



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
St. Paul District

# Crosscurrents

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**St. Paul District  
manages quick recovery  
from Hurricane Gustav**

Emergency  
Operations



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Judy Marshall, project management, worked the Corps' blue roof mission Sept. 6. to Oct. 5 in response to damaged roofs caused by Hurricane Gustav in East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Iberville, Livingston and Plaquemines parishes in Louisiana.**

**Command Corner**  
by Col. Jon Christensen  
St. Paul District Commander



Teammates,

This month, I would like to take a moment to both reflect on this past year's accomplishments and to discuss the challenges that face us this new fiscal year. This past week the St. Paul District leadership spent time in Vicksburg, Miss., for the first Mississippi Valley Division Regional Four, or R4 meetings. This combined session of the Regional Command Council, Regional Management Board, Regional Program Review Board and Regional Program Budget Advisory Committee brought all of the regional leadership together to discuss the path forward for the next three years. The stated goal was to create a common sight picture of our regional program and decide how we are going to ensure success of all regional missions.

Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh, Mississippi Valley Division commander, kicked the meeting off by praising everyone for their efforts in this year of "simultaneous operations." While keeping our large civil mission on track, the region successfully dealt with spring flooding (179 division employees deployed), June flooding (301 division employees deployed) and two hurricanes (308 division employees deployed). We were able to pull together assets regionally to prevent over \$340 million in damages during the floods and to help save and sustain lives after the hurricanes. Each event, taken separately, put a great demand on the region's resources. That we were able to meet those challenges in a sustained and simultaneous manner, while keeping our standard workload on track, speaks highly to the professionalism and quality of the personnel in this district and in the region. I applaud each of you for your heroic efforts.

The challenges are not yet behind us – the hard work still remains on the horizon. The recent quality assurance review on the Hurricane Storm Damage Risk Reduction System, or HSDRRS, suggests that successful execution of the June 2011 operational goal may be unrealistic unless drastic changes are made. Walsh stated that we are "on a burning platform" and failure is not an option. The last two days of the meetings focused the regional leadership on formulating the drastic changes needed to meet the 2011 goal. One result was to focus the districts on delivering the engineering effort required for their assigned area of responsibility within the HSDRRS.

For the St. Paul District, that means we are responsible for orchestrating the design effort in St. Bernard Parish to deliver plans and specifications on time. Our HSDRRS mission is our number one district priority – we got it, we own it and we will deliver by 2011. We will balance system needs and adjust our district delivery model where needed to meet our present commitments, but our piece of the HSDRRS must remain on the front burner. I know I am asking a lot out of all of you, but I truly believe we have the talent and heart necessary to drive this mission to success. Thanks for all your hard work and for all that you do.



US Army Corps of Engineers  
St. Paul District

**Crosscurrents**

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# iinside

**4 Contracting speeds recovery missions**

**5 Corps completes Gustav power mission**

**6 Corps wraps up blue roof mission**

**7 District retiree receives safety award**

**10 Rehired annuitants contribute to hurricane recovery efforts**

**11 Thrift Savings Plan offers tax-deferred savings, low administrative cost**

**12 District computer refresh begins**

**13 News and Notes**

Holiday Awards Banquet re-scheduled for Dec. 16

**14 Employees of the Month**

April: Tim Meers

May: Shannon Bauer

June: Linda Krueger

July: Pat Berczyk



# Contracting speeds recovery missions

By Mark Davidson

BATON ROUGE, La.—Putting blue roofs on houses just six days after landfall and getting power to people who desperately need it, were two of the most positive accomplishments the St. Paul District contracting team achieved in response to Hurricane Gustav.

Led by St. Paul's James Roloff, contracting team lead, they prepared before they deployed.

"I read the Advance Contract Initiative documents," said Roloff. "These are contracts any deploying contracting officer can use that were put in place for quick response to emergencies. They are for debris removal, temporary roofing repairs, power and water and ice. I also found out who the contract specialists were who were going to deploy, so that I could begin the process of allowing them access to our databases."

