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St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

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St. Paul District leads stand up of Louisiana Recovery Field Office

Photo by Alfred Dulaney, Vicksburg District



Photo by Alfred Dulaney

Left to right are Gary Dill, a contract photographer from Mississippi Valley Division; Mark Davidson, public affairs; Mark Koenig, safety specialist; and Dave McFarlin, logistics, a virtual employee, Millington, Tenn. The photo was taken Sep. 1 at the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired in Baton Rouge, La., which served as a temporary response field office and living quarters.

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



St. Paul District teammates,

I wanted to take a minute to thank everyone for two things:

Thanks for the support you have given to establishing the Louisiana recovery field office – it has been superb. The office was established in record time, and we have contributed significantly to the recovery effort in Louisiana.

As of Sept. 29, our Corps’ power team installed more than 100 generators to critical public facilities – keeping hospitals, nursing homes, water treatment plants, lift stations and shelters up and operational. Our commodities team has delivered more than 480 trucks of water and more than 200 trucks of ice. The debris team has provided technical assistance and quality control advice to local parish teams. And, the blue roof team has installed nearly 5,000 temporary roofs with about 7,000 more to follow.

These things do not happen by themselves – having the St. Paul District recovery field office team with augmentation from across the Corps contributed greatly to the success of the Emergency Support Function #3, public works and engineering team. We have relied on professional support from as far west as Hawaii and as far east as Baltimore.

Of special note is the outstanding performance of our roofing team from Nashville and our power teams from Memphis and Tulsa. They have performed magnificently.

Whether you deployed directly, are scheduled to deploy or are carrying the additional workload of someone who did deploy, know that you have made a difference on this mission.

The second thanks is for the preparation, professionalism and flexibility of the district team in coping with the Republican National Convention. You weathered the storm perfectly, kept great accountability and, most importantly, kept safe.

It isn’t often that a district must handle two simultaneous, high profile missions. Your success in doing both speaks volumes about the quality work force we have in St. Paul. I could not be more proud.

The fight goes on, and I ask for your continued support in both the recovery field office and in delivering our district mission in St. Paul. The road promises to be a bit rocky, but I know you are up to the task.

Again, thanks for all you do.



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Crosscurrents

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News and Notes Extra
Marcia McCloskey, real estate division, achieved “Second Premium” with a Halloween cross-stitch in the four-counted cross-stitch competition in the Minnesota State Fair creative activities. Her “Mermaid of Pearls” achieved fifth place in the large category.



District quickly executes Gustav recovery missions in Louisiana

by Peter Verstegen

As part of its lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, the Mississippi Valley Division tasked the St. Paul District with setting up a disaster recovery field office in Louisiana in the event the state was again hit by a hurricane. Katrina had made landfall in Louisiana almost three years earlier, on August 29, 2005.

And the St. Paul District, with support throughout the Corps, was ready for Hurricane Gustav, which hit the state Sept. 1.

Prior to Gustav making landfall along the Louisiana coast, the district deployed an advance team of 10 to set up a recovery field office. “All this while the district continued to support flood recovery missions in Iowa,” said Teri Alberico, readiness branch.

The district managed commodities, such as ice and water, emergency power and temporary roofing, as well as provided technical advice in the areas of debris removal and temporary housing, throughout the state of Louisiana.

Since landfall, nearly 30 district personnel have gone to Baton Rouge, mainly to serve as a management cell for the Corps’ disaster response missions given to it by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, under Emergency Support Function #3, public works and engineering.

Corps’ personnel moved into the



Photo by Alfred Dulaney

Mark Nelson (left), St. Paul District real estate division, and Vivian Ratliff, logistics activity from St. Louis District, worked hurricane recovery duty in Baton Rouge, La. Ratliff worked at the Louisiana Recovery Field Office to secure accommodations at the Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired – one of the few secure available quarters when area hotels were fully occupied.

LA-RFO, or Louisiana Recovery Field Office, Baton Rouge, Sept. 6, after nearly a week at the FEMA-JFO, or Federal Emergency Management Agency Joint Field Office.

“Headquarters, Army Corps of Engineers provided \$160,000 in flood control and coastal engineering funds to activate the emergency operations center in St. Paul and to deploy the advance personnel to Baton Rouge to prepare to stand up the RFO in late August,” said Alberico.

