NEW ORLEANS, May 2 — With the hurricane season less than a month away and memories of Hurricane Katrina still vivid here, Mayor C. Ray Nagin announced a new evacuation plan on Tuesday that relies on buses and trains rather than the cavernous sites of last year's mass misery, the Superdome and the Morial Convention Center.

Mr. Nagin said that if a hurricane threatened this year, there would be no "shelters of last resort" — places where the city's poor have gathered to sit out storms, which last year became fetid bunkers for thousands when New Orleans flooded.

Instead, the convention center will simply be used as a staging area for residents unable to leave on their own, the mayor said. Buses will pick citizens up and take them there, and other buses will take them out of town. Still, the mayor stopped short of saying that everyone would be forced to leave, emphasizing that though evacuation would be urged if a major storm threatened, "we're dealing with adults here."

Amtrak trains will be used to ferry out the elderly and disabled, Mr. Nagin said.

Both Mr. Nagin and a top aide emphasized that citizens would primarily be responsible for looking out for themselves when a storm threatens.

"Everybody has the personal responsibility to develop their own evacuation plan," said the head of the city's homeland security office, Terry Ebbert, the point man in managing last year's catastrophic storm.

Mr. Nagin suggested that the dimensions of the enormous challenge that faced New Orleans last year — close to 130,000 people without cars — would be sharply reduced this year with so many residents still dispersed. Perhaps as few as 10,000 will be taking advantage of the city's new evacuation plan, the mayor said, a number that may err on the high side, since the poorest neighborhoods are still empty ruins.

Buses were also available in the city after Hurricane Katrina hit, but most remained idle in the absence of a plan by the city to use them. Nonetheless, despite the tiny window of opportunity afforded by the hurricane's rapid approach, some 75 percent of the area's population heeded warnings and evacuated on time.

This year, a new challenge is posed by some 7,000 people in unstable trailers, and officials said those residents would be ordered to evacuate for far less threatening storms than Hurricane Katrina and moved to shelters within New Orleans.

Mr. Nagin's announcement Tuesday took place in the midst of a heated mayor's race. His opponent, Lt. Gov. Mitch Landrieu, wasted no time Tuesday criticizing the mayor for
waiting until just before June 1, the onset of hurricane season, to release his plan. "I'm concerned that it took the mayor eight months to announce this plan," Mr. Landrieu said.

But the mayor, asked whether his new plan would be carried out by his challenger should he lose, quickly shot back, "If somebody new comes in, they would have to be Einstein to figure this out."