Making up the Louisiana Recovery Field Office contracting team were: Yvette Walker, contracting specialist, Nashville District; Carlen Capenos, deputy for small business, Baltimore District; Priscilla Sweeney, contracting officer, Memphis District; Celestine Evans, contract specialist, Memphis District; and Bill Hurley, contracting specialist, St. Paul District.

The power mission was the biggest challenge initially for the Louisiana Recovery Field Office, or LA-RFO, said Roloff. "Priscilla Sweeney and Celestine Evans' work with the power team was critical," he said. "Those two worked hard with their team to



Photos by Mark Davidson

**Bill Hurley**

acquire generators in order to keep hospitals, nursing homes, sewage treatment plants and other major elements of the state infrastructure in operation or to bring them back into operation."

The next biggest challenge was the blue roof mission that started Sept. 6. Yvette Walker was the key to getting the first task orders for roofing awarded, said Roloff.

"It was a joint effort in getting the first task order against both contracts for the roofing mission award," said Walker. "I worked closely with the roofing mission manager to ensure the funds were available and with the St. Paul District contracting staff, as I did not yet have the authorizations to access St. Paul's financial management and project delivery databases or a computer to work on. Together we worked as a team, ensuring the task orders were awarded and the funds obligated," she said.

"Another exceptional specialist who helped me to prepare the award of the first task orders for debris removal was Carlen Capenos from Baltimore District," said Roloff. "But the order from the Federal Emergency



**Jim Roloff**

Management Agency never came for that mission."

Hurley played the role of the "utility contract specialist" comparable to a utility player in baseball who can play any position asked of him.

"Early on, things were fairly unpredictable and I thought we may have a need for another contract specialist because each of the people I had was dedicated to their own respective missions and teams. I needed a sort of floater, someone who could get anything done, and that was Bill," said Roloff. "Getting here on Sept. 4, he helped me get a contract in place for quality assurance people for the roofing team."

Although Roloff deployed a number of times during his Air Force active duty career, this was his first time with the Corps.

"It was a valuable learning experience because I had greater responsibility," said Roloff. "It's a very fortunate thing for all involved that the event wasn't as bad as it could have been in terms of damage or destruction."

# Corps completes Gustav power mission

By Shannon Bauer

The Corps of Engineers' Memphis District power team collected its last generator at the South Cameron Hospital in Cameron, La., completing its emergency operations mission for Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in Louisiana, Oct. 4.

After Gustav made landfall, state officials reported that 13 of the 14 main power lines in Louisiana were damaged and the fourteenth was questionable. They correctly estimated it would take 30 days to restore power to the entire state.

"Considering the size of the storm, this was a fairly large mission," said Randy Clark, mission manager. "We completed 289 assessments and installed 105 generators [in less than two weeks]."

Under the direction of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, the mission of Corps' power teams during a disaster includes prioritizing and completing initial assessments at critical public facilities such as hospitals and police stations; preparing, hauling and installing emergency generators; maintaining and repairing the generators while they are in use; and then collecting, refurbishing and storing the generators in preparation for a future disaster.

The Memphis power team had pre-positioned itself in Carville, La., Aug. 30 and began to receive generators in anticipation of Gustav. During the storm, the team relocated the generators to



**The Memphis District set up Federal Emergency Management Agency generators at the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired, site of initial Louisiana Recovery Field Office in Baton Rouge.**

Camp Beauregard, in Pineville, La., for better protection. By Sept. 13, the day Hurricane Ike made landfall in Texas, they had completed all of their assessments and installations. After Ike, they had a few more assessments and installations to do in the southwest corner of the state. Since then, they have been removing generators no longer needed as power has been restored and sending them either on to Texas or back to storage.

At its peak, the team included 10 people from Memphis, nine people from the Tulsa District, 20 members of the U.S. Army's 249<sup>th</sup> C2 Node or Prime Power Team and 32 contractors from International American Products. One of the Corps' Deployable Tactical Operating Systems, or DTOS, that is normally staged in Nashville, served as their office.