The RFO and district are currently managing nearly \$73 million mission to execute FEMA

mission assignments, starting with surge funding in anticipation of Gustav’s landfall through disaster declaration missions, primarily for emergency power and temporary roofing. “We have already fiscally and physically closed out four missions that were reassigned after landfall with disaster funds and are currently closing out \$4.6 million worth of missions that were also reassigned with disaster funds after landfall, or didn’t fully materialize and are no longer needed,” said Alberico.

“We expect a number of the recovery missions to be wrapped up by mid-October.”

Louisiana Recovery Field Office stands up

From nothing to networking in two days

By George Stringham
St. Louis District Public Affairs

A 51,000 square-foot office building once home to a housing financier is transformed into a nerve center for the Corps of Engineers' Louisiana Recovery Field Office, helping the State of Louisiana and its residents recover from Hurricane Gustav, then, less than two weeks later, Hurricane Ike.

Setting up the LA-RFO, though, requires more than just putting people at desks. It also requires technology infrastructure. That's where the ACE-IT Enterprise Emergency Response Team, or EERT, comes into play.

The building formerly occupied by Aegis Lending Corporation was first identified as a possible site for an RFO in the spring of 2008, should the need arise to establish the recovery office.

John Albrecht, real estate appraiser for the St. Paul District, said that every year, 10 sites are identified as potential sites to be turned into RFOs, should the need arise.

"The Aegis building was at the top of the list. It had a lot of what

we needed, from space, available parking and highway access to infrastructure," Albrecht said.

Infrastructure ended up being one of the key factors that allowed the RFO to be occupied quickly.

"Research by the St. Paul personnel to identify a facility that had a pre-existing cable plant was a key element of success for EERT to establish data and voice communications and stand up operations of the LA-RFO in record time," Lori Kennedy, Memphis District ACE-IT, said. "Telecommunication service priority, or TSP requests for data and voice circuits, were prepared in advance, reducing the time required for service installation.

"In fact, the installation of the circuits was postponed a day due to lack of power at the facility. The communications equipment was pre-configured and installed allowing for connectivity within minimal allowable time."

ACE-IT personnel first came into the building to start setting things up Sep. 3, the day after the lease was signed. By the afternoon of Sep. 5, the local area network, or LAN, was up and running.

"The existing wiring was a plus, however, we were very lucky," said ACE-IT's Dave Husted, working out of the Rock Island District. "Many times what looks like modern data/communications equipment is actually older stuff that is not useful. However, this facility saved at least two, possibly three days, of cabling, and several thousand dollars. A+ to the recon team that found this!"

For Husted and Dave Wright, an ACE-IT employee who works out of the St. Paul District, one of our



Photo by Alfred Dulaney

St. Paul District's Dave Himmerich (left) and Lori Kennedy, Memphis District, work with Nashville District's Larry Nash to configure the overhead projector in the RFO conference room. In a matter of days, the ACE-IT team was able to turn a nearly vacant office building into an operational nerve center for the Corps' recovery efforts in Louisiana.

Networking, continued Page 6

Networking, continued from Page 5
bigger challenges was working without reliable power or air conditioning in a room that was hotter than 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

“With only a rumor of land line power coming on-line soon and a generator that needed a lot of work, we had no choice but to connect essentials to a Honda generator and continue setup,” said Husted. “AT&T needed power to setup data circuits and phones. Had we turned them away, it could have been days before they would return. It was a gamble we just couldn’t afford. It all worked out perfectly,” he said.

All that was needed for someone to access it was a Corps computer. But those deploying without Corps computers also posed one of the greatest challenges.

“We were able to acquire laptops identified for refresh and have them shipped directly to us for use,” ACE-IT’s Kennedy said. “Dr. Peggy Wright, ACE-IT Director at ERDC, the Corps’ Engineering Research and Design Center, personally delivered six laptops on Saturday, the first day of standing up the LA-RFO. Twenty additional refresh laptops were received from Norfolk District the following day. It is always a challenge when working with various district laptop configurations and network policies.”

As days passed, the team continued to improve and build on what they had. A server was set up, allowing team members and others to share information more efficiently. High speed laser printers, copiers and faxes were set up on the LAN throughout the



Photo by Alfred Dulaney

Dave Husted, Rock Island District, maps Liz Dvorak’s computer to one of the new printers installed in the Louisiana Recovery Field Office. Dvorak normally works in civilian personnel in the St. Paul District. In a matter of days, the ACE-IT team was able to turn a nearly vacant office building into an operational nerve center for the Corps’ recovery efforts in Louisiana.

building. All of this to make it easier and more efficient for the various teams to carry out and complete their missions.

