

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**

**COMPLETE STATEMENT OF**

**MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL J. WALSH  
DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL,  
CIVIL AND EMERGENCY OPERATIONS  
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

**BEFORE**

**THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**ON**

**A Review of the Preparedness, Response to and Recovery from  
Hurricane Sandy**

**DECEMBER 4, 2012**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am MG Michael J. Walsh, Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I am pleased to be here today to testify on the Corps activities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from Hurricane Sandy. Along with other federal agencies, states and numerous local entities, the Corps has a multitude of response activities underway in an effort to mitigate the risk to public health and safety and to facilitate recovery from this severe weather event.

During a natural disaster, the Corps may exercise authority under Public Law (PL) 84-99, Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies (FCCE) (33 U.S.C. § 701n), for certain emergency management activities in response to natural disasters. Under PL 84-99, the Chief of Engineers, acting for the Secretary of the Army, is authorized to undertake activities including natural disaster preparedness, advance measures, emergency operations (flood response and post flood response), rehabilitation of eligible flood control works threatened or destroyed by flood, repair of federally authorized shore protective works threatened or damaged by coastal storms, and provision of emergency water assistance due to drought or contaminated source. The Corps also responds to disasters at the direction of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the Robert T. Stafford Act (42 USC 5121, *et seq.*). Under the National Response Framework, the Corps is assigned as the Coordinator for Emergency Support Function (ESF) #3, "Public Works and Engineering" and, during disasters the Corps is the primary executing agency for response activities, providing potable water, emergency temporary power and debris management and removal. FEMA is the primary agency for ESF#3 recovery activities and can assign missions to the Corps to assist in the execution of these and other recovery missions. Disaster response activities authorized by the Stafford Act, and prescribed by FEMA Mission Assignments to the Corps, are funded by FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund.

## **PREPAREDNESS and TRAINING**

The FCCE appropriation account provides funds for the Corps preparedness with regard to emergency response to natural disasters, flood fighting and infrastructure search-and-rescue operations, and rehabilitation of flood control and hurricane protection structures. Disaster preparedness activities include coordination, planning, training, and conducting response exercises with local, state, and federal agencies. District Commanders, Tribal liaisons, and emergency management staff meet with federal, state, and local officials and other interested parties to discuss Corps authorities under PL 84-99, share lessons learned from previous flood events, conduct tabletop exercises, review sandbagging and other flood fighting techniques, and strengthen the collaboration among the Corps, State and local governments and tribal entities.

## **RESPONSE ACTIVITIES**

Under PL 84-99, the Corps emergency assistance prior to and during a flood event is temporary in nature to meet an immediate threat and may only be undertaken to supplement non-federal efforts. The assistance is undertaken to mitigate risk to life and public safety by providing protection to critical public infrastructure against flood waters. Tribes and states must commit all available resources such as supplies, equipment, funds and labor as a general condition to receiving Corps assistance. Furthermore, the Corps emergency efforts are not intended to provide permanent solutions to flood risks. Therefore, the removal of all flood fight material at the conclusion of a flood event is the responsibility of the respective Tribe or state.

## **COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION**

The Corps collaborates and coordinates with federal, Tribal, and state partners and close coordination occurs with appropriate state emergency management offices. During Hurricane Sandy, the Corps was part of FEMA's Joint Information Center to coordinate activities among all response agencies and transparently communicate to all affected parties and the communities. The Corps has also participated in national and regional exercises held by the Department of Homeland Security/FEMA. These exercises provide federal and non-federal agencies an opportunity to plan for natural disasters, and to learn about partner agency capabilities, resources, and responsibilities. The Corps works closely with other federal emergency response partners including: Department of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, United States Coast Guard, National Guard Bureau, Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce (NOAA), the Department of the Interior, and state and local agencies. In particular, the Corps works closely with the Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation, which has been an exceptional partner, providing technical resources that are vital to support the Corps surge requirements for quality assurance personnel.

## **PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY TO HURRICANE SANDY**

In preparation for Hurricane Sandy, the Corps took steps to ensure that personnel, facilities and equipment were pre-positioned to quickly respond to the event. Examples include:

- Lowered Pool Elevations Behind Corps Dams
- Closed Hurricane Barriers in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut
- Coordinated and met with State Governors and Congressional Officials
- Moved Corps Vessels to safe havens
- Secured Corps Construction Projects and Facilities
- Deployed Mobile Command and Control Vehicles to Key Locations
- Executed Pre-Storm Inspections

- Updated Surveying Plans
- Staffed and Activated District and Division Emergency Operation Centers
- Issued approximately 218,000 Sandbags to States
- Deployed liaison Officers to New York City and the National Capital Region Office of Emergency Management
- Pre-positioned Power Generators to Intermediate Staging Bases
- Prepositioned 512 Truckloads of Water to New York & New Jersey
- Deployed supplemental Logistics & IT Teams to North Atlantic Districts
- Activated Alternate Emergency Operation Centers for each of the impacted Districts
- Deployed Liaison Officers to State Emergency Operation Centers
- Deployed ESF 3 Team Leaders/Assistant Team Leaders to the States.

