



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Mississippi Valley Division

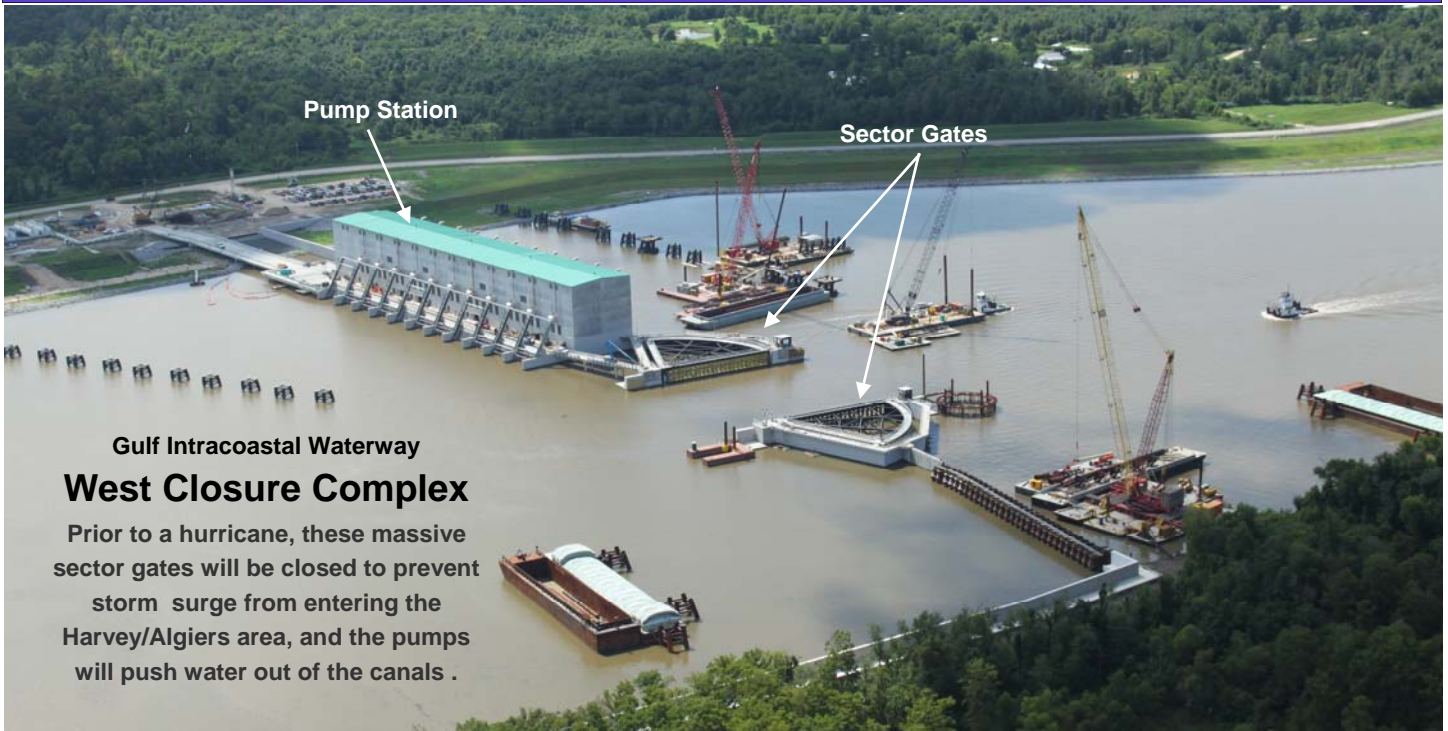


# Corps Hurricane Response

Task Force Hope Status Report Newsletter

August 26, 2011

## Emergency Management Team prepares year-round



by Susan Spaht

**As** the peak of hurricane season approaches, citizens along the Gulf coast are keeping a close watch on weather developments in the Atlantic Ocean. The Corps of Engineers has a professional team watching too. The Emergency Management team, a specially-trained group of Corps employees, prepares all year for the possibility of a major storm or hurricane hitting the area. This includes maintaining an inventory of flood fighting

supplies, inspecting levee systems and flood-fighting structures and rehearsing individual duties.

