolabs in and around New Orleans, what's happened to the infected animals? Are they free and roaming? Are they dead, with their diseased bodies floating in the flood waters? And what about the cultures and vials of the diseases? Are they still secure? Are they being stolen? Were they washed away, now forming part of the toxic soup that coats the city?

And take a look at this. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a "Select Agents Program" for any facility that handles highly dangerous germs, including Ebola, Marburg, ricin, avian flu, and anthrax. At the top of their website is the following notice:

Announcement for Entities Impacted by Hurricane Katrina

Entities that are registered with the Select Agent Program who have been impacted by Hurricane Katrina may contact the CDC Select Agent Program for guidance on actions that should be taken to transfer Select Agents to another registered entity or **report the theft, loss, or release of select agents that might have occurred due to storm damage.** The CDC Select Agent Program will expedite any special requests from registered entities as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Contact the Program via email at lrsat@cdc.gov, phone at 404-498-2255, fax at 404-498-2265, or call your designated CDC representative.

You can see it [here](#).

I encourage journalists to pursue these worthwhile questions. Edward Hammond of the Sunshine Project helped greatly with this post, and if reporters would like some more background on this, they should contact him [here](#).

Thanks to NE for the initial tip.

Posted by russ at September 8, 2005 03:45 PM