

In his last official press conference as president George W. Bush vigorously defended the federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina, denying it had been slow.

Tuesday, The Times-Picayune -- whose staff was forced to abandon its New Orleans headquarters in the rising flood waters and whose reporters were the first to alert the nation that the city had not "dodged a bullet" on Katrina -- begged to differ. Strongly.

The newspaper threw Bush's own words back at him, noting that a few days after the storm hit the president said, "The results are not acceptable."

A week later, in a nationally televised address from Jackson Square, Bush said, "Americans have every right to expect a more effective response in a time of emergency."

The editorial concluded: "This is more than a difference in semantics. Plenty of reforms are still needed at the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal disaster-response entities. The last thing bureaucrats in those agencies need is the view that their performance during Katrina was fine.

"It wasn't. New Orleanians and the nation know it."

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