“We test our pumps, gates – all of our equipment – year round to be sure everything is ready to go long before a storm approaches,” said Mike Stack, Chief of Emergency Management. “And we conduct very realistic hurricane exercises with local, state and Federal agencies in advance of hurricane season to be sure our response plans are all coordinated and our responsibilities well defined.”

The Emergency Management team consists of five people during normal operations, jumps to 15 when the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated, and swells to nearly 300 people when the district is threatened by a major hurricane. Throughout hurricane season, the EOC tracks storms and tropical de-

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velopments and makes recommendations for implementation of the rest of its plan based upon probability and severity of storm development.

### System Openings

The Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System forms a perimeter storm surge defense of 133 miles around the Greater New Orleans five-parish area. The system currently has **499 openings** - all of which must be closed if a major hurricane strike is imminent. These include:

- 15 Navigable openings
- 142 Roadway openings
- 42 Railroad openings
- 155 Access openings
- 145 Drainage openings

*# Approximately 100 of these openings are kept in the closed position*

The navigable openings include some of the Corps' largest-ever projects, such as the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Surge Barrier (three gated openings), the Gulf Intra-coastal Waterway - West Closure Complex (largest surge barrier gates in the nation), the Harvey Floodgate and the Company Canal Floodgate. All navigable structure closings must be coordinated with local authorities and the U.S. Coast Guard which is ultimately responsible for Federal navigation issues. Other major closure structures include the three Outfall Canals at 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Orleans Ave. and London Ave. All of these structures will have emergency operations teams on site to operate the structures to stop approaching storm surge.



**Corps of Engineers employees perform a pump test at the Orleans Ave. Outfall Canal. Tests are performed on a regular basis on all pumps, pump station equipment, gates and flood fighting equipment to ensure everything will be ready for a possible tropical event.**

USACE Photo

### When a Storm Threatens

Here are the "trigger points" for the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to move into action:

#### D-7 Mode

*(7 days until projected landfall, storm is approximately 1,800 miles out and forecast to enter the Caribbean or Gulf of Mexico)*

- Local Government Liaisons - LGLs (*Corps personnel embedded with local governments*) make contact with their respective local Offices of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) and deploy as the OEP's are activated. LGLs remain active through the end of the event or until the local OEP shuts down.
- Canal Teams and field personnel (including Lock Operators) begin structure preparation for the possible arrival of the storm.

#### D-5 Mode

*(5 days until projected landfall, storm is approximately 1200 miles out)*

- Begin implementation of Hurricane Plans for ongoing construction sites in Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System.
- Begin coordination of the Port Contingency Plan, Regulated Navigation Areas, Surge Barrier and West Closure Complex closures with the U.S. Coast Guard.
- Advance teams deploy to Rear Emergency Operations Center (REOC) and Alternate Command Post (ACP) sites to begin site setup.

#### H-96

*(96 hours until projected landfall, storm is approximately 1,000 - 750 miles out)*

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- Canal Teams are deployed and begin structure operational protocols. Operations continue through end of event.

- New Orleans District Commander makes decision on full activation of the Rear Emergency Operations Center (REOC) and ACP (based on storm size and potential evacuation).

#### H-72 to H-48

(72 to 48 hours from projected landfall, storm is approximately 750 - 500 miles out)

- REOC and ACP teams deploy and facilities become operational. Teams remain active through end of event.

- Locks move to hurricane operational protocols in coordination with U.S. Coast Guard.

- Assessment teams deployed on 24-hour recall if evacuations are necessary.

- West Closure Complex and IHNC Surge Barrier are closed.

#### H-48

(48 hours to projected landfall, storm is approximately 500 miles out)

- Complete system closures.

- Teams execute response operations in accordance with event size/location.

#### Hurricane Landfall until complete

- Teams continue to execute response operations.