“The key to success in an emergency response is a whole team committed to the best possible result in the least amount of time,” said Dave Himmerich, St. Paul District emergency IT manager. “That starts with a real estate team tuned into the IT needs of the recovery field office and includes excellent reach-back support with the same level of urgency as the first responders.

But mostly it requires a forward

team that is resourceful and committed to meeting every demand with excellent service,” said Himmerich. “From my observation, the emergency response team and the ACE-IT team behind them has stepped up to provide superior IT response during this hurricane season.”

Their next big challenge for ACE-IT was to prepare to accommodate dozens of FEMA, or Federal Emergency Management Agency personnel, transferring from the Louisiana Joint Field Office.

Scouting for RFO began in 2006

By Mark Davidson

Aside from the extensive information technology requirements for setting up the Louisiana Recovery Field Office, or LA-RFO, in September, there was additional necessary work to complete for the facility to support a more than 300-person operation.

"I actually began my part of the RFO set-up process when I spent three days at the district emergency operations center before deploying," said Dave McFarlin, logistics.

Arriving in Baton Rouge, La., on Aug. 31, the day before Hurricane Gustav hit the Louisiana, gave McFarlin some time to reconnect with most of his resources required to stand up a recovery field office. "Like anything else, the more time you have before the disaster hits helps in having resources ready to be used," he said.

Mark Koenig, engineering and construction, was a "pinch hitter" on the advance team in setting up the RFO. "My initial task associated with the establishment and setup of the RFO was the review of the facilities for safety and security concerns," said Koenig, "since the safety manager and security manager were not physically here due to their duties back in St. Paul while the Republican National Convention was going on Sep. 1-4."

Prior to the RFO lease signing, Koenig met with the Federal Emergency Management Agency,



Photo by Mark Davidson

John Albrecht (above), real estate division, scouted locations and buildings for the recovery field office as early as April 2006 and 2007. He also surveyed available locations online in 2008.

or FEMA, security personnel to discuss required security upgrades and the level of guard services required for the building configuration.

After the initial assessments and the lease was signed, Koenig said his primary mission was to ensure that the facilities were ready to be occupied starting Sep. 6, two days after the lease was signed, since there was not a Corps' logistics property manager yet assigned to the RFO.

"This required close coordination with the building management to insure that the backup generator was running, the air conditioning was functioning adequately to provide a comfortable working environment, and janitorial and cleaning services were initiated," said Koenig. "The ACE-IT organization also had to gain access to set up the RFO server and insure connectivity for all designated work stations prior to move in," said Koenig.

The biggest obstacle to

overcome was the absence of permanent power for the building, said Koenig.

Another challenge, said Koenig, was the scavenging that was necessary to set up functional working stations grouped by organizational function from the equipment that was left in the building by the last tenant.

"We set up and accommodated the initial move-in of approximately 60 people into the RFO in less than 48 hours," said Koenig.

Personnel from real estate division had been getting ready to set up the RFO since 2006.

"We came down here in April of 2006 and 2007 to scout buildings to use for the RFO. We had to do it before hurricane season started on June 1," said John Albrecht.

"I did the scouting on-line in 2008. Some of the same buildings were still open from 2006," said Albrecht.

The buildings are ranked on a 1-10 scale, based on many factors – space, available parking, IT capabilities. The plan was to have a building in place for the RFO eight days after the hurricane hits.

On Aug. 29 Albrecht called the top-three ranked building contacts from St. Paul to ask them about lease availability. He got a quote from each of them on how much their lease would cost. On Sep. 1, Labor Day, Hurricane Gustav hit Louisiana.

"I spent four hours at home on Sep. 1, late afternoon and evening, working with the building manager to work out the lease details and to secure the building," said Albrecht. "It was a stroke of luck to have the IT data lines, cubicles, furniture, etc., in place," he said.

2008 Flood of Record

Cedar Rapids School District begins disaster recovery with Corps support

by Jeff DeZellar

When torrential rains hit Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in mid-June 2008, it resulted in "...a flood of biblical proportions..." according to one resident.

In Cedar Rapids, the Cedar River crested June 13, 12 feet higher than the previous record flood set in 1929. Hundreds of city blocks were flooded, including thousands of homes and many commercial and governmental buildings.

Devastating flooding also affected much of the rest of Iowa and the Midwest.

One entity severely impacted by the flooding was the Cedar Rapids Community Schools, the second largest school district in Iowa. The district has approximately 17,840 students, 24 elementary schools, six middle schools, four high schools and various alternative schools.

