US Army Corps
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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers releases tropical rainfall depth inundation maps

NEW ORLEANS—The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers today released tropical rainfall depth inundation maps showing potential flooding levels in New Orleans. Based on computer modeling, the maps compare possible flooding levels prior to Hurricane Katrina when no gates were installed at the outfall canals and potential levels after installation of the gates. The gates prevent storm surge from entering the canals.

The maps are based on 3-, 6- and 9-inch rainfall during a six-hour period when gates at the three outfall canals are closed, the 17th Street, Orleans Avenue and London Avenue canals. They are also based on pump capacity at the outfall canal gate closures. Each map represents a point in time: pre-Katrina; July 2006; September 2006; and June 2007. Each of those dates represents increased pump capacity at the outfall gates. The June 2007 pumping capacity will return the inundation depth levels in the area to pre-Katrina conditions before the outfall gates were installed.

Dan Hitchings, director of the Corps' Task Force Hope, points out that outfall gates will be closed only during a tropical storm event that would cause a five-foot or more storm surge in Lake Pontchartrain. Since 1959, storm surges exceeding five feet have been recorded three times: in 1985 during Hurricane Juan; in 2002 during Hurricane Isidore, and in 2005 during Hurricane Katrina. "One should not assume that the gates will be closed at all during this hurricane season," Hitchings said. "Certainly London Avenue and 17th Street Canals will be closed if we have a storm headed at us that will cause a five-foot or more storm surge."

The Corps released computer-generated maps showing inundation areas with depths based on four scenarios:

Pre-Katrina without interim closures or pumps at the outfall canals and all pump stations operating at full capacity.

July 2006 with available pumping capacity at the closure gates of 1000 cubic feet per second (cfs) at 17th Street; 2200 cfs at Orleans Avenue Canal; and 2800 cfs at London Avenue. The maps are adjusted for the current condition of Pump Station 12 which is zero and Pump Station 19 which is 1550 cfs. A variation not shown in the maps is that the pumping capacity at 17th Street has increased from 1000 cfs to 1400 cfs.

September 2006 with pumping capacity at the closure gates of 4000 cfs at 17th Street; 2200 at Orleans Canal; 2800 cfs at London Avenue. The projected capacity for Pump Station12 is 1000 cfs, and for Pump Station 19 is 3650 cfs.

June 2007 with gates and 7300 cfs pumping capacity at 17th Street; 2200 cfs at Orleans Avenue Canals; and 4800 cfs at London Avenue. These pumping capacities are expected to match the internal maximum capacity going into these drainage canals based on model results.

These maps are for information and planning only. They should not be used in comparison or relationship to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Base Flood Elevations.

Depth inundation maps http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps/