



News Release

Galveston District

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



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Release # 100802
Oct. 23, 2008

The 'hurricane heroes' work to open waterways

Working out of a cramped office at the Addicks Field Office in west Houston, a small band of Galveston District employees performed a huge mission that had a tremendous impact for the Texas Gulf Coast region and for the nation.

Johnny Rozsypal, chief of the Operations Division, Joe Hrametz, chief of the Navigation Branch, Tim Updike, district survey coordinator, Department of the Army Intern Jantzen Miller worked literally day and night to help open the navigation channels and waterways after Hurricane Ike.

As the hurricane approached and initially after landfall, the group's first order of business was close coordination with their partners on the Texas Joint Hurricane Response Team—the Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, the barge industry, pilot organizations, and deep and shallow draft stakeholders. Telephone conferences with the Team, as well as higher headquarters and sponsors, kept the ops tempo fast. Rozsypal was also frequently lined up as a spokesperson, including a couple of live on air interviews with MSNBC, as well as the Washington Post and the Associated Press.

"It was hectic, but reaffirmed the importance of the Corps' navigation mission" Rozsypal said. "We had to line up assets so that we could begin survey operations as soon as possible after the storm had passed. Each day that went by with waterways closed had a huge economic impact not only on the Texas coast, but also on the country as a whole because of petrochemical industry and other shipping on this part of the Texas coast."

Joe Hrametz worked the survey mission hard.

"We set a rigorous schedule to conduct hydrographic and side scan sonar surveys of the Houston/Galveston Bay complex and the Sabine Neches Waterway," he said. "Our goal was to survey these waterways as quickly as possible and begin any necessary salvage operations."

As a coastal district, the survey list was long. Using 17 survey boats, they surveyed both the Houston/Galveston Bay complex, which includes the Port of Houston, Port of Galveston, Port of Texas City, Green's Bayou, Bayport and Barbers Terminals, and the Sabine Neches Waterway, which includes the Ports of Orange, Beaumont, and Port Arthur. Also on the survey schedule were Freeport, Matagorda, the Corpus Christi Ship Channel, the Victoria Barge Channel, and Chocolate Bayou.



Galveston District employee Ryan Hatch prepares the Vollert to get underway for the Port Of Houston in anticipation of Hurricane Ike. The District's Area Office took the Vollert and assets to Houston to ride out the storm.

Another milestone was surveying and opening the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. Many salvage operations were necessary to open the GIWW. The teams pulled out everything from roofs of houses to shrimp boats to silos, evidence of Ike's storm surge that relocated so many things. Salvage operations continue in other areas, but the GIWW is open.

"This has been a demanding time for all of us in Galveston District," Rozsypal said. "Through a tremendous effort and great teamwork, we have met Ike's challenges and are better trained and prepared for what the next storm will bring."

What Ike produced in the final analysis was a group of 'hurricane heroes' who ensured that the Galveston District could continue its navigation mission— a mission vital to our Texas coastal communities and to our nation.



Siding from a house is pulled from the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway near Bolivar Peninsula during a salvage mission. Shrimp boats, silos, roofs, and dozens of other debris were removed from the GIWW to clean it up for opening.