



Gustav dampens Southern Decadence party in New Orleans

By [Kevin Wayne](#)

New Orleans, LA - As an estimated million people have voluntarily fled the US Gulf Coast ahead of Hurricane Gustav, several thousand tourists are still estimated to be in New Orleans. Many of the remaining tourists are in town for the Southern Decadence Festival, the largest gay festival in the South.

Southern Decadence had just begun when people were told to flee New Orleans as Gustav is expected to make landfall on Monday or Tuesday.

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin ordered residents to leave. Nagin warned them that staying would be "one of the biggest mistakes you could make in your life".

Though Gustav has been downgraded to a Category 3 storm after passing over Cuba, it is expected to build again into a Category 5 hurricane. Nagin called Gustav the "mother of all storms".

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal has declared a state of emergency to lay groundwork for federal assistance and put 3,000 National Guard troops on standby.

Southern Decadence is a gay Labor Day weekend festival that brings an estimated 120,000 visitors and \$100 million to New Orleans' economy.

Thursday Southern Decadence organizers said they had no plans to cancel any events. The festivities began Wednesday.

"We are making contingency plans behind the scenes to insure the safety of both our customers and employees, and will certainly close our doors responsibly in order to allow them a safe exit from the city when that time arrives." OZ Nightclub owner and Circuit promoter Johnny Chisholm told JustCircuit.com on Saturday.

"Events that are scheduled for after midday on Sunday may be affected," organizers said on the Southern Decadence website.