



US Army Corps
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New Orleans District

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Riverside

Task Force Hope Edition

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Evacuation decision to come

District Commander to make determination Thursday

District Engineer COL Richard P. Wagenaar will decide by Thursday morning whether to instruct New Orleans District employees to evacuate if it appears Hurricane Rita is threatening this area.

Details of the evacuation plan will be released by noon Wednesday. If evacuation appears imminent, details will be disseminated throughout the District headquarters, posted on the District website and available on the toll-free information line at 1-877-533-5224.

The line currently contains information about Hurricane Katrina evacuation order that remains in affect. Callers should listen carefully when calling the toll-free number to distinguish whether a new order for Rita has been issued.

Rita was already a very strong storm on Tuesday evening, packing maximum sustained winds of 105 miles per hour near the center and intensifying.

If an evacuation is necessary, the District's command and control element, and two members of Task Force Unwatering will remain in a bunker at the District.

Contractors should follow their procedures for evacuating provided by their company.

Also, instructions will also be provided for evacuating Corps employees deployed to assist in Katrina recovery.



Mary Pizzuto (left sitting) and Alison Hebert (right) help Sharon and Bill Reeves check in to the District office in New Orleans. They are among the employees who returned to work this week as part of District's reconstitution process. Their selection was based on several factors, including their expertise and the livability of their homes.

Commander's Comments



Our effort to re-constitute the District continues here in New Orleans and across the region. As you return to work, it will take a long time for things to return to normal. We have employees coming back to the District office, while others will work at remote locations for the time being.

This week focus on family and personal issues and getting organized for the gargantuan effort that lies ahead. The communities we serve are depending on us to continue recovery efforts. Our goal is to have 90 percent of you back here in 30 days.

We all need to continue to take care of our families and ourselves. Much needs to be done to stay spiritually and mentally fit, as well as physically healthy. We have counselors from the Crisis Care Network in place, and we're also offering immunizations to employees 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays. We've all been through and continue to go through some very trying times because of this disaster. It is okay to ask for help. These available services can expand your

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personal and family support network if needed.

As you work to repair damage to your homes and yards, I ask that you err on the side of safety. Hospital and emergency room statistics show that accidental injuries increase when recovery work progresses. People work too hard and get too tired. This causes them to take unsafe chances.

Heat can also be very dangerous when performing the difficult manual tasks required to repair storm damage. Remember to drink plenty of water and take frequent breaks.

Pay extra attention to cleanliness because floodwaters have caused a great deal of contamination in the city. This will help keep you well for the tasks you face.

Along the same vein, be cautious and patient when commuting or driving anywhere. Many traffic signs and signals are not operational or are missing. Debris is still a hazard on many streets, so I'm asking you keep your commuting to and from work during daylight hours. Employees should leave the District office by 6 p.m.

Our region is coping with what is probably the largest natural disaster to strike the United States since the great flood of 1927. I am immensely proud of each of you. I hear story after story of our fellow employees displaying Army values in the face of extreme adversity. The one value that rises to the top over and over is Personal Courage. Once reconstituted, I am confident New Orleans District will meet and exceed the significant engineering challenges we face in rebuilding this region. In fact, it is very likely some of our brightest, most important days lie ahead as the nation turns to us for our expertise and Selfless Service.

Hooah!

RICHARD P. WAGENAAR
Colonel
Commanding

Reconstitution plan update

Providing current and accurate information to District employees since Hurricane Katrina's landfall is one of the greatest challenges in reconstituting the District. Employees who haven't already done so are required to check in at either the District office or one of the satellite offices listed at the bottom of this page.

Employees in the Greater New Orleans Area are required to attend an informational meeting at 2 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 22, at the District office.

Thursday's meeting will provide information about crisis counseling, the back to work plan, District priorities and the Commander's intent for future work.

Night Crew



With Hurricane Rita entering the Gulf, construction crews work around the clock to reinforce an interim levee repair that was made after a breach caused by Hurricane Katrina. A USACE Quality Assurance team from Task Force Unwatering was on site at the Saint Bernard Parish back levee location. From left to right; Capt. Jason Wood, Kevin Wagner, Capt. David Pounds and Benjamin Farrell.

*(US Army Corps of Engineers
Photo by Hank Heusinkveld)*