



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
St. Louis District®

Media Advisory

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MEDIA UPDATE -- Progress Being Made at Locks 27

Granite City, Ill., August 2, 2004 – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District is reporting this morning that they are making progress in emergency repairs to the gates on the south end of the 1200-foot main chamber of Locks 27 near Granite City.

The work, originally slated to begin Monday, July 12, was delayed two weeks due to high river and ground water outside of the lock chamber. Work began July 26, with detailed inspections of the problem and initial setting of bulkheads, which isolate the lock chamber from the river's water during the work.

Corps maintenance experts completed setting the bulkhead at the lock chamber's south end Sunday and started pumping to dewater the lock chamber. As of this morning it is approximately one-third dewatered, with about 10 million gallons of water having been pumped into the adjacent river. Corps engineers estimate it will take 48-60 hours to dewater the chamber.

Leakage between the eleven stop logs – the beam structures that are stacked to make up the bulkhead – was encountered at first, but Army Corps of Engineers experts expect this to improve as pressure helps set the seals between the beams and have called in additional pumps to overcome leakage and speed the process.

In addition, work has begun to release tension on the giant bolts at the top end of the gates. Peggy O'Bryan, St. Louis District chief of Construction and Operations remains optimistic that the improving weather prospects will permit the Corps to return to its original plan to replace the tensioning system at both the top and bottom of the gates. To accomplish this the lock chamber must be pumped down to an elevation of 365 feet – some 30 feet below the river's surface. This will expose the lock chamber's sill – the concrete against which the gates fit when they are closed, much like a doorsill at the base of a residential door.

The St. Louis District is continuing to work closely with navigation industry representatives to minimize impact and is continuing to move barge tows through Locks 27's adjacent 600-foot-long auxiliary chamber. Although industry-provided helper boats are contributing to this effort, as of this morning, 23 barge tows were awaiting northbound passages and 11 were awaiting southbound movement. Delays due to the one-to-two-hour lock passage are averaging 54 hours for each barge tow.

An additional problem has arisen in the St. Louis area with the collision of a southbound tow with the Poplar Street Bridge at river mile 179 at about 10:30 p.m. last night. One of fifteen barges being pushed southward at the time is missing and is believed to have sunk near the site. As a result, the St. Louis Harbor has been closed for one mile in each direction, from miles 178 to 180.

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2-2-2-2 LOCKS 27 UPDATE

Corps of Engineers and Coast Guard officials are cooperating this morning, with priority being given to locating the missing barge and if it is in the navigation channel, removing it to reopen the river. (For additional information on the Coast Guard's role in this occurrence, contact the St. Louis Coast Guard Marine Safety Office Public Affairs Officer, Lieutenant Bill Clark at (314) 539-3091, ext. 3244).

Additional progress reports will be issued as appropriate.

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Note for Assignment Editors: Media with access to helicopter coverage may view the closure's impact to navigation by flying up the river from the Eads Street Bridge, seeing a large number of tows pushed up on either side of the river waiting to proceed north. Southbound tows are similarly "stacked up" in the Chain of Rocks Canal above the Locks.