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The Emergency Management Team is pictured in the Emergency Operations Center at the New Orleans District's high tech control room. From left, back row standing, are Johan Barrios, Courtney Elzey and Jeff Carroll; in front seated are Mike Krehely; Mike Stack, Chief of Emergency Management; and Heath Jones, Hurricane Emergency Manager.

*Emergency Management Team coordinates closings of 499 system openings in HSDRRS when a hurricane is imminent*



The Highway 46 gate on the northbound lane in St. Bernard Parish is one of 499 openings in the HSDRRS that will be closed to halt storm surge prior to a hurricane reaching the area .

USACE Photos



The railroad gate along Highway 23 in St. Bernard Parish will be closed to prevent storm surge prior to a tropical event. USACE Photo by Tom Durel

**2011 Hurricane Structure Probable Closures**

**Seabrook** – under construction, closed with Cofferd Dam

**IHNC Surge Barrier** – Contractor will close gates

**Harvey Floodgate** – Corps to close gates and operate pumps

**Company Canal** – Corps and SLFPA-W will close barge gate, operate pump

**West Closure Complex** – Corps/Contractor to close gates, operate pumps

**London Ave. Canal** - Corps to close gates and operate pumps

**17<sup>th</sup> St. Canal** - Corps to close gates and operate pumps

**Orleans Ave. Canal** - Corps to close gates and operate pumps



**Hurricane Season  
June 1 - November 1**

The New Orleans area has the best perimeter defense in its history. Yet it is important to remember that you should always heed the directions of your local authorities: when an evacuation is called for, please **EVACUATE!**

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- Assessment teams recalled and assess damage to HSDRRS. EOC coordinates emergency repairs.
- Teams brought back in as the response allows.

**Practice and Coordination**

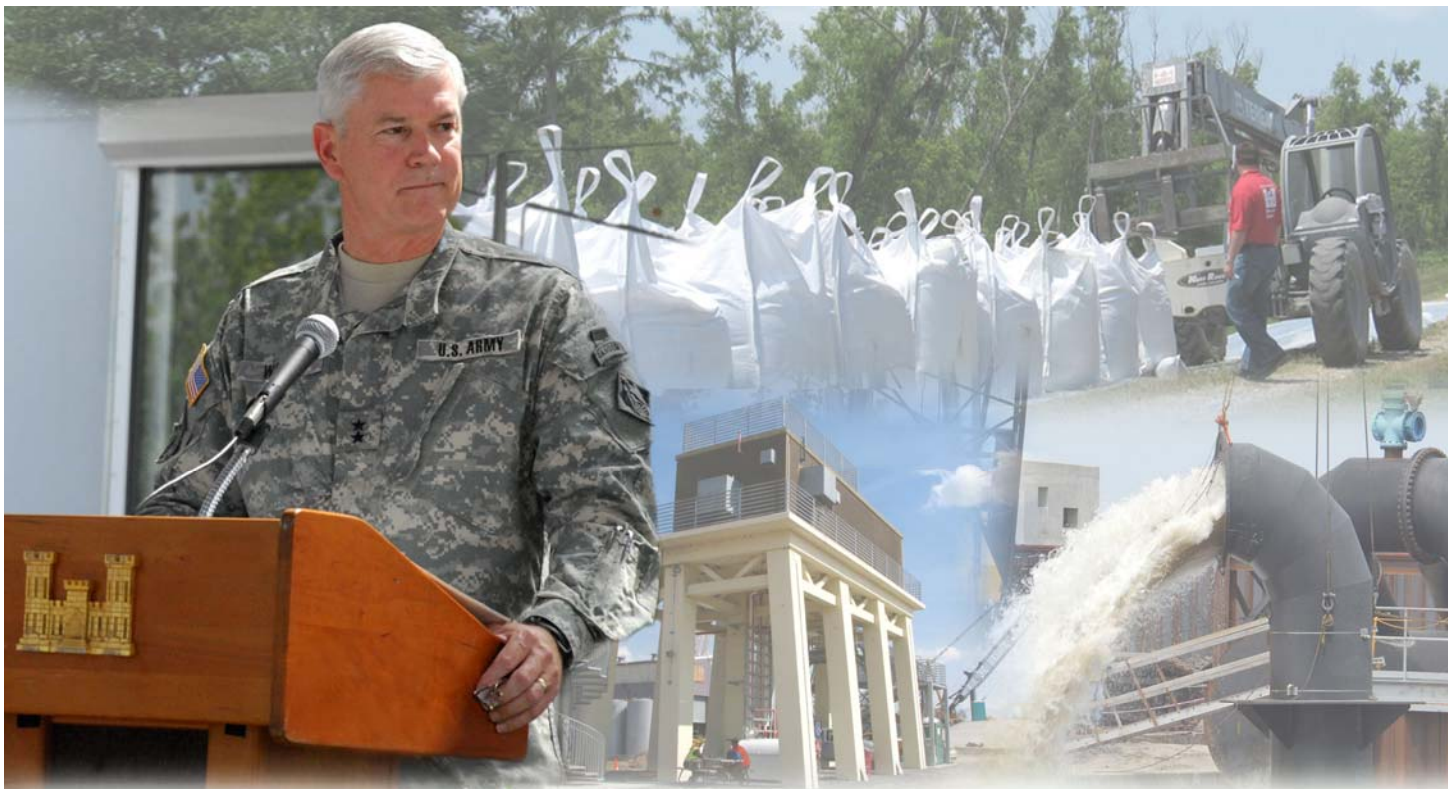
“We don’t leave anything to chance when it comes to hurricanes,” said