A challenge which usually happens during a power mission but didn't happen after Gustav includes the team having a hard time getting the generators back. The facility owners usually want to hold onto them in the event there's another storm, said Clark.

"This time, since many of them were needed in Texas after Hurricane Ike, they [the customers] recognized there was a need out there and were good about giving them back."

Clark said the challenges they did face with Gustav included initially receiving generators too small for the facilities that needed them, as well as keeping track of the units once they were in place. "Some of the units are on wheels," said Clark, "and the facility owners would move them. One of the units was even moved to another parish.

"It's not a problem, if they tell you where they are," he continued, "but I had quality assurance people out there every day, trying to find them all." All of the units have GPS trackers on them, however, he said, which means they are all eventually found.

Overall, though, he said, the Gustav mission went smoothly. "Even in the restaurants we went to, people came up to us and said 'thanks,'" he said. "They were glad we were here."

*Hurricane Gustav recovery in Louisiana*

# Corps wraps up blue roof mission

by Shannon Bauer

The Corps of Engineers wrapped up its Operation Blue Roof mission in Louisiana Oct. 8, after completing 10,500 roofs damaged by Hurricanes Gustav or Ike early September.

Operation Blue Roof is a Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, assigned mission in support of hurricane recovery. The program provides assistance to storm victims through the installation of blue, rolled, plastic sheeting on damaged roofs. It helps to protect property from further damage and allows residents to remain in their homes until they are able to obtain permanent repairs.

Homeowners sign up for the program by signing a right-of-entry form, allowing the Corps and its contractors access to their property. Then, a Corps' employee visits the home to do a damage and eligibility assessment. If the property fits required specifications, the ROE is assigned to a contractor. Upon completion, if it is done correctly, a Corps' quality assurance inspector signs off on the work so the contractor can get paid.

*Blue roof, continued Page 7*



St. Paul District photo

Two Corps' personnel on quality assurance duty inspect a blue roof contracting crew in covering a residential roof in La Place, La., Sept. 7.

*Blue roof, continued from Page 6*

To be eligible for the program, a roof must be less than 50 percent damaged and clear of any debris. Flat and tile roofs made of clay, slate or asbestos do not qualify. Mobile homes and homes with metal roofs are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For the homeowner, the temporary roof is free. FEMA picks up 75 percent of the cost, and the state or local government the remaining 25 percent.

Hurricane Gustav made landfall Monday, Sept. 1, along the Louisiana coast near Cocodrie as a category II storm, although, according to the National Hurricane Center, it produced category III force winds of 110 to 115 miles per hour. It wreaked havoc on roofs across the state, with the most damage occurring between Grand Isle and Baton Rouge.

Further, just as the Gustav mission began to ramp up, Hurricane Ike went through the region, making landfall in Texas on Sept. 13 but also again flooding portions of the Louisiana coast and damaging additional roofs. All Louisiana roofs damaged by Ike were added to the Gustav blue roof mission.

FEMA gave the Corps its blue roof mission four days after Gustav made landfall. In the meantime, key members of the Corps' Nashville District roofing team were already in Baton Rouge, making preparations for such a mission.

Mission manager Doug DeLong said they did damage assessments and used Geographic Information Systems, or GIS, to plot out

*Blue roof, continued Page 8*



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Bruce Boldon (left), deputy commander at the Louisiana Recovery Field Office, Baton Rouge, La., recognizes Dave Kitzman, a St. Paul District reemployed annuitant, on Oct. 3. for a safety initiative.**

## District retiree receives safety award

By Shannon Bauer

Dave Kitzman, a St. Paul District reemployed annuitant, received a Corps' Headquarters safety coin late September during a deployment to Louisiana for the Corps' response to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

Jeff Pfannes, district safety officer, nominated Kitzman for this honor.

Pfannes said Kitzman, who served as a quality assurance official for the blue roof mission, received this coin for doing the right thing. When Kitzman was working with a roofer he caught drinking on the job, he reported the individual and had him removed from the worksite.

"On the jobsite around 10 a.m., he left, and I asked him where he was going," said Kitzman. "He said he was going to the bathroom. Then I found a fresh 11-pack in the cooler. A little while later, it was a seven-pack.

