



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

St. Louis District

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# Press Release

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## **Ice hampering operation at Corps of Engineers Locks**

Saint Louis -- Bitterly cold weather that has descended over the Midwestern and Eastern states has impacted operations at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi River Locks throughout the St. Louis District due to ice building up at those facilities.

The Corps announced operating restrictions from Lock 24 at Clarksville, Mo., southward to St. Louis, Saturday. The announcement came after a 15-barge tow became stuck in the 1200-foot-long main chamber at the Melvin Price Locks and Dam near Alton, Ill., causing the lock's main chamber to be closed for several hours.

The operating restrictions now limit barge tows to no more than 106 feet in width due to ice which is building up on the walls of the 110-foot wide lock chambers. Originally set at 105 feet, they were relaxed to 106 feet after Corps-Industry-Coast Guard consultation Monday.

Hopper barges are 35 feet wide. Thus, a three-wide tow is approximately 105 feet wide. Other types of barges can be as much as 54 feet wide, with two side-by-side being 108 feet wide. These wider configurations are now prohibited from locking.

Other weather-related issues include possible ice build-ups under the bows of some barge tows that can hamper them as they attempt to pass over concrete sills at the bottom of the lock gates when leaving the chambers. Ice forming in the recesses behind lock miter gates can make it difficult to open them completely, further hampering and slowing operations.

The Saturday closure was ended after several hours when other tow boats were able to assist the stuck tow to exit the chamber.

Corps operations authorities do not expect substantial relief from tomorrow's slight warming and precipitation. This is due both to the near freezing temperatures of the water moving southward and to the sub-freezing weather predicted to prevail in the region throughout the week. North into Iowa, this week's forecasts are the coldest of the season and for early February the coldest in a decade, according to the National Weather Service.

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The announcement of the 106 foot restriction is the first such measure in the District in several years. Ice, which started to form Saturday in still water behind dikes as far south as the Jefferson Barracks Bridge, can today be seen as floating sheets moving south through the St. Louis Harbor.

Further north at Clarksville and Winfield, Mo., tows are still transiting, breaking ice. They are cooperating and doing so in groups to be able to assist each other while they are en route to and from grain shippers sending commodity shipments south for overseas export through New Orleans. Further north at Locks 20, 21 and 22, limits have been placed at a maximum width of 70 feet.

More than 60 percent of the nation's grain exports are loaded at or pass through the St. Louis harbor. Other high volume shipments that depend on operation of the locks include salt for highway maintenance, coal for power plants and petroleum-based fuels and chemicals.

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Editor's Notes: Media interested in visiting one of the Corps locks are asked to coordinate through the Public Affairs Office at 314-331-8002/8068.