

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Daily Key Messages and General Mission Talking Points

DAILY MESSAGES - Tuesday, 13 September 2005

1. The Overall Corps Mission

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is continuing to work primarily in support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, carrying out a wide variety of missions in response to Hurricane Katrina. In addition to our efforts to get the water out of New Orleans we are also providing services throughout the affected areas to include providing ice, water and temporary power; as well as debris removal and temporary roofing.

Our three priorities are:

First, supporting efforts to save lives and find people,

Second, sustaining lives (water and shelter) and

Third, setting conditions for recovery (cleanup, restoring infrastructure and navigation).

Corps employees are empowered to make decisions regarding hurricane relief support on the spot as long as the decision is lawful, ethical and the employee is willing to be accountable for the action. This has helped keep things moving in a time of difficult communication.

Currently we have nearly 2,000 Corps employees deployed in the affected areas and our missions are totaling \$2.9 billion, of which more than \$2.8 billion are missions from FEMA and more than \$36 million are for Flood Control Coastal Emergencies.

Other Mission Statistics:

- **More than 54 million liters of water delivered**
- **More than 216 million pounds of ice delivered**
- **159 generators delivered**
- **More than 300 roofs installed; 51,000 projects to take place**
- **More than 560,000 cubic yards of debris removed**

2. Un-Watering Progress in New Orleans

Working with the city of New Orleans and private contractors, the Army Corps of Engineers continues to make steady progress on pumping out floodwaters from the city of New Orleans and immediate vicinity into Lake Ponchartrain. The number of pumps that are operational at any given time is continually changing. **On average, we are pumping 11.8 billion gallons of water per day, or the equivalent of an Olympic-sized swimming pool every 4.8 seconds.**

Original estimates for completing the un-watering of the city have recently been revised. Several factors have contributed to this revision: improved pumping capacity and efficiency, additional pumps, intentional breaches in the levee system and better field

data and hydrological modeling. As of today, we estimate the overall un-watering effort will be completed in early to mid-October. A breakdown by parish is provided:

New Orleans Parish, the week of October 2

New Orleans East Parish, the week of October 8

Chalmette Parish, the week of October 8

Plaquemines East Parish, the week of October 18, and

Plaquemines West, the week of October 18.

The estimates are based on normal seasonal rainfall.

It is important to note that the un-watering effort will remove most, but not all the water. There will be some isolated pockets of water that will remain. However, these pockets of water should not hamper recovery efforts such as debris removal, structural assessments and restoration of critical services.

3. Finding Human Remains during Work

The US Army Corps of Engineers is sympathetic to the tragic loss of life that occurred in New Orleans and throughout other parts of Louisiana and Mississippi as a result of Hurricane Katrina. As Corps personnel continue recovery operations throughout the affected areas, they may come discover human remains. If this is the case, Corps personnel will handle the remains in a dignified and respectful manner and will contact the appropriate authorities.

4. Water Quality Issues Related to Pumping Water into Lake Ponchartrain

Everyone is concerned about the quality of water being moved from New Orleans to Lake Ponchartrain, but our first priority is the health and safety of residents of New Orleans and all responders as we get the water out of the city. We are working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to ensure human health and safety as we drain the water and have received approval from EPA to move the water following the agency's normal practices in emergencies. EPA is monitoring and testing the water. As water drains, we anticipate there will be times when we may need to take additional measures, and we are working with EPA on this right now. Any questions as to water quality should be referred to the Office of Water, U.S. EPA.

5. Corps Team in New Orleans

During and after disasters, the Corps of Engineers "victim district team concept" is often put into place. Colonel Richard Wagenaar, commander and district engineer of the New Orleans District, has shifted his attention to reconstituting the district, and Colonel Duane Gapinski of the Rock Island District has taken the lead on un-watering the city of New Orleans. The district has now accounted for nearly every one of its 1193 employees. Many employees are available and waiting to return to work and 75-100 are actually working at the emergency operations centers. The plan has three phases: (1) immediately place essential staff at existing offices in Vicksburg, Lafayette and St. Louis or by telework; (2) place other employees when space and IM/IT is available in Vicksburg,

Jackson, Clinton, MS, Lafayette, Baton Rouge and other sites or by telework; and (3) transition to the New Orleans office when the facility is available.