Heath Jones, Hurricane Emergency Manager. “We rehearse and practice our duties, and we check and double check our structures and equipment. We make sure that our team members know their responsibilities and what everyone else is responsible for as well.

“If we have a hurricane this season, we are prepared and we are ready.”

“Coordination is the key,” said Stack. “It takes a coordinated effort of all of the local, state and Federal agencies to successfully respond to hurricane threats and we continuously work together to make sure we are ready to respond. We take our responsibility for public safety very seriously; the public can be assured that we are doing everything we can to reduce their risk of flooding.”





★ A Letter from our Commanding General ★

**As** powerful storms form in the Atlantic, the Mississippi Valley Division is working resolutely to prepare for any possible threat within our area of responsibility. Public safety is always our top priority, so our team response will be fast, effective and safe.

In particular, our professionals in New Orleans who comprise the Emergency Management Team are a specially-trained group who prepare year-round for the possibility of a major storm or hurricane hitting the greater New Orleans area. Their intense and comprehensive preparedness includes inspecting the levee systems and flood-fighting structures, and rehearsing their individual duties. They also work very closely with local, state and Federal agencies, including the local levee districts, to ensure a coordinated and effective response to any event.

Throughout the year, the team continuously tests pumps, gates and equipment to ensure the hurricane system's integrity and viability. They also conduct realistic hurricane exercises with our partners to ensure seamless coordination and teamwork. I commend the entire team for their dedication and readiness.



I also want to recognize Team New Orleans for their tremendous achievements during this year's Summer Leaders Conference

Awards ceremony. I extend special congratulations to John C. Hess, Senior Program Manager for Task Force Hope, who won the top honor as the USACE Program Manager of the Year, and Kevin G. Wagner, Senior Project Manager for the West Closure Complex (WCC), who was recognized as the Corps' Project Manager of the Year.

Kevin and his team also won the USACE Innovation of the Year Award for their work at the West Closure Complex. This honor, the first time that it has been awarded, was given in recognition of the team's innovative solutions that had an immediate and positive impact on designing and building a super structure with a collection of sub-projects, including the largest drainage pump station in the world. I am extremely proud of the accomplishments of both men, their teams, and of all the hard working people who make up Team New Orleans.



Don't forget our Day of Recognition on September 9th. I hope you can attend!