"I told him to show me where the other beers were, and he wouldn't or couldn't," he continued. "I called the supervisor and told him I didn't want a drunk guy on a roof ... I ended up working with the supervisor the rest of the day [the roofer was let go]."

Pfannes said not all Corps' QAs would have reported the individual, and what Kitzman did was the safest thing to do. Kitzman received his coin from Bruce Boldon, operations manager and deputy commander of the Louisiana Recovery Field Office, Oct. 3.

Since retiring in December of 2007, Kitzman has moved to Florida. He spends some of his time running auctions and shrimp boating. He said he applied to be a retired annuitant because of encouragement he received from Bonnie Greenleaf, project management.

*Blue roof, continued from Page 7*

velocity charts for the hurricane; and with this information, they were able to select places to set up centrally-located emergency field offices. In this case, they selected Baton Rouge and Houma, La.

“We were originally given 13 parishes to work on, centering around the main areas of damage, and it fit really well within our EFO locations,” said DeLong. “Then, they expanded the mission to include 25 additional parishes.

“Because we’d set up EFO sites based on wind velocities, it enabled us to fully work those parishes,” he continued. “Ninety-five percent of the ROEs were located around the EFO sites, so it’s really important to do good damage assessments at the beginning of a mission.”

The day the team received the mission, the Corps awarded contracts to two prime roofing contractors – Crown Roofing Services, Inc., of Kenner, La., and S&M Associates, Inc., of Pascagoula, Miss. They were able to complete the first roof by Oct. 7.

DeLong said one of the challenges they faced when they began, however, was initial staffing. The mission can’t really ramp up until ROEs start coming in, he explained, and they needed bodies to collect ROEs and begin assessments.

Yet another challenge included contacting the parishes to determine where to locate ROE collection centers. “We had extreme difficulty in getting the parishes to get back to us,” he said. “In a way, it worked out, since we didn’t have enough manpower. We were able to open

up ROE centers sporadically, as we awaited the parish official’s answer.”

Ike further complicated matters, since feeder winds and rain from the hurricane made it unsafe for roofing. DeLong said they used those couple of lost days to provide the QAs with more training.

Additionally, he said, “realizing we had manpower issues early on, the recovery field office staff [mainly from the St. Paul District] provided us with additional assistance and that was appreciated.”

Corps’ QA personnel began arriving that first weekend, he said, so some were at first put to work collecting ROEs. Others began making assessments right away. “On these missions, everything changes on a daily basis, and you’re not just given one task,” he said. “You have to be very flexible.”

To complete the mission, the team used a nontraditional method

that was first used towards the end of the Hurricane Katrina blue roof mission. The usual way, explained DeLong, is to do assessments, have the contractors do the work and then return later for final inspections. Potentially, days can go by between each step, and the QA personnel might never see the actual work take place.

With this mission, since the homes were geographically spread across a wide area, DeLong said, a Corps’ QA person and a contractor quality control person would usually travel with two or more roofing crews. The QA and QC would make an assessment on one home and leave a crew there to do the work and then do the same at the next home. Later, they would return to the first house to check on the crew’s work and sign off on the ROE.

“You spend a little bit more on overhead doing it this way, but you

*Blue roof, continued on Page 9*



Photo by George Stringham

**A line formed at a Right of Entry Office, Port Allen, La., Sept. 8. Residents had to authorize right of entry to their property for a temporary blue roof cover for their homes before government and contractor employees could assess property damage and program eligibility.**



*Blue roof, continued from Page 8*

finish the mission a little faster, a little safer and with less mistakes,” he said. “If there’s a discrepancy [or an issue with the roof], the crews can fix it right there. Plus, if there are issues with a particular crew, instead of finding out about it a week later and having it be a big mess to clean up, it can be corrected immediately that day.

“Additionally, with the government presence through the

whole process, safety rules can be enforced,” he continued. “We had a low number of safety-related incidents. None of the injuries resulted in lost time.”

