



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Mississippi Valley Division



Corps Hurricane Response

Task Force Hope Status Report Newsletter

September 9, 2011

SPECIAL ISSUE: Tropical Storm Lee

Meeting the challenge with Teamwork and Collaboration

by Susan Spaht

Many lessons were learned from the experience of Hurricane Katrina. One of the most valuable lessons learned was the importance of teamwork and collaboration.

“When Hurricane Katrina struck us in 2005, we were all doing our own thing separately,” said Chris Accardo, the Corps’ Chief of Operations Division in New Orleans. “Local governments were doing what they are supposed to do, the levee boards were doing what they are required to do, the Corps was doing what we need to do, and so forth. The big lesson we learned was that does not necessarily work so well in the end - and we made a big change.”

Accardo was referring to the improved practice of teamwork and collaboration among Federal agencies, local governments, levee boards and other public safety organizations when faced with a tropical event or an emergency situation. Working together and collaborating has become standard procedure



At London Ave. Outfall Canal during Tropical Storm Lee: Col. Ed Fleming, right, Commander of the New Orleans District, fields questions from the media with Mayor Mitch Landrieu, Mayor of New Orleans, and Marcia St. Martin, President of the New Orleans Sewerage & Water Board.
USACE Photos by Rachel Rodi

among these agencies since Katrina. The Corps and its partners and stakeholders hold meetings with each other on a regular basis, they participate in hurricane response practices together, compare new technologies and methods, and share ideas on ways to improve public safety and assist each other.

This new practice was evident when Tropical Storm Lee hovered over

southeast Louisiana throughout this past Labor Day weekend. Long before the arrival of the storm, the Corps of Engineers was in constant communication with the New Orleans Sewerage & Water Board, with the Levee Boards, with Jefferson Parish leaders, other local government officials, the Port of New Orleans, the Coast Guard and with

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Corps personnel and Jefferson Parish officials climb atop the Harvey Canal Floodwall to inspect rising water in the canal during Tropical Storm Lee.

other stakeholders. Each organization was comparing notes and confirming pre-set plans and methods to avoid flooding and to ensure proper pumping and drainage procedures were followed.

When TS Lee made land-fall with its heavy rain and high water, this united and coordinated team went into action, each supporting the other in their assignments.

The Corps of Engineers closed the gates at the London Ave. Outfall Canal to prevent Lake Pontchartrain water from entering the canal, and operated the pumps to remove drainage water accumulating in the canal. The Corps also closed the gates at the Harvey Canal and operated the pumps to remove rain water. All procedures went smoothly and followed coordinated drainage operations plans. "These gates were closed and the pumps operated on pre-approved operation manuals," said Accardo. "Col. Fleming makes the decision and we notify our stakeholders. As a result of our coordi-

nated planning, they already know the 'triggers' that call for canal action and are not surprised when we notify them that we will close the gates." That's how teamwork and collaboration is paying off.



Chris Accardo

"I'll give you another good example of how successful this collaboration is," said Accardo. "One of our new partnership procedures has us 'embedding' one of our Outfall Canal Captains with the Sewerage & Water Board's pump station team during tropical events. During TS Lee, our embedded Canal Captain was able to relay information regarding pumping amounts and ongoing procedures to our outfall canal teams. Then he relayed what was happening at the outfall canals, such as water levels and pumping amounts, to the Sewerage & Water Board's team. This kind of partnership and collaboration helps us provide improved public safety for all our citizens. And that's what we all want."



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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 Corps' hurricane risk reduction efforts to stakeholders.

This is an online publication that is open to public distribution.

This issue and past issues can be found at: <http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/hps>

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