



Corps Hurricane Response

Task Force Hope Status Report

May 17, 2007

Corps Outlines Hurricane Readiness Improvements

Upgrades include new high-tech communications and monitoring systems

By Susan Spaht

The 2007 hurricane season is less than a month away and the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers is prepared and ready.

Since Hurricane Katrina hit the area almost two years ago, numerous improvements have been made toward hurricane preparedness and response, including improved communications, additional storm monitoring and area-wide coordination, not to mention the vast improvements to the hurricane protection system itself which will be outlined in the next issue of the Status Report Newsletter.

The last issue introduced the Joint Communication Advisory Council (JCAC), a group of communications professionals representing several area agencies and government entities involved in hurricane preparedness and protection. The JCAC is poised to respond with coordinated advisories should a major storm or hurricane threaten this area. The

Corps of Engineers is a participant.

Chain of command

On August 29, 2005, there was not a clear chain of command in place for the cities and parishes, the state, the

four levee districts, numerous federal agencies and other emergency response organizations. Today, four levee districts have been narrowed to two (the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority – East, and the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protec-

tion Authority – West), and they have been meeting regularly with each other, with the Corps of Engineers and with other emergency response organizations in the area to hammer out an organized jurisdictional plan in the event of a major storm.

Communications and monitoring systems

“We have established multiple communications and monitoring systems,” said Col. Richard Wagenaar,

Commander of the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers. “Starting at our Division Headquarters in Vicksburg, Miss., to our command centers here at the District and at Port Allen,

we have back-up communications systems to ensure that we maintain contact with each other and with appropriate outside agencies.”

Corps emergency personnel will be equipped with State Police and Emergency Operations Center

radios, as well as satellite phones, cell phones and Blackberries with out-of-state numbers in the event that local cell towers go down, as they did during Katrina. Back-up



Ray Newman, Canal Captain/17th Street, works on a new SCADA computer during a practice exercise. (USACE Photo)

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communications systems are also planned for emergency centers at numerous southeast Louisiana parishes. This will give the Corps the availability to call on additional manpower or equipment if needed.

The Corps will follow a newly-established communications matrix to ensure that local, state and federal officials are kept informed on all critical steps taken, including outfall canal gate closings.

There is a communications plan and system in place for the operators of the Corps' outfall canal gates and pumps, and the operators of the two parishes' interior pump stations.

The purpose here is control of outfall canal water levels by coordinating pump capacity from the interior pump stations to



Chris Accardo

the outfall canal pump structures at Lake Pontchartrain, particularly at the huge 17th Street Canal. "We will have Corps personnel stationed at the Sewerage & Water Board's interior pump stations and at the outfall canal pump structures," said Chris Accardo, Operations Chief, "and they will be communicating with each other to coordinate water levels in a storm event."

An important component of the storm monitoring system is the new Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) equipment which has been installed at the three outfall canals and at the Harvey Canal. SCADA is

a high-tech information and control system that will measure water levels at the canals. "And we've assigned highly-trained personnel to operate the equipment," Accardo said. If the situation at the canals gets rough, the operators will fall back to SCADA equipment at the District command center. If the storm situation gets worse, the operators can take the SCADA computers and seek refuge in the Corps' Leake Avenue bunker. Of course, the systems are backed-up by alternate power sources.

Manned outpost locations

During a major storm, Corps Division Headquarters at Vicksburg will direct emergency operations until command is established closer to the storm. "We are here, we are on the ground and we know the territory," said Col. Wagenaar. "At the end of the day, all initial emergency responses start at the local level."

A team has been established for the Corps' Emergency Operations Center on Leake Avenue, and key positions have already been assigned with a high-level Corps engineer coordinating emergency responses.

About 20 high-level engineers and managers will be posted at the Port of Greater Baton Rouge at Port Allen which is the Corps' established staging ground for equipment, supplies and skilled workers. Corps boats and ships can return executive staff to New Orleans by water if land transportation is inaccessible.

