



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Galveston District

News Release

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Galveston District takes on Ike

Standing sentinel on Seawall Boulevard in Galveston, a pair of granite pillars frame a gateway of sorts to the Gulf of Mexico. The inscription on one recalls the building of the “Extension of the Sea Wall from 39th to 53rd Sts constructed under the direction of Captain Edgar Jadwin, Corps of Engineers, US Army Nov. 1904-Sep. 1905.”



Seawall revisited

The Galveston seawall, built after the Great Storm of 1900 came ashore on Sept. 8, 1900, has stood as a bulwark since that terrible event. More than a century later, Hurricane Ike came roaring into Galveston and the upper Texas coast, and once again, the Corps of Engineers responded.

As Hurricane Ike played an erratic game of where it would make landfall, the area prepared for possible evacuation. Once the Mayor of Galveston issued a mandatory evacuation order for the island, the commander of the Galveston District issued a Commander’s Evacuation Order on Sept. 11 for “Galveston District employees and their families residing in the areas affected by Hurricane Ike.”

An advance team had deployed to Addicks Project Office on the west side of Houston the day before. Survey boats were moved to areas considered safer. With the Evacuation Order, the District headquarters and its employees began preparation for a possible strike on the island. Equipment was covered, items removed from window sills, electronics unplugged. Emergency kits—both work and personal—were packed in cars. For some, family members and pets piled into cars and hit I-45 to drive to their evacuation destination. Some, on the island and on the mainland, decided to batten down the hatches and wait out the storm.

Some district employees went to work in an emergency management mode. The Crisis Action Team—led by the deputy commander Lt. Col. Ed Feigenbaum and chief of Emergency Management Gus Marinos— and the Crisis Management Team joined the advance team at Addicks, which became the Galveston District’s Alternate Emergency Operations Center. Fort Worth District assumed Lead District responsibilities as Galveston District focused on personnel accountability—where were employees and were they safe—and any other preparations they could make to secure assets.

After landfall, AEOC actions shifted. Personnel accountability was and continued to be the priority. “Accounting for everyone in the District was Job One for us,” said Colonel David C. Weston, Galveston District commander. “We had trouble accounting for about four people for a little while, but we did get hold of everyone.”

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But storm damage assessment kicked in too. Helicopter overflights to see the damage not only to Galveston Island and the Jadwin Building (the District Headquarters Building), but also the rest of the impacted district areas lifted off. Addicks and Barker reservoirs were checked for damage, as were the Brazos River Flood Gates and Colorado River Locks. District officials couldn't get into the Wallisville Recreation Area—which did sustain damage—for several days. Port Arthur offices were (and remain as of this writing) severely impacted.

All this is an environment of “no's”: no electricity, no water, no telephones, and no gas—the heating kind and the automobile kind. Galveston Island was indeed desolate, and residents were not allowed to re-enter until Sept. 24—11 days after landfall—but even as far as Houston residents had to cope with a power outage that lasted for weeks, as well as closed service stations, grocery stores, and restaurants. The Addicks office fortunately had a generator for backup power and running water, as well as telephone lines and internet. The hotels where the AEOC staff stayed did not. Most toughed it out, while a few opted to just bunk down on a cot in the Addicks office.

Even while the assessments were going on, the AEOC entered yet another phase: how to return employees to work. Efforts began to make the Jadwin Building on Galveston habitable as soon as the island was opened up again. Damage seemed to be minor to the Jadwin Building, and the staff, led by facilities manager Eric Procter, started planning for how to open the building up again. Additionally, inquiries were begun about alternate headquarters locations in the greater Houston area. Though that did not work out, an alternate work site was established at the Sims Project Office in Houston that allowed some employees to return to work. Several employees, primarily from contracting and resource management, were also deployed to the Joint Program Management Office in San Antonio to work on year-end closeout.

Going on at the same time was the critical navigation mission. Beginning the day after landfall efforts were underway to begin the coordination to survey the waterways. “Our goal was to get

these waterways open as soon as possible,” said Weston. “We knew how critical they are to our nation's economy and industry.” The operations section at the AEOC—Johnny Rozsypal, chief of the Operations Division and Joe Hrametz, chief of the Navigation Branch— led their small-in-numbers team to accomplish huge things, like getting the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway open again.

All told, about half of all Galveston District employees were working at some point during and after Hurricane Ike: roughly 50 carried out the District responsibilities from the AEOC, while 170 were working from other locations.



Team Galveston at Addicks



Senior leaders and city leaders

Brig. Gen. Kendall P. Cox, Southwestern Division commander, visited several times, and gave coins to some extraordinarily deserving employees. By the time the return to Galveston was in the works, innumerable Galveston District employees deserved accolades for a job well done. But accolades were secondary to them—they were merely doing their jobs, just as their predecessors in the Corps had done after the Great Storm of the last century. Building Strong, then and now.