



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

# Press Release

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Contact: Alan Dooley (314) 331-8002 or 618-719-9039

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1222 Spruce Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63103-2833

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## Media Advisory

### U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to Remove First Damaged Lock Gate At Melvin Price Locks and Dam

**What:** Lift first of two damaged lock gates at Mel Price Locks and Dam  
**Where:** Melvin Price Locks and Dam, off highway 143 south of Alton, Ill  
**When:** Approximately 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, October 13, 2004.  
**Why:** To determine causes, extent and course to repair gates and lock  
**POC:** Alan Dooley, St. Louis District Chief of Public Affairs: **618-719-9039**

Alton, Ill – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintenance personnel will attempt – weather and conditions permitting – to remove the first of two damaged miter gates from the south end of the Melvin Price Locks and Dam 600-foot auxiliary chamber, at approximately 10 a.m., Wednesday, October 13.

The gates, each 57 1/2 feet high by 62 feet wide and weighing 220 tons, were damaged Sunday, October 2, while the lock was being prepared to pass several pleasure craft southbound. No vessels were in the lock chamber at the time of the mishap.

According to Rivers Project Operations Manager Stan Ebersohl, for still to be determined reasons, the gates were pushed past the miter position when water prematurely started to enter the chamber from the giant culvert valves on the lock's north end. Until the lock gates can both be removed and examined, and until the chamber can be unwatered, it will not be possible to determine the cause of the incident, the complete extent of damages or a precise repair plan.

While the total extent of damages cannot be known yet, there is severe damage to the gates, lock machinery and the concrete in which it is anchored. Corps experts estimate the time for repairs will be a matter of from several months up to one year. Repair cost estimates are similarly vague pending gate removal and chamber unwatering, but they range up to \$25 million at this time.

The locks' main 1200-foot chamber – the primary facility for moving large, 15-barge tows north and south – is in full operation and will remain so during repairs. St. Louis District personnel are taking additional measures to ensure against possible damage to this adjacent chamber while the auxiliary chamber is out of commission. These steps include extra personnel for manual checks during operation and the presence of a helper boat to aid barge tows using the main chamber.

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## 2-2-2-2 Lock Gate Removal

Normally the auxiliary chamber is used to pass pleasure craft and smaller commercial barge tows as they transit between the higher elevation water to the north and the lower water to the south.

The gate barge “The Hercules,” which normally operates on the Illinois River for the Rock Island District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been brought in to lift the gates. These gates are beyond the capacity for the St. Louis District’s floating crane Sewell. According to Chief of Construction and Operations, Peggy O’Bryan, this is a perfect example of regional cooperation, with two districts coming together to pool manpower and equipment to carry out the operation.

The lift is scheduled to start at about 10:00 a.m. St. Louis District Public Affairs Officer Alan Dooley will be on scene and will call media as soon as the schedule firms up, to attempt to give you as much time as possible to arrive at the scene. He will be reachable on his cell phone at **618-719-9039** throughout the day.

- 30 -

**Note to editors:** The scale of this operation should lend itself to a very good photo opportunity. While unfortunately we will not know answers to the cause and extent of damage, nor a time line for repair, we will be able to answer general questions concerning the Mel Price Locks and Dam, locks in general, their operation and roles in river traffic and commerce.