General Mission Talking Points

Discovering the Breach

We received an unconfirmed report Monday morning, 29 August 2005, from local firemen that there was breach at the 17th Street Canal. Due to its potential significance the District Commander Col Richard Wagenaar, who had weathered the storm in New Orleans, attempted to view the site on Monday afternoon. He was unable to get to the area due to high water, power lines and debris. In their attempts to get to the site, Corps officials encountered significant flooding at the I-10/610 split. Based on water height at that location it was obvious that significant flooding had occurred. They were able to validate the levee breach on Tuesday, and they began implementing a plan to fix the breach

Receiving FOIA Requests

The Corps has received a number of Freedom of Information Act requests from news media over the past several days. The requests have been for inspection reports, evacuation plans, contracts, email and correspondence. We understand the public's need for information about the Corps of Engineers capabilities, projects and performance in responding to national emergencies. Due to the hurricane and flooding in New Orleans, we are unable to access our files in the New Orleans District Office. In the interim we will process these requests for the records that are here in the DC headquarters.

Hurricane Preparedness

We are continually monitoring the weather and are prepared to respond, if needed, should another hurricane approach the United States. Although we have more **than 2,000 people** deployed in support of Hurricane Katrina, we are reconstituting our response capability and have many more employees prepared for any other major storms or other natural disasters. We continue to support our military missions in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as supporting the civil works and military programs missions at home.

Contracting

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers uses full and open competition to award standing contracts for emergency disaster response to provide services we know we will need, such as debris removal, roofing, ice and water supply. Federal agencies can award non-competitive contracts for specific work not covered by the existing contracts when an emergency demands the fastest possible response - such as plugging the breaches in New Orleans' levee. New Orleans District issued most of the Corps' non-competitive contracts immediately after Hurricane Katrina to firms that could quickly bring in equipment to address critical recovery operations. The Corps used limited competitions to speed the award process for time-critical follow-on tasks in cases where the service

provider needs to have a proven track record for completing difficult tasks. The repair of New Orleans' unique system of levees, pumps and canals is an example of work awarded in limited competition. Emergency contracts have been critical to the ongoing success in drawing down Hurricane Katrina flood waters. As of Sept. 10, the Corps has awarded 124 contracts for Hurricane Katrina disaster response.

Navigation

The Mississippi River has now been declared open by the U.S. Coast Guard, all the way from the Head of Passes, North. The Head of Passes is very far south. That's the part of the river that's just above Southwest Pass. So right now, the only part of the river that's operating under any restrictions at all is just that little part from the main stem of the Mississippi River channel through the Southwest Pass out into the Gulf. That section is limited to daylight traffic. The USGS continues restoring Aids to Navigation (AToN) to allow night transits, giving first priority to the AToN's that the pilots say are most needed.

The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway is open from Texas to Florida using Baptiste Collette, as an alternative to the IHNC. The GIWW reach from Baptiste Collette to Pascagoula is limited to 9.5' draft, versus the 12' authorized. Caution is recommended for transit.

Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) Lock is operational but not operating due to bridge closures and sunken barges. The contracting firm of Boh Brothers is continuing to remove sunken vessels. Anticipate removal by mid-week.

Mississippi River Gulf Outlet is closed to deep draft vessels. Inland portion will serve as an alternative route to GIWW due to closure of IHNC for shallow draft vessels. Preliminary surveys indicate controlling depth of 27'.

Port Fourchon sustained significant damage, but is operating to a limited extent. Sunken vessels are not blocking the channel.

Corps preliminary surveys are under way for Atchafalaya, Houma, and other channels. NOAA is continuing its surveys of the Mississippi River to verify Corps centerline survey results.

Tiger Pass is shoaled to less than 6'. This channel, authorized to 14' provides a shorter route for vessels traveling to the west from the Mississippi River near the mouth. Primarily used by fishing and supply vessels. The Corps is preparing contract to dredge.

GWOT effect on Mission Capability

The Corps' 35,000 employees have a long history of volunteerism and dedication to assisting our nation in times of need, both at home and abroad. Our overall capability to respond to this and other disasters at home is not diminished by our support to the Global War on Terror.

