



**US Army Corps
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News Release

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The pumps pumped and the system held

New Orleans --- This week, Corps commanders and emergency response teams worked together to analyze, plan and carry out the actions necessary to defend against Hurricane Gustav. Located in Baton Rouge, La., Vicksburg, Miss., and around the Nation, the Corps pulled together with its partners to form teams for hurricane response.

The Corps' immediate attention was directed at monitoring the effects of the storm as it moved across Louisiana. Hurricane Gustav tested the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) three years before the system was scheduled to be built to the 100-year level of protection.

The closure gate at Harvey Canal on the West Bank operated as designed. Based on predictive data provided by the Engineering Research and Development Center (ERDC) in Vicksburg, the Mississippi Division Commander gave the order to close the gates at two of the Outfall Canals, London Ave. and 17th Street, to cut off surge from Lake Pontchartrain. With the gates lowered and locked firmly in place, pumping operations began. The pumps ran for 10 hours, quickly lowering the water in the canals below safe water levels and allowing New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board to effectively operate their pumping stations. The ERDC data predicting the late surge into Lake Pontchartrain after the storm's peak had passed greatly aided the team's planning efforts. This was the first time there has been enough water depth in the canals to operate the pumps in a storm event situation.

During the day, water splashed over the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) West Floodwall near Claiborne Ave. The IHNC West Floodwall, an I-wall that stood up to Hurricane Katrina, has since been buttressed, armored and improved. Designed to be resilient for minor overtopping, it performed as intended.

In a different area of the IHNC West Floodwall, the Corps, as a flood fight measure, had already pre-positioned sand-filled HESCO baskets to keep flood waters from putting extra pressure on the wall. They worked as planned.

After a non-federal levee at Braithwaite/Scarsdale overtopped in Plaquemines Parish (east bank), the Corps provided technical and engineering assistance and gave clearance to deliver sandbags to the site by driving on the Mississippi River Levee. A non-federal levee breach occurred at Citrus Back in Plaquemines Parish (west bank). The Corps has provided 400 sandbags, about a ton each, to help fill the 150-foot breach.

Corps damage assessment teams have already begun to overfly the system to determine what repairs need to be made. Overflight information will supplement the on-the-ground assessments. Initial overflights included the Chief of Engineers, LTG Van Antwerp, Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh, Commander, Mississippi Valley Division, Karen Durham-Aguilera, Director, Mississippi Valley Division Forward/Task Force Hope, Col. Al Lee, Commander, New Orleans District, and Col. Jeffrey Bedey, Commander, Hurricane Protection Office. Key state and local leaders such as Gov. Bobby Jindal and other parish representatives are also making assessment overflights. Repairs will be worked in close coordination between the Corps, federal, state and local leaders in every phase.

During the storm, Col. Lee directed operations from a command bunker in New Orleans. Col. Bedey assisted St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes. Col. Bedey and team also provided ongoing field assessments as they drove throughout the system.

Karen Durham-Aguilera pulled her Task Force Hope team into the Joint Field Office in Baton Rouge, La., to coordinate with all other agencies and first responders in that office. Team elements also dispersed to Vicksburg, Miss., to manage all program issues, and to Port Allen, La., to operate a rear Emergency Operations Center.

Other teams were located in Rock Island, Ill., St Paul, Minn., St. Louis, Mo., Memphis, Tenn., and Washington, D.C. The New Orleans district set up an Alternate Command Post in Vicksburg, Miss. All stayed in constant contact using land lines, computers, video conferencing, BlackBerrys, radios and face-to-face communications.

Teams were set up to manage and begin to receive Emergency Support Function Missions as given by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to include water, blue roof, power, damage assessment, unwatering, and debris removal.

"One of the keys to the response's success was that we worked as a team of teams, and we had the right people, in the right places, taking the right actions.," said BG Michael Walsh, Commander, Mississippi Valley Division.