At its peak, around 1,000 roofers and 250 Corps’ employees and contractors were working on the Louisiana blue roof mission. They processed through as many as 1,000 ROEs a day and completed the mission in almost a month.

Overall, DeLong said he thought

it went extremely well. “The great majority of the team is happy with the work. The morale is very high, and the folks are happy with volunteering to come down here,” he said. “From talking to the folks, they’d be happy to do it again; and since this is a volunteer mission, you got to have volunteers.

“The contractors have both said this was the smoothest mission they’ve ever seen,” he continued, “and I’ve heard a lot of happy stories from homeowners.”



Army Corps of Engineers photo

**Raymond Byrd (left), a rehired annuitant with Defense Contract Audit Agency, and Col. Jon Christensen, St. Paul District commander, review execution of the blue roof mission at a residence on Avenue B in Port Allen La., Sept. 9.**

# Rehired annuitants contribute to hurricane recovery efforts

By Shannon Bauer

Corps' employees weren't the only ones who volunteered to deploy for hurricane duty this summer.

The Corps' response to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike in Louisiana September and early October included a total of 392 people, of which 65 were rehired annuitants. For the Corps' response to Hurricane Ike in Texas, as of Oct. 8, 100 of the 508 employees that have deployed are rehired annuitants.

In 2004, Congress passed a new law that allows the Corps to rehire its employees for temporary duty during a disaster or other situation that requires a surge of personnel. The retiree can either deploy or backfill for a deployed employee.

Joe Dvorak, a reemployed annuitant and retired St. Paul District upper area lockmaster, arrived at the Louisiana Recovery Field Office in Baton Rouge, La., Sept. 12, to serve as a team leader with the Corps' blue roof team. Dvorak said he and the rest of the rehired cadre work for Corps' Headquarters out of Washington, D.C.

"Anytime we want to go to work, we send him [Don Binder, the program manager] a note that we want to go to work," he said. "The taskers are usually for 30 days, but it varies according to the disaster.

"You can't go from one disaster to another," he added. "You have to go home first and then you go to the bottom of the list."



Photo by Shannon Bauer

**Joe Dvorak (left), retired St. Paul District upper area lockmaster, and Roger Azevedo, retired lock operator from Detroit district, deployed to Louisiana to support Hurricane Gustav recovery efforts. They are both working on the Corps' Operation Blue Roof mission.**

Since 2005, annuitants have been brought on board for natural disasters, as well as to assist in building a border fence in Texas and with the Defense Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC, process on military installations. Dvorak said he has previously deployed four times, all for Hurricane Katrina.

"It's nice to come down south as the weather gets cooler, and it's really nice to help people who can't help themselves," he said. "One of the greatest benefits, though, is you get to see guys you worked with before.

"It's reconnecting with old friends," he explained. "I've seen at least a dozen people here that I worked with on Katrina."

Roger Azevedo, a rehired

annuitant from Detroit District, echoed Dvorak's opinions. "It's nice to meet new people and learn new things," he said. "I'm thankful for the opportunity."

Retirees continue to receive their retirement check, as well as additionally receive biweekly checks like regular employees. They don't receive benefits, as they are already covered in their retirement plan. They also don't earn any leave. If they took an early out through a VSIP package, they cannot be rehired for five years.

Those interested in becoming a rehired annuitant should contact Don Binder at 202-761-7099 or [don.binder@usace.army.mil](mailto:don.binder@usace.army.mil). Binder is also a rehired annuitant and has been so for more than three years.

# TSP

## Thrift Savings Plan offers tax-deferred savings, low administrative cost

by Patricia Berczyk

The Thrift Savings Plan, or TSP, is an extremely important part of the federal retirement system. It is a retirement savings and investment plan for federal employees. Currently, there are 3.9 million participants, federal employees and retirees, with combined assets of \$225 billion dollars. The TSP offers federal employees the same type of savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer their employees under 401(k) plans.

In the civilian component of the TSP, employees covered by the Federal Employees' Retirement System, or FERS, and the Civil Service Retirement System, or CSRS, can contribute to the TSP regardless of whether one works full time or part time. However, the participation rules are different for FERS and CSRS employees.