Flood waters rose to a level of approximately eight feet in the Educational Service Center, or ESC, the main administration facility for the school district. Flooding heavily damaged the first floor. Flooding also damaged two elementary schools, including Taylor Elementary School, where the water level reached approximately three feet.

Although regular school was not



Photo by Greg Henshall, FEMA

Jim Mosner (left) engineering and construction, and Dick Otto, natural resources, check progress on the school administration buildings being installed on the grounds of Kingston Stadium on Aug. 6. The Federal Emergency Management Agency asked the Corps to install 35 modular units by mid-August for the Linn County Board of Education, which lost the use of its building in the June flood. (Photo and information from Tower Times, Rock Island District.)

in session, the ESC is a year-round operation. With only about two months before the beginning of the new school year, it was critical that the ESC begin to function as normally as possible as soon as possible.

The Corps of Engineers initiated a rapid response to assist the school district in arranging for temporary administrative facilities. The Corps accepted the mission to assist with the layout, design and construction of the needed temporary offices. Mark Clark of Rock Island District, the Emergency Support Function #3 team leader, coordinated with school district officials, the State of Iowa and the Federal Emergency

Management Agency, or FEMA, for preliminary scoping.

A critical public facilities team of subject matter experts was then mobilized to accomplish this mission.

The initial team was comprised of three St. Paul District employees: Bonnie Greenleaf, project management; Dick Otto, natural resources manager from LaCrescent, Minn., designated mission manager; and Tim Meers, lockmaster from Lower St. Anthony Falls Lock and Dam in Minneapolis, who was site engineer on the critical public facilities team.

Others contributed throughout

Schools, continued Page 9

Schools, continued from Page 8

the summer: Dave Valen and Gary Wolf, both engineering and construction; Dennis Anderson, project management; Bryan Peterson, logistics; Ray Marinan, Natural Resources Office; Milt Haupt, Lake Traverse Project; Jim Sentz, Doris Sullivan, Pat Vickman and Melissa Gulan, all in engineering and construction; and Steve Lenhart, upper area lock master from operations, were all involved.

Adrienne Blackwell of Rock Island District and Jack Little of Vicksburg also assisted this effort.

Early on, the school district selected a suitable site for the temporary buildings near Kingston Stadium in Cedar Rapids. In addition, a staging area was located to place the trailers after

delivery, while the temporary site was being prepared. Site preparation included sewer, water and electrical connections, and concrete pads to place the buildings. The Corps' team reviewed this site and found it suitable.

The team arranged to procure the required 35 double-wide buildings to house the school administrative staff and arranged for delivery to the site.

The contracting process involved issuing a supply contract and a construction contract. The process was put on an extremely fast track, and a contract for delivery of the trailers was executed in five days. Working closely with FEMA also expedited the outcome.

With contractors working seven days a week, the temporary office buildings were completed in less than six weeks. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on Aug. 21.

Meeting the extremely aggressive construction schedule was an important achievement. "What a great effort by all in constructing the temporary school buildings in Cedar Rapids [in record time]. I appreciate the 'can do' attitude, and the genuine desire to meet the needs of the public we serve," said Col. Robert Sinkler, Rock Island district commander. "It is always nice when the media says '...you can't beat this supersonic construction schedule.' Or when Dick Hainje (FEMA Region 7 Administrator) says '... they moved

heaven and earth on this one to get this here.'"

The school district will open the new school year in the temporary offices, which was a primary goal of the accelerated procurement and construction schedule. The new temporary offices will keep the school administration in the same location. School District Associate Superintendent Jay Marino said, "...[before the new buildings were completed], if you wanted to talk to multiple departments, you'd literally have to get in your car and sometimes drive across town to find some departments because we were scattered. I think the convenience will definitely be a plus."

Throughout the mission, the team met frequently with school district officials to identify their specific requirements and to coordinate all activities.

The disaster response is managed by FEMA, which identifies and assigns missions and tasks to other federal partners including the Corps. The Corps' response was a regional effort managed by Rock Island District and supported by other Corps' districts. Team members achieved close collaboration with FEMA, Iowa emergency operations personnel and local officials at every step of the process.

Mission Manager Dick Otto said "It is very satisfying to be able to help the people here, who have had their lives disrupted in such a major way. They seem to truly appreciate our efforts. It is also nice to see such immediate results of your work, and to be a part of a team doing good things for this community."