Trained crews will also be assigned to the locks at Algiers, Harvey and the Inner Harbor Naviga-

JCAC Holds Second Press Briefing



The Joint Communication Advisory Council (JCAC) holds its second press briefing on May 3. The JCAC is an organization of communications professionals who represent civic and government agencies involved in hurricane evacuation and response. The Corps of Engineers is a participant.

(USACE Photo)

tional Canal to monitor installations and storm activities.

Preparation is key

Corps personnel have been participating in emergency training exercises internally and at the outfall canals, as well as with local, state and other federal agencies. The Corps has also pre-placed emergency equipment at strategic locations, including sandbags, Hesco bastions, sheet piles, water tubes and pumps. It also has contracts in place for possibly-needed emergency services and supplies.

"If we have a major storm this season," said Col. Wagenaar, "we're ready. We have the command centers in place, we have the communication systems and equipment we need, we are coordinated with the other local, state and federal emergency agencies, and our people are confident.

"We live here too," the commander added; "we have a personal interest and professional duty to save lives and protect property."



Faces of Hope

Corps Employee Receives Prestigious Military Award as Volunteer for Hurricane Victim Assistance

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Armed Forces Civilian Service Award



This award was established to recognize the contributions and accomplishments of the Department of Defense civilian workforce in directly supporting the military forces, whose members are engaged in military operations of a prolonged peacekeeping or humanitarian nature. This award honors those employees who support designated operations under the same or similar conditions as our military members, thereby strengthening the unique partnership between our uniformed members and the civilian workforce.

By Michael Logue



Emil H. "Skip" Jacobs III, left, recently received the prestigious Armed Forces Civilian Service Award for outstanding service to victims of Hurricane Katrina. Here he accepts congratulations from Michael Park, director of the Corps' Louisiana Recovery Field Office, following official ceremonies honoring Jacobs.
(USACE Photo)

Emile H. "Skip" Jacobs III, a Corps of Engineers interpretive ranger at the Bonnet Carre Spillway, has been awarded the prestigious Armed Forces Civilian Service Medal by the Louisiana Recovery Field Office (LaRFO) of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in New Orleans.

Jacobs, a Kenner, La., native and longtime New Orleans area resident, volunteered to serve with the LaRFO as a logistics specialist during the months following Hurricane Katrina.

In an area stricken by catastrophe, Jacobs "demonstrated courage and care for victims by quickly establishing control and visibility of commodi-

ties like ice, water and food from regional points of delivery to more crucial local delivery points, and ultimately into the hands of victims of Katrina.

He quickly established excellent working relationships with local agencies, law enforcement agencies, the Army National Guard, faith-based and non-governmental relief agencies to assist hundreds of storm victims throughout southeastern Louisiana who greatly benefited from his efforts.

A lifelong volunteer, Jacobs served as property book officer for the Iraqi Reconstruction Office in Baghdad in 2003-2004 and later for relief efforts

in Florida in 2005-2006 following passage of Hurricanes Charlie and Frances. Later that same year, he went back to Florida as commodities manager for relief efforts for Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne.

A graduate of Martin Behrman High School in New Orleans, Jacobs served in Vietnam with the U.S. Marine Corps and received the Purple Heart. He and his wife of 33 years, Ilene, have two children: Todd, 29, and Brittany, 16.

Nationwide, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is made up of approximately 34,600 civilians and 650 military members.



Corps of Engineers Hosting Important Public Meetings in June *Environmental & Project Status Presentations*

The Corps of Engineers is conducting a series of public meetings in the New Orleans area in June. The purpose of these meetings is to update the public, as well as federal, state and local agencies, on the progress of work on the hurricane protection system and compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as it relates to the continuing work on that system.

Representatives of the Corps will be on hand at these public meetings to discuss design information, contract awards, construction schedules and the progress of environmental compliance.



Public meetings are an important part of the Corps' job. Here John Meador, Deputy Director of Task Force Hope, presides over a recent, well-attended public meeting. (USACE Photo)

All public meetings start at 7:00 p.m. and end at approximately 9:00 p.m.