The contributions one makes to his or her TSP account are voluntary and the amount is an individual's choice. The TSP contribution is separate from contributions to the FERS basic annuity or CSRS annuity. Employees can enroll or make changes to their TSP at any time.

### FERS

For FERS employees, the TSP is one of the three parts of the basic retirement package, along with the FERS basic annuity and Social Security. Participating in the TSP does not affect the amount of Social Security benefits or the FERS basic annuity. An individual may elect to contribute any dollar amount or percentage (1 to 100) of your basic pay. However, the annual dollar total cannot exceed the Internal Revenue Code limit, which is \$15,500 for 2008.

The money saved and earned in a TSP account will provide an important source of retirement income for an individual enrolled in FERS. The TSP is especially important to FERS employees, because the formula used to compute the FERS Basic Annuity is less generous than the formula used to compute the CSRS annuity.

FERS employees may begin contributing to the TSP when first hired by the federal government. Once eligible for agency contributions, an individual will receive an agency automatic contribution of one percent whether or not he or she is contributing to one's account. If

contributing to a TSP, an individual will also receive agency matching contributions at that time. These matching contributions are a principal benefit of the TSP. Federal income taxes are deferred on all contributions to TSP accounts.

### CSRS

For CSRS employees, the TSP can provide a source of retirement income in addition to the CSRS annuity. Although one does not receive agency contributions, an individual does have the benefit of deferring taxes on contributions and on earnings in their TSP account. However, their annual dollar total cannot exceed the Internal Revenue Code limit, which is \$15,500 for 2008.

For all participants, the TSP offers the following:

- Immediate employee contributions
- Before-tax savings and tax-deferred investment earnings
- Daily valuation of accounts
- Low administrative and investment expenses
- Transfers or roll-overs of eligible distributions into the TSP

*TSP, continued Page 12*

*TSP, continued from Page 11*

- Ability to make contribution allocations daily
- Ability to make interfund transfers
- Loans from one’s own contributions and attributable earnings while in federal service
- Catchup contributions for participants age 50 or older
- In-service withdrawals for financial hardship or after age 59½
- Portable benefits and a choice of withdrawal options after separation from federal service
- Ability to designate beneficiaries for the account balance
- Protection of spouses’ rights for loans and withdrawals and recognition of qualifying court orders
- A choice of investment funds.

### Individual Funds

Participants may make their own decisions about investment allocation by choosing from any or all of the individual TSP investment funds:

- Government Securities Investment (G) Fund
- Fixed Income Index Investment (F) Fund
- Common Stock Index Investment (C) Fund
- Small Capitalization Stock Index Investment (S) Fund
- International Stock Index Investment (I) Fund.

There is also an option to choose one of the L funds, which are “lifecyle” funds invested according to a professionally designed mix of stocks, bonds and government securities. The L Fund is based on a time horizon, targeted to when one will need the money after leaving federal service.

The most up-to-date information about the TSP is available on line at <https://www.abc.army.mil/>. To access the Employee Benefits Information System, or EBIS to enroll in TSP, click on Benefits/EBIS and enter one’s own AKO username and password. Upon first access, click on the “New User” button. Enter a temporary four-digit personal identification number, or PIN, and then enter and verify a custom six-digit PIN.

For questions, please contact a counselor at the Army Benefits Center – Civilian, toll-free at 1-877-276-9287. Numbers for our overseas and/or hearing impaired customers can be found at <https://www.abc.army.mil/ABCCMenu.htm>. Benefits counselors are available Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Central time.

## District computer refresh begins

The St. Paul District is getting new computers. The computer refresh began Nov. 7 and will continue through Dec. 10, or when all the computers are installed. “The objective is to standardize the information technology infrastructure,” said Dave Himmerich, regional information officer for ACE-IT. “It offers new and reliable equipment district personnel need to execute their missions for the Corps.”

The refresh is happening throughout the Army Corps of Engineers. Steve Grannes, ACE-IT, is managing the district’s effort.



