

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
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NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is performing a detailed assessment of about 350 miles of hurricane levee and developing a comprehensive, prioritized plan to repair it and the pumping stations that support New Orleans and surrounding areas.

“The system in its present condition does not ensure that the city will be protected from flooding resulting from storms or hurricanes,” stressed Col. Duane Gapinski, Task Force Unwatering commander.

Gapinski says that residents may be placing their lives and property at risk by re-entering flooded areas until additional emergency levee repairs are made. State and local leaders are being informed as assessments are being completed and repairs are made. The Corps continues to work with state and local leaders to make assessments and repairs of the system.

The Corps’ recovery of New Orleans is a three-phase process:

- Immediate – Unwater the city and assess flood protection;
- Intermediate – Provide an interim level of protection to get the city through hurricane season and later high water; and,
- Long-term – Return the system to pre-hurricane conditions. This will take a tremendous amount of study, research, funding and construction.

The Corps is prioritizing work and collecting ground-truth info via surveys, and ground and aerial recons. Officials estimate it’s going to be a long process to get back to the pre-Hurricane Katrina level of protection.

Working with the New Orleans Water and Sewage Board and private contractors, Task Force Unwatering continues to make steady progress on pumping floodwaters from the city and

surrounding areas. The Corps estimates the New Orleans area is more than 80 percent unwatered. The Corps will continue assisting local officials in repairing organic pumps, designed to remove city water, even after the city is dry.

Corps officials estimate the overall un-watering effort, given normal seasonal rainfall, will be completed no later than early October.

“We want to be clear, however, that weather conditions can change and this may affect our estimates,” Gapinski said. “We’re watching Tropical Storm Rita’s projected path and, depending on its strength and how much rain falls, everything could change. Residents moving into the area may have to evacuate again.”

Additional traffic in the city in the past three days has already caused some delay in traveling to work sites, and is also a safety concern for the Corps and its contractors hauling stone, steel piling, pumps, generators and other emergency repair equipment.

“We understand the desire residents have to get back to their homes,” Gapinski said. “We hope this can be balanced with their safety and the safety of the work crews who are trying to restore a level of protection for the city.”

For more information on the Corps’ Hurricane Response, go to <http://www.mvd.usace.army.mil/hurricane/chr.php>