Photo courtesy of Alliant Energy, from Tower Times, Rock Island District

Workers can be seen on the wood decking, which connects the Cedar Rapids Community School District buildings on the grounds of Kingston Stadium.



Photo by Shannon Bauer

The St. Paul District hosted an open house on the Motor Vessel Mississippi for the public in St. Paul, Minn., Aug. 9. The MV Mississippi made its first visit to the St. Paul District since 2006.

District hosts M.V. Mississippi

By Shannon Bauer

The Motor Vessel Mississippi made its first visit to the St. Paul District since 2006 Aug. 9-12.

The vessel is used part-time by the Mississippi River Commission for inspection trips each year. Ninety percent of the time, though, it is a working towboat for the Memphis District. Its main role is moving barges, equipment and supplies in support of mat sinking operations on the Lower Mississippi River.

The vessel visited the St. Paul

District for the main purpose of allowing the river commissioners the opportunity to host a public meeting within the district's boundaries, as required during inspection trips. This year's meeting was held in Red Wing, Minn., Aug. 11, and approximately 100 individuals attended.

On this trip, in addition to the public meeting, the district also provided the commissioners with a tour of the new I-35W bridge in Minneapolis; visits to Lock and Dam 3 north of Red Wing; the National Eagles Center in Wabasha, Minn.; and the Marine Art Museum in Winona, Minn.

Additionally, the district made use of the vessel to host an open

house in St. Paul, Minn., Aug. 9. Around 850 individuals toured the vessel and learned more about the Corps of Engineers and its role on the Upper Mississippi River.

Don Powell, project management, and Kristin Kosterman, executive assistant, did most of the planning for the week.

The MV Mississippi is the largest diesel towboat in the United States, measuring in at 214 feet long and 58 feet wide with 6,300 horsepower behind it. It is five stories high and can accommodate up to 90 passengers for dinner, as well as offers 22 staterooms for the commissioners and other official guests.

Announcements

The St. Paul District **Holiday Awards Banquet** is scheduled for Dec. 11 at the Prom Center, 484 Inwood Ave., Oakdale, Minn.

Timothy Meers, Lower St. Anthony Falls lockmaster, was selected as the Mississippi Valley Division first responder of the year.

Aaron Snyder, project management, was selected for the Headquarters' 2009 Planning Associates Course.

The **Special Emphasis Committee's** school supply drive resulted in the collection of more than 300 individual school supplies donated by district employees. The supplies were distributed to the district's adopted school, Washington Middle School in St. Paul.

Newcomers

Karen Eklund, regulatory, Hayward, Wis.

Richard Hall, contracting, district office

Shannon Matthews, contracting, district office

Tamara Mukete, student, public affairs office, district office

Thomas Pawlak, Dredge Goetz, Fountain City, Wis.

Apryl Radel, natural resources, Blackhawk Park, DeSoto, Wis.

Barbara Walther, regulatory, district office

Births

Elizabeth Nelsen, hydraulics and hydrology, celebrated the birth of a baby girl, named Aurora Hope Nelsen, May 18.

Shua Xiong, project management, celebrated the birth of a baby girl, named MaiNhia Claire Vang, Sept. 9.

News and Notes



Photo by Tammy Wick

Tammy Wick, an administrative assistant at the district's headwaters office, Grand Rapids, Minn., won first place for the above photo of Hailey Anderson in the Environmental Stewardship Category of the Corps' Water Safety Photo Contest. Wick's photo was from the nature walk at the Sandy Lake Water Institute, Sandy Lake Recreation Area, McGregor, Minn. "This day in particular was our 'nature walk' along the river," said Wick. "The kids were fortunate enough to see minnows, frogs, tadpoles, water bugs, turtle eggs, grasshoppers, clams, crayfish and more. I titled the photo 'He looks like me,' because that is the expression I read on her face."

Wopat inducted into Hall of Fame



Judy DesHarnais, district deputy for programs and project management and acting on behalf of the district commander, inducted Ben Wopat, retired assistant chief of the operations division, into the St. Paul District Hall of Fame at the 33rd annual retirees' reunion in St. Paul, Sept. 11. Nearly 50 attended the reunion. At right, many retirees assembled for a group photo. Wopat (bottom center) served the Corps of Engineers for 30 years, the last eight as the St. Paul District assistant chief of operations division. During his career, Among his many accomplishments, he championed the building of relationships and was known for his consistency and integrity in decision making.



Photos by Shannon Bauer