Photo by Peter Versteegen

**Boxed computers surround Dave Himmerich, regional information officer for ACE-IT, the Corps’ information technology provider.**

### Banquet rescheduled

The St. Paul District **Holiday Awards Banquet** has been re-scheduled for Dec. 16 at the Prom Center, 484 Inwood Ave., Oakdale, Minn.

### Newcomers

**Karen Eklund**, regulatory;  
**Richard Hall**, contracting;  
**Shannon Matthews**,  
 contracting;  
**Tamara Mukete**, public affairs;  
**Thomas Pawlak**, physical  
 support branch, Dredge Goetz,  
 Fountain City; Wis.;  
**Apryl Radel**, Blackhawk Park,  
 DeSoto, Wis.;  
**Barbara Walther**, regulatory.

### Retirements

**Stuart Dobberpuhl**, civil  
 engineer, more than 37 years  
 federal service;  
**Philip Kramer**, lock and dam  
 operator, Lock and Dam 9, nearly  
 16 years federal service;  
**Byron Nelson**, electrical  
 engineer, more than 36 years  
 federal service;  
**Mark Paschke**, construction  
 inspection technician, 33 years  
 federal service;  
**Donald Powell**, project  
 manager, more than 36 years  
 federal service;  
**Lorilee Taylor**, engineering  
 technician, 29 years federal  
 service.

### Taps

**Margaret Kincaid**, a retiree  
 from the old office of automated  
 data processing, passed away  
 Sept. 6.

**Harry E. Bock**, retired chief of  
 the old recruitment and placement  
 branch in the personnel office,  
 now civilian personnel, passed  
 away Oct. 21.

## News and Notes

### District joins regional recruiting team

A regional cadre traveled to Puerto Rico in early September to recruit engineering students for employment with the Mississippi Valley Division of the Army Corps of Engineers.

Dave Busse and Patti O'Connor, St. Louis District; Holly Porter, Vicksburg District; Noel Grego-Delgado and Francisco Martinez-Rodriguez, New Orleans District; and Marsha Mose, St. Paul District, interviewed more than 80 students at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez, Sept. 9-10.

"We found most of the students that we talked with to be extremely interested in employment with the Corps of Engineers and willing to consider moving to parts of the United States (even the cold parts!) that they maybe are not familiar with," said Mose, chief of design branch. "They also seemed to be very motivated and serious about working in their chosen profession and continuing their education even while employed."

The University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez, or UPRM, is a state university located in the city of Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. UPRM is the second largest university campus of the University of Puerto Rico System, and the premier engineering and science institution of the Caribbean and Latin America. The university and its engineering program are accredited.

The individual districts are now in the process of offering employment to the top candidates.



Photos by Tammy Wick

**Mark Blanchard**, student ranger at Pokegama, Grand Rapids, Minn., received a "thank you" letter and a 225th Army Birthday commemorative coin in August from George Ryan, Bay Village, Ohio. Ryan thanked him for directions to Pokegama and a campsite with a view of the Mississippi River. Ryan had received the coin "from a colonel or general" while doing work for the Corps of Engineers a few years ago.

# Employees of the Month

## April: Tim Meers

*Terry Fluekiger, head lock operator at Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam, nominated Tim Meers, lockmaster at Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam, for Employee of the Month. LSAF is in Minneapolis.*



St. Paul District photo

**Lt. Col. John Kunkle, deputy district engineer, presents Tim Meers, lockmaster, Employee of the Month honors.**

“Along with other individuals during the Interstate 35-W bridge collapse, Tim Meers rose to the duty by working countless hours providing help and technical support to all agencies involved with the bridge collapse. Meers provided this support with concentrated focus and selfless service.

“He curtailed sleeping, eating and put his personal life on hold. Our hats off to his wife and family.

“With the foreseeable future of the Saint Anthony Falls’ hydropower plant going in at site, Meers has spent countless hours on research and plans to secure safety and longevity at the site and on customer satisfaction.

Sometimes, he takes research home and comes in on own time to prepare for next upcoming events.