Rebuilding New Orleans

At this time, the Corps is focused on its missions of disaster relief, recovery and unwatering New Orleans and surrounding areas. Local and state officials will lead the future discussions for rebuilding New Orleans.

Future Funding

Recently, Congress approved a large funding package for hurricane relief with \$400 million for Corps missions separate from our FEMA ones. The President and Congress are currently considering additional funding to assist in the relief and recovery efforts following Hurricane Katrina.

At the request of the Administration, the Corps of Engineers is providing input regarding the restoration of flood damage reduction infrastructure as well as the inland and deep draft navigation system.

Corps Support to Louisiana

In support of FEMA, the Corps of Engineers will be assessing and repairing public facilities (schools, libraries, fire stations, etc.) for the state of Louisiana. This mission is estimated at \$200 million.

Corps Team in Mississippi

Our MRFO web site is now up and growing at <http://www.mvd.usace.army.mil/hurricane/chr.php> The site includes a Media Services section with names, contacts, and sign up for e-Media alerts. Suggestions welcome!

The Army Corps of Engineers' Task Force Hope Mississippi has about 400 personnel from around the nation focused on recovery operations in the Mississippi Recovery Field Office (RFO). This number could eventually reach 1000 at peak recovery as the Vicksburg District sets up a district-size team to execute assigned FEMA missions.

The Corps mission in Mississippi is now heavily focused on recovery operations as requirements for power, water and ice support have dropped significantly with local systems coming back on line.

Debris Removal

FEMA estimates that there are currently about 18 to 20 million cubic yards of debris in the hurricane impacted area of Mississippi. This equates to 200 football fields piled 50 feet high. It will take about 8 months to remove it from the streets, and roughly a year and a half to completely dispose of it.

Right now we are moving roughly 100,000 cubic yards of debris per day, but we are ramping up and expect that to increase. Removal is underway in 6 counties (Jackson, Jones, Stone, Forrest, George and Hancock). We are expecting additional requests from cities and counties. Each county or municipality must agree to USACE debris removal support before it can be received.

The Corps of Engineers is not alone in this process. Disposal efforts are closely coordinated with the local community and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Coast Guard among others.

The EPA and Coast Guard are working on targeting large scale hazardous materials, while the Corps is working on clearing debris on the roads and selectively removing hazardous materials as they are discovered. Hazardous materials that end up at our reduction sites inadvertently will be culled out and placed in separate containment areas. The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality monitors our work and issues permits for reduction sites.

Temporary Roofing

Over 5200 requests for Operation Blue Roof have been received in the past few days. Over 200 roofs were repaired in the past 24 hours. More than 100 crews are now working. Estimates are that 23,000 roof repairs will be required. About 1000 work orders are about to be issued to contractors.

At peak, several hundred roofs per day will be repaired. Plastic staging operations are in Hattiesburg and Gulfport. **Operation Blue Roof Sign Up Centers** are now open in Jackson, Harrison, Hancock, Forrest, Stone, Lamar, Marion, Jefferson Davis, and Pearl River counties.

Temporary Housing

Temporary housing is being handled using a national/regional approach through the FEMA Housing Area Command.

Technical Assistance

RFO technical experts are providing technical assistance as request from the state through FEMA.

Water/Waste Water Restoration

Forty-six systems are known to need assessment. We have begun assessment of the state's prioritized list. A 10-12 person team from the Environmental Protection Agency will join the USACE team at Keesler in supporting this FEMA mission.

Temporary Classroom Sites & Emergency Facilities

USACE has received a mission assignment to place approximately 450 temporary classrooms on school property in the impacted areas. This mission also tasks the Corps provide portable buildings for public facilities such as fire stations, police stations, and emergency centers. Current focus is coordinating with the state to identify and prioritize structures.

Today's Vignette: Keeping the Lights on in Biloxi

The local power station in Biloxi faced a potential problem after Hurricane Katrina. The local power plant needed the damaged Popps Ferry Bridge opened to supply coal needed for power generation for the area. A united team from USACE, Bureau of Reclamation, Harrison County, the City of Biloxi, and a professor from the University of Wyoming developed a creative plan to safely raise the bridge and keep power flowing to the area.

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