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Corps opens way for emergency Katrina repairs

VICKSBURG, Miss. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division has published emergency regulatory permit procedures to speed up vital repairs for Louisiana and Mississippi to recover from Hurricane Katrina.

The four-page document clears the way for local, state and federal agencies to proceed with repair work in the New Orleans and Vicksburg districts of the Corps of Engineers.

It also applies to the electric, telephone and pipeline utilities, including natural gas distribution systems.

In addition, private repairs by the general public are broadly authorized by two related documents, which also relate to the Emergency Permit Procedures. All three documents are posted on the New Orleans District Web site www.mvn.usace.army.mil, click on Regulatory button at top of page, and the Mississippi Valley Division site www.mvd.usace.army.mil -- click on Katrina Emergency Hurricane Information.

“There are lots of emergency repairs necessary as a result of the hurricane,” said Ronald Ventola, chief of the Regulatory Branch of the New Orleans District.

“An emergency” is defined as circumstances which would result in unacceptable hazard to life, a significant loss to property, or an immediate, unforeseen and significant hardship if corrective action requiring a permit is not undertaken within less than the usual time to get a permit under standard procedures.

“The Emergency Permit Procedures require that the repairs be done in as environmentally friendly manner as possible,” Ventola said.

“After the emergency is over, a decision will be made as to ‘adequate mitigation’ required to offset impacts of the repairs,” Ventola said.