“Taking great pride in this organization and site, Meers has provided a cohesive work environment and a team atmosphere by communicating a positive attitude. He leads positively through his daily examples.

“Through his daily walk of life, he is committed to excellence and being the best person he can possible be and encourages others to do the same.

“He goes out of his way to help people even if there’s no personal benefit to himself; except for the gratitude of being able to help someone.

“He holds a high degree of loyalty to people he comes in contact with.

“He is a strong role model and believes in doing what is right for this organization and nation. He listens to what each employee has to say and takes their ideas into consideration when making decisions for the site and its well being.

“Meers holds a strong sense of character, dedication, charisma and discernment and gives back to what he has taken from. He holds the highest degree of respect for people from any walk of life. He also upholds the greatest values showing high amounts of selfless service to our organization and customers by going the extra mile. With many years of service, he still has a passion for his job and believes in providing greatness to our nation, organization and site.”

## May: Shannon Bauer

*Mark Davidson, public affairs chief, nominated Shannon Bauer, public affairs specialist, for Employee of the Month.*



St. Paul District photo

**Col. Jon Christensen, district engineer, presents Shannon Bauer, public affairs specialist, Employee of the Month honors.**

“In the initial 69-hour period of the Interstate 35-W bridge collapse, which included President George Bush’s visit, Shannon Bauer, public affairs, worked at the Lower St. Anthony Falls lock and dam 34 hours. Aside from responding to most of the 144 media inquiries during that time, she worked with the White House press secretary, the Secret Service and local officials to coordinate Army Corps of Engineers communication activities. The outcome resulted in positive media coverage worldwide.”

# Employees of the Month

## June: Linda Krueger

*Lt. Col. John Kunkle, deputy district engineer, nominated Linda Krueger for June Employee of the Month.*



St. Paul District photo

**Col. Jon Christensen, district engineer, presents Linda Krueger, civilian personnel advisory center chief, Employee of the Month honors.**

Linda Krueger, chief of the district’s civilian personnel advisory center, successfully led a team through negotiations and approval of union contract. Intense, complex and challenging synchronization of numerous team members resulted in an acceptable solution for all affected parties. Diligence related to high performing organization/most efficient organization transitions minimized the need to conduct a reduction in force. Efforts are on-going for the last few affected employees that, when complete, will result in all those who wished to continue to work with the district will do so and no involuntary separations will be

required. She spearheaded National Security Personnel System planning and implementation – leading the way regionally. Her efforts earned her an unwavering reputation for honesty and integrity.

## July: Pat Berczyk

*Ann Mershon, civilian personnel advisory center, nominated Pat Berczyk, also in CPAC, for July Employee of the Month.*



St. Paul District photo

**Bruce Boldon, operations chief, presents Pat Berczyk, civilian personnel advisory center, Employee of the Month honors.**

I nominate Pat Berczyk for Employee of the Month for her part in the planning and organizing of the employee National Security Personnel System training. The training was a total success in large part because of Berczyk’s motivation, initiative and dedication as the civilian personnel advisory’s training coordinator. She not only assisted district employees with signing up for the training but also

spent many hours ensuring all the classes were scheduled and each instructor had all the necessary materials required to teach the classes.

As part of the planning process, she coordinated with field site training coordinators on classroom size, location and ensured that technical amenities were available for use. If not, she made sure that the instructors knew which equipment was needed at the training site location such as projectors and laptop computers.

In addition, she trained all of the district training coordinators on how to use the online Civilian Human Resource Training Application System, or CHRTAS, so that they could assist their employees when signing up for a class.

She arrived to the St. Paul training facility for each local class and ensured that the classroom was set up to include student books on the tables, extra pens and pencils, handout material, new employee roster and that each student had a nameplate. When the class began she provided all the logistical information such as parking, places to eat, etc. This was a substantial help to all of the instructors, because it allowed us to focus on instructing the class. She also coordinated all the classroom rosters with the training division of the civilian human resource agency, ensuring that each employee who attended the NSPS training session had their personnel training record updated.

The outcome was a success NSPS rollout.