



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

Press Release

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1222 Spruce Street, Saint Louis, Missouri, 63103-2833

Repairs at Mel Price Locks and Dam on Schedule Media Availability, June 5, 12:30 – 3:30 p.m.

St. Louis – The 1,200-foot-long main lock at the Melvin Price Locks and Dam in Alton, Ill., is almost half way through its 54 day closure. The lock chamber has been closed to navigation traffic for 23 days and all repair work is on schedule. The lock is expected to open on schedule, July 3. Work includes miter gate repairs and replacing lift gate hoisting cables, motors and electronic controls.

Miter gate repairs are ahead of schedule and expected to be complete this coming week, which will allow the gates to be reinstalled. The gates, which are each 57 feet tall and 65 feet wide, and weigh 220 tons, were successfully removed May 11-14. Repairs have included new cross braces, called 'diagonals.' The new cross braces will allow engineers to tension the gates using only the top bolts, instead of the previous requirement to adjust bottom tensioning bolts as well. This will enable adjustments to be done in the future without dewatering the gates, at a substantial savings in time and money as well as impact to the navigation industry.

Lift gate cable replacement is continuing on schedule. Crews worked hard to make up some lost time due to high river levels, which delayed the start of work. All time has been regained and the work is on schedule. The upstream leaf cables have been removed and replaced and downstream leaf cable removal and replacement is nearing completion. Work on the middle leaf is expected to commence early next week.

The electronic control system replacement work is nearing completion. Once all the lift gate hoist motors and drives are installed, expected next week, the remaining work will include some miscellaneous items and gate testing.

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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to work closely with the navigation industry during the closure. The 600-foot auxiliary lock has remained open to navigation and two Corps motor vessels, Pathfinder and Grand Tower, have been helping tows lock through. With the 600-foot-long auxiliary chamber, it is necessary to break 15-barge tows into two sections for locking, a process called a double-cut lockage. The helper boats help guide the sections through the lock.

The regional repair crew, consisting mostly of crews from the St. Louis and Rock Island (Ill.) Districts, is being supported by staff from four other Corps Districts: St. Paul (Minn.), Vicksburg (Miss.), Louisville (Ky.) and Pittsburgh (Pa.). Crews are working around the clock to ensure that work is completed on schedule.

This temporary closure has been necessary to replace components that, if they had failed, would have necessitated potentially longer unscheduled closures with serious impacts to the navigation industry. While the Melvin Price Locks and Dam facility, which was placed in service October 10, 1989, is the newest of the Mississippi River's system of locks and dams, periodic maintenance and replacement of key components is necessary to ensure the locks continue to operate safely and reliably.

Approximately 6,500 tows lock through Melvin Price each year, carrying over 70 million tons of cargo.

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Editor's Note: Media are invited to come out to the Melvin Price Locks and Dam on Tuesday, June 5 between 12:30 and 3:30 p.m. to tour the work site, observe work progress and see lift gate cables being pulled on the middle gate leaf. If media representatives have steel toe shoes they are highly encouraged to wear those so they will have further access to the construction site. Representatives will also be required to wear hardhats, of which the Corps will provide. Interested media are asked to contact Alan Dooley at 314-331-8002 (office) or 618-719-9039 (cell). Melvin Price is located at #1 Lock and Dam Way in Alton, Illinois off of Illinois Hwy 143.