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**Seabees instrumental in AFRH recovery efforts**

*Armed Forces Retirement Home, Gulfport, Miss.* – U.S. Navy Seabees, from both Atlantic and Pacific Fleets, have joined together to assist in Hurricane Katrina recovery and clean up. The 11-story high-rise that is home for 600 military retirees and veterans, sits on 44 acres directly across the street from the Mississippi Sound. The veterans' home withstood the hurricane force winds better than most structures along the coastline but the 30-foot tidal surge resulted in extensive flooding and damage to the first floor.

The residents of AFRH-G were evacuated to its sister home in Washington, D.C., shortly after the winds subsided. Nineteen Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 7, home ported in Gulfport, Miss., were on hand during the storm and helped move residents to higher ground as water rushed into the building. The Seabees also helped the residents get settled and stay calm as the storm raged for almost 12 hours. They waited with no power or water until morning and then they helped move the residents outside to fresh air and to assess the damage.

Another group of 27 Seabees converged on site immediately after the storm, Construction Battalion Mobile Unit 202 of Key West, Fla. This group began recovery and clean up. In the true Seabee "Can Do" fashion, they quickly turned the AFRH-G grounds into a tent city with a galley, sleeping quarters, burn out heads, outside showers and an admin tent. They brought generators for temporary power and much hope to the staff and residents that have called the place home for almost 30 years.

This week, another group of Seabees, this time a group of 90 men and women from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4, home ported in Port Hueneme, Calif., arrived on site to assist in the cleanup.

Seabees, especially those on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, have shared a kinship with the retirees and veterans of the Armed Forces Retirement Home for many years. Formerly the U.S. Naval Home, the facility changed its name to Armed Forces Retirement Home in 1992 and began taking retirees and veterans from all military branches. The Gulfport residents now residing in DC are very thankful and hopeful for a quick return to their home in Mississippi, thanks to the U.S. Navy Seabees.