Louisianians have a lot to worry about as the new hurricane season wears on. The list of problems facing the state includes coping with the terrible anxieties and depression left over from the 2005 season.

There is a great deal to be depressed about, in general. Large portions of the greater New Orleans area are in ruins, and business is not good. Efforts to bring back the tourist trade continue, but reports of crime don't help. Fear of another big hurricane appears to have driven away tour buses that are a big part of the summer tourist trade.

The economic consequences of fewer visitors put more stress on a population that has suffered a great deal of loss and pain.

The New York Times quoted Orleans authorities reporting a big jump in the rate of suicide.

One of those who took his own life attracted national attention. New Orleans documentary filmmaker Stevenson Palfi, 51, killed himself after losing everything in the hurricanes.
Police officers are dealing with people jumping into the Mississippi River or otherwise seeking to end their lives.

"He said he'd lost everything and didn't want to live anymore," a police sergeant said of one man pulled from the river. The man was fighting the officers trying to rescue him.

These are symptoms of the crisis in mental-health care that envelops New Orleans. The problem, of course, also includes people unable to return home in the metropolitan area, or facing daunting economic challenges.

Yet in the city the problem is worse because of the virtual collapse of the mental-health supports people had before hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

"It's like living in the 'Twilight Zone,' " Candace Cutrone, assistant coroner for mental health in Orleans Parish, told The Washington Post recently. "The whole world changed overnight."

Hospitals and clinics were destroyed or hobbled by the hurricanes. The Louisiana Hospital Association estimates about 60 beds are available in hospitals for psychiatric patients.
The state estimates that half the mental-health counselors and other professionals who were in the metropolitan area no longer are there.

The state and federal governments have tried to step up with more funding for these needs, but it's difficult, as with so many other sectors of society, to rebuild what has been hit so hard by the hurricanes. America has not seen anything this comprehensively debilitating since the Civil War.

Disturbed people, if they seek professional help, might end up waiting for hours in emergency rooms of hospitals in the city or its suburbs.

The state as a whole feels the impact on an emotional level.

In a statewide survey, the LSU Public Policy Research Lab reported more than half of 960 respondents said they were feeling depressed by the events of 2005, and more than 11 percent said they sought counseling or other professional help for depression.

Our state might have to live with the consequences of this mental-health crisis for a long time.

For many people, their worlds collapsed around them, and the long wait - compounded by a general lack of leadership grappling with the big problems
in the city - makes people generally more anxious about the future.

"This is a trauma that didn't last 24 hours, then go away," Kathleen Crapanzano, director of the Louisiana Office of Mental Health, told The New York Times. "It goes on and on."