*Michael Walsh*

Major General Michael Walsh, Commander  
Mississippi Valley Division

## Team New Orleans Sweeps National Performance Awards

By Susan Spaht

**On** August 1, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' "Team New Orleans" was recognized at the USACE Summer Leaders Conference Awards ceremony for outstanding achievement in professional excellence and the Corps' Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System construction efforts to reduce surge risk for the people of the Greater New Orleans area.

**John C. Hess**, Senior Program Manager for Task Force Hope, won the top honor as the USACE Program Manager of the Year, and **Kevin G. Wagner**, Senior Project Manager for the West Closure Complex, was recognized as the Corps' Project Manager of the Year. The West Closure Complex team won the USACE Innovation of the Year Award. Also, **Timothy Black**, the New Orleans District's Assistant Chief of Contracting, was presented the Leadership in Contracting Award for his timely improvements and achievements in supporting a contracting mission that includes some 400 HSDRRS contracts.

As the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System Program Manager, John Hess provides programmatic oversight for the \$14.6 billion budget and execution of all program activities including design, construction, environmental mitigation and levee system evaluation to support FEMA accreditation of the system. The HSDRRS is the Corps' number one domestic priority, the



Kevin Wagner at the West Closure Complex

largest single civil works mission ever and, not surprisingly, the most costly in Corps history. Additionally, the Corps set itself a very aggressive goal to complete the enormous task - a mere six years.

"The huge amount of work involved and short timeframe to complete it is unheard of in normal Army Civil Works programs," said Mike Park, Chief of Task Force Hope. "Yet John was able to track every contract and every dollar of the program to the satisfaction of the General Accounting Office (GAO) audit. His work received a 'No Comment' from their recent audit. That means that the GAO could find nothing to change or question about the management of the program. We are very proud of that achievement, and I congratulate John on his well-deserved award."



John Hess

Kevin Wagner, a New Orleans native and longtime Corps employee, was recognized as the Corps' Project Manager of the Year for his work at the gigantic and multi-faceted West Closure Complex. Wagner leads a multi-disciplinary project delivery

team for one of the most complex projects ever constructed by the Corps of Engineers. The WCC is a major element of the West Bank & Vicinity project and the HSDRRS.

Wagner and his team also won the USACE Innovation of the Year Award for their work at the West Closure Complex. This honor,

the first time that it has been awarded, was given in recognition of the WCC team's innovative solutions that had an immediate and positive

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“Every member of Team New Orleans, including our partners and stakeholders, was determined to get the job done and meet our commitment to the citizens of Greater New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana. Receiving these prestigious awards is recognition of Team New Orleans’ outstanding accomplishments.”

- Mike Park, Chief, Task Force Hope

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impact on designing and building a super structure with a collection of sub-projects: the largest drainage pump station in the world, the largest sector gate in the nation, T-walls, a closure wall, five sluice gates, as well as site work that included a levee, an inlet road and channel excavation. Their work was further complicated by the fact that the WCC borders a 404c environmentally-sensitive area.

According to Walter Bauny, Chief of Engineering for the New Orleans District, “The West Closure Complex is a one-of-a-kind, complex, technically challenging and fast-paced project that most engineers and constructors will see as a once-in-a-lifetime career opportunity. The project has been a huge success by all accounts. The entire Corps has gained valuable technical experience and capability for future endeavors from this project. I congratulate the WCC team on their national recognition and for a job well done.”



**Tim Black**

By the end of August, Greater New Orleans will have 100-year level defense throughout the five-parish area reducing the risk of flooding from hurricane surge to its lowest levels ever. The infrastructure that is in place is stronger and more resilient than it has ever been.

“The Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System is undoubtedly the largest civil works mission ever undertaken by the Corps of Engineers,” said Park. “We set ourselves a completion date that many said could not be done. But every member of

Team New Orleans, including our partners and stakeholders, was determined to get the job done and meet our commitment to the citizens of Greater New Orleans and Southeast Louisiana. Receiving these prestigious awards is recognition of Team New Orleans’ outstanding accomplishments.”



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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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The Status Report Newsletter is an unofficial publication authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Corps of Engineers or the Department of the Army.



#### **Status Report Newsletter**

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