June 5

Gretna/Algiers
Holy Cross College, Moreau Center
4123 Woodland Dr.
New Orleans, LA 70114

June 7

Jefferson Parish East Bank
Jefferson Parish Library
4747 W. Napoleon Ave.
Metairie, LA

June 12

Orleans East Bank
University of New Orleans,
Lindy Boggs Conference Center
Lakeshore Dr. at Elysian Fields
New Orleans, LA 70148

June 13

Harvey/Westwego
Westwego City Council Chambers
419 Avenue A
Westwego, LA

For more information on the NEPA public meetings,
please go to this website:

http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/pd/Envir_Processes_NEPA/Index.htm

Contact Information

New Orleans District

(504) 862-2201

Task Force Hope

(504) 862-1836

Hurricane Protection Office

(504) 862-2126

Louisiana Recovery Field Office

(504) 681-2317

The *Status Report Newsletter* supports the information program for Task Force Hope and its stakeholders. It also serves as the primary tool for accurately transmitting the hurricane recovery work to stakeholders.

This is an online publication and open to public distribution.

This issue and past issues can be found at:

www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps

Comments and questions may be sent to the

Status Report Newsletter editor at:

b2fwdpao@usace.army.mil

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Status Report Newsletter

Task Force Hope
Public Affairs Office
7400 Leake Ave., Room #388
New Orleans, LA 70118
(504) 862-1949

Pump Capacity Report

17th Street Canal.....approx. 4,000 cfs
London Ave. Canal...approx. 2,800 cfs
Orleans Ave. Canal....approx. 2,200 cfs

As of May 17, 2007

Note: The Status Report Newsletter will give regular reports on the pump capacity of the three temporary outfall canals under construction. For more details, please visit:

www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps



Karen Durham-Aguilera, SES, P.E. Named New Director of Task Force Hope



**THE U.S. ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS**
established Task Force Hope on
Sept. 4, 2005 after Hurricane Katrina
made landfall on the coasts of
Louisiana and Mississippi.

Mission of Task Force Hope:

- Achieve long term coastal restoration and hurricane damage reduction: Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration (LaCPR) Study
- Provide system 100-year level of protection to the greater New Orleans area prior to hurricane season 2011

Focus of Task Force Hope Staff:

- Manage hurricane protection system program development: planning, design, construction and quality
- Integrate program amongst state, region and higher authorities
- Lead strategic communications
- Manage the coastal protection and restoration programs
- Support the Federal Emergency Management Agency when required



Karen Durham-Aguilera, P.E., has been appointed the new Director of Task Force Hope, part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Mississippi Valley Division. As Director, she is responsible for overseeing the Corps' \$5.7 billion hurricane protection system work in New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana, and the long-term planning of coastal restoration and hurricane damage reduction.

Durham-Aguilera, a member of the Army's elite Senior Executive Service, replaced Dan Hitchings who served as the first Director of Task Force Hope. Durham-Aguilera began transition meetings with Hitchings as far back as December 2006 in preparation for the important post, and officially took over the reigns of the job in early March.

In her previous position as Director of Programs for the Corps' Northwestern Division, Durham-Aguilera was responsible for civil works and military programs that included hydroelectric, navigation, flood damage reduction, and endangered species recovery projects in an area that covered about 25 percent of the continental United States.

A registered professional engineer in



Karen Durham-Aguilera

the state of Louisiana, Durham-Aguilera holds a bachelor's degree in engineering and a master's degree in civil (geotechnical) engineering, both from the University of Louisville.

In 2005, she served as the Director of the Reconstruction Programs, Project and Contracting office in Baghdad, Iraq. In that position she was responsible for planning, coordination, contracting acquisition and execution of nearly 3,200 projects spanning the nation of Iraq.

For several years, Durham-Aguilera served on the Army's Career Board for Engineers and Scientists. Her recognitions include the Bronze Order of the DeFleury Medal, Joint Civilian Service, Meritorious Service, Superior Civilian Service Awards and Commander's Awards. She was also selected as the Corps of Engineers' 1990 Southwestern Division Engineer of the Year and the 1993 Federal Engineer of the Year.

Durham-Aguilera recently moved her household from Portland, Ore., to her new home in New Orleans and looks forward to being part of this historic mission.