On October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy was centered 285 miles east of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina and moving north with sustained winds of 85 mph, a Category 1 hurricane. The forecast had the center of Hurricane Sandy coming to shore at Ocean City, New Jersey. Peak wind for the National Capitol Region was projected to reach 74 mph. Along with wind damage, Sandy was expected to cause dangerous rip currents, beach erosion, minor coastal flooding, with an increase in potential for inland flooding, and power outages. The highest threat of storm surge was expected from 6 to 11 feet in Long Island Sound, Raritan Bay, and New York Harbor. The highest rain projections were predicted in the Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia Peninsula with isolated maximum amounts of 12 inches. Hurricane force winds would affect Mid-Atlantic States, and New York City and Long Island. Gale to tropical storm force winds would affect most of the northeast. Six Corps of Engineers Districts and their Division Emergency Operation Centers were all activated and numerous response teams were moved into place.

Hurricane Sandy traveled along the Atlantic coast impacting the entire area from coastal North Carolina to Massachusetts. Described as a "superstorm", Sandy brought over 80 mph winds and surges up to 13.7 feet. Flood damages in the area severely impacted public infrastructure, flooding subways, highway tunnels, public housing structures, and wastewater treatment plants, causing extensive power outages, impacting mass transit systems, and affecting public housing and private residences.

During Hurricane Sandy, the Corps responded to missions assigned by FEMA, and provided 1,039 highly trained technical personnel including the 249<sup>th</sup> Prime Power Battalion in 13 states. The Corps response to Hurricane Sandy included 68 FEMA mission assignments for over \$351.6 million in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Delaware, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, West Virginia, and Rhode Island. These missions included; ESF#3 Management support for each state, Technical Assistance, Temporary Housing, Commodities (bottled water delivery), Temporary Power, and Debris Management and Removal. The Corps worked closely with the U.S. Coast Guard to determine threats to navigation and navigation closures, and affected ports were cleared and returned to operation.

The Corps provided technical assistance and response to federal, state, and local entities. These efforts included removing 475 million gallons of water from 14 areas identified by local entities, including the New York City (NYC) subway systems and tunnels, the Passaic Wastewater Treatment Plant, and restoring operation to the Hoboken Terminal. These efforts were successful due to a dedicated and determined team of federal, state and local partners, including the Corps, the Navy, the US Coast Guard, the Department of Transportation, the NYC Transit System, and many others.

As of November 27, 2012, the Corps response efforts also included:

- Temporary power - installed 199 generators in critical locations, de-installing each as the power grid was restored. De-installed generators are serviced and returned to FEMA when fully mission capable;
- National water - provided 512 truckloads of water to New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia;
- Infrastructure assessment/technical assistance - completed 16 assessments (to date) with 2 additional awaiting assessments of the facilities;
- Debris removal efforts - ongoing with a total of 180,763 cubic yard of debris removed to date;
- Temporary housing efforts - ongoing with state government and FEMA refitting one building for temporary housing at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. After remodeling, the building will provide 45 apartments that meet tenant and ADA requirements. FEMA will handle operations and maintenance after project turnover.
- Breach Closure at Mantoloking, New Jersey completed under FEMA mission assignment in partnership with New Jersey Department of Transportation.
- Breach Closure at Fire Island to Montauk Point Federal Project, Smith Point County Park (west of Moriches Inlet) and Cupsogue County Park (east of Moriches Inlet), New York under existing Civil Works Authorities.

## **DAMAGE TO CORPS OF ENGINEERS PROJECTS FROM HURRICANE SANDY**

The Corps of Engineers continues to assess the extent of damages to Civil Works projects operated by the Corps. Damages to projects in the PL 84-99 Rehabilitation and Inspection Program include both federally constructed and non-Federal projects that are eligible for assistance from the Corps as a result of the flooding due to Hurricane Sandy.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the Corps of Engineers stands ready to respond to and assist in recovery from disasters, both under its own authorities and under the Stafford Act in support of FEMA as missions are assigned. Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other Members of the Committee may have.