



Task Force Hope Status Report

July 03, 2006

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Releases Tropical Rainfall Inundation Maps

NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently released tropical rainfall inundation maps that depict areas of Orleans East Bank and Jefferson Parish that may have short-term accumulations of interior water if the area were to experience 3-, 6- and 9-inch rainfall over a six-hour period with the interim outfall canal gates closed.

“The good news is that our computer modeling shows that by next June the city of New Orleans will be back to pre-Katrina levels of rainfall inundation in the city after a hurricane or tropical storm,” said Dan Hitchings, director of the Corps’ Task Force Hope. “The city will have storm surge protection at the interim gate closures at the 17th, Orleans and London canals with full pumping capacity.”

The maps, based on computer modeling, graphically display inundation areas under several scenarios:

- pre-Katrina and July 2007;
- current (July 2006) interim conditions with available pumps operating and the temporary closure structures (gates) at the mouths of the 17th Street, London



The inundation maps compare possible rainfall events and accumulations of interior water if the area were to experience 3-, 6- and 9-inches of rainfall over a six-hour period with the interim outfall canal gates closed. The maps are intended for illustrative purposes only. These maps cannot be used for comparison to FEMA Base Flood Elevations. For detailed information on the inundation maps, go to www.mvn.usace.army.mil/inundation_maps.htm

Avenue and Orleans Avenue outfall canals closed;

- predicted conditions in September 2006 with the three gates closed and additional pump capacity, and;
- predicted conditions in July 2007 with the three gates closed and additional pump capacity.

The three outfall canal gates are designed to protect Orleans East Bank and the canals from Lake Pontchartrain storm surge. The

gates will only be closed when lake stage is predicted to exceed five feet, a condition which has only occurred three times in the past 45 years.

The tropical rainfall inundation maps illustrate potential events using aver-

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Katrina Puts Hold On Engineer's Plans For Advanced Degree

Thompson goes from Master's Degree candidate to volunteer to Corps Project Engineer

John Thompson is a 1998 graduate of the University of New Orleans' School of Engineering. In the summer of 2005, Thompson was working on his master's degree in mechanical engineering at UNO.

On August 28, he was monitoring Hurricane Katrina as the gigantic storm headed toward the coast of Louisiana and was taking aim at New Orleans. Thompson had an apartment on Lake Avenue near the 17th Street Canal.

"I woke up early on the morning of August 29, looked out my window, and I saw the levee cap wall was overtopping," Thompson said. "I knew that was really bad."

Thompson first thought about his parents who live in Thibodeaux, Louisiana, and worried for their safety. "My side of the canal wasn't flooding," Thompson said, "so I was able to get to my car and drive to Thibodeaux using the Huey P. Long Bridge. I was lucky to get out."

He made it to his parents' house – they were fine. But soon after his arrival in Thibodeaux, he got a call from a buddy in the Coast Guard. "My friend said they were rescuing people from flooded homes in Old Metairie and Lakeview, and they could use some help."



John Thompson stands on the levee at Port Sulphur, Plaquemines Parish. (USACE photo)

Thompson drove back to New Orleans that day and joined in the rescue efforts. "We were pulling people off their roofs, from their attics – and even one from a telephone pole!"

At first we were in an airboat, then we went up in helicopters," Thompson explained. They brought the storm victims to staging areas on the overpasses of Interstate 10 and Causeway Boulevard. "There were thousands of people...and they were freaking out."

That went on for about a week. Then Thompson volunteered to help at U.N.O.

"We were repairing the AC, the generators, and doing room-to-room checks...what Katrina didn't damage, the vandals did. It was really awful."

In November, Thompson accepted a job with EMC Consultants who had a

contract with the Corps of Engineers to repair the levee breaches around Port Sulphur in Plaquemines Parish. Thompson was made the Project Engineer for about 170 miles of levee repair work – from Belle Chase down to the Gulf of Mexico.

He and his crews, about 80 people, were responsible

for finishing the basic levee protection work by June 1. Now they are starting on the set-back projects, the permanent levee repair construction. That work will be completed by June 1, 2007.

Their final objective, after funding approvals, will be to extend the height of the levees to 17 or 18 feet – Category 5 protection.

"We're doing some amazing work here," Thompson said. "I don't think people realize how much we've done." Thompson and his workers pushed to make their June 1 deadline and actually beat it. They finished May 15. "And that included Quality Testing Assurances," he added proudly, meaning their work has met strict quality standards set by the Corps.

"We're down here working for the people who live in these communities," he said.

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ages across a wide area that, in reality, may have considerable variations that impact actual flooding. The maps released recently are based upon the most verifiable information currently available.


The Interagency Performance Evaluation Taskforce (IPET) model was used as the basis to generate these maps. The IPET team included more than 150 national and international experts representing 60 different government, university and industry organizations. Some of the nation's leading engineers were on the IPET team.

"When the outfall canal gates are closed during significant rainfall events, there will be areas within the city with an increased risk of standing interior water for short durations," said Hitchings. "This situa-

tion will continue to improve as additional pumping capacity is brought on line.

"We know that the Corps' work impacts people's decisions and peace of mind," stated Hitchings. "These maps, and others that will follow, are designed to ensure residents have a clear picture about where rainfall inundation risks exist under different forecast conditions and have the chance to prepare accordingly."

The maps are intended only as a flood control planning tool reflecting current interim conditions and do not contain detailed information about potential flood depths in specific neighborhoods. The maps are not intended for and should not be used for insurance or building construction planning. The Corps has provided similar maps in the past to


local, state and federal agencies as an aid in making decisions such as determining the best possible evacuation routes. 

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Many of my people have lost their homes too, and they have been away from their families for six to seven months. But we really want to get this job done."

Thompson offered a message for the people of Plaquemines Parish. "You can tell the residents that we're building a better, more efficient community here for them.

"Everything will be new: new electric service, new water lines, new roads, new underground fiber optic cables...and, of course, better and stronger levees.

"Tell the residents to come back home!" 

Points of Contact for Information

Topic	Phone	Organization
Overall information about work being performed by the Corps of Engineers in the New Orleans District, or	(504) 862-2201	New Orleans District Public Affairs
Overall Task Force Hope Information To be included on the Newsletter e-mail list	(504) 862-1836	Task Force Hope Public Affairs
Debris Removal in Louisiana	(225) 218-9325	Louisiana Recovery Field Office
Debris Removal in Mississippi	(601) 631-5065	Mississippi Recovery Field Office

The **Status Report Newsletter** supports the information program for Task Force Hope and its stakeholders. It also serves as one of the Task Force Hope's primary communication tools for accurately transmitting the work of Task Force Hope, Hurricane Protection Office and the Recovery Field Offices in Louisiana and Mississippi to the Gulf Coast community and its citizens. This is an online publication and open to public distribution. This issue and past issues can be found at: www.mvd.usace.army.mil/hurricane. Comments and questions may be sent to the Status Report Newsletter editor at: b2fwdpao@usace.army.mil.

Status Report Newsletter
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