



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

Press Release

Release No. 01-05

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For Release: **IMMEDIATE** — January 11, 2005

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St. Louis District Army Corps of Engineers Focuses on Region's Lakes and Rivers

St. Louis, Mo, January 11, 2004 -- As rain continues to fall throughout the region, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers St. Louis District has stood up its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to keep a watchful eye over the lakes and rivers for which it is responsible.

This move is seen as a prudent response to the recent and current heavy rain that has saturated the ground and which is now running off almost as quickly as it falls.

When the District's EOC is activated the first result is more frequent scrutiny of water elevation and flow readings, as well as detailed coordination with state and local government centers, as well as numerous levee districts, the U.S. Coast Guard and National Weather Service.

Levels on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers have predominantly remained below flood stages, but the river stage in St. Louis raised temporary precautionary flags for barge tow boats passing through the harbor as it rose above 25 feet on the St. Louis gage last week.

To date, most potential impacts on the Mississippi River have stayed south of St. Louis, with high water on the Ohio River combining with Mississippi River flows to create elevated threats at the confluence of those two mighty rivers, near Cairo, Illinois.

Some flooding has already occurred in the Illinois and Kaskaskia Rivers, although the low seasonal level of agricultural activity is currently minimizing impacts there. But according to Corps EOC Chief Jake Scanlon, "It's about readiness. We are talking to people, ensuring that they are in place if necessary and that our equipment is ready to go." Scanlon also said, "People should understand that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers works primarily with area governments in efforts to reduce flood damage. They should turn to their local officials first. Local officials will in turn contact us if they need additional help."

District Corps officials are also keeping a careful watch on levels at the five lakes they oversee. One function of these lakes is to hold excess run-off until it can be discharged safely. According to Hydrologic and Hydraulics Branch Chief Dave Busse, the combined effect of the Kansas City District's Lake Truman and St. Louis' Mark Twain Lake lowered the river stage some six feet at St. Louis during last week's rain. While substantial flows have already been absorbed by the Corps-managed lakes, they still have some capacity to help moderate flows downstream.

There have been significant impacts at Shelbyville and Carlyle Lakes in Illinois, where roads and recreation facilities are under rising waters.

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The Meramec River has also been subject to potential flooding during recent days. When that occurred on Thursday, January 6, Corps experts, Valley Park officials and a contractor completing a levee to protect that often-flooded city came together in a matter of hours to temporarily raise the under-construction levee to preserve uncompleted parts of that structure.

District flood fight experts emphasize that while there is generally a low-to-moderate threat of flooding throughout the 28,000 square-mile region, citizens who live near bodies of water should be vigilant as more rain arrives in the area. Heavy localized downpours can quickly result in flash flooding or other rapid rises in water levels. Citizens should be watchful, tune into media weather updates and contact local government authorities if they observe water levels out of the ordinary. In addition, they should use extreme care when driving, never driving into water since it may turn out to be deeper or faster-flowing than expected.