



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

News Release

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers joins flood fight

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers St. Louis District has joined partners in the fight against flooding in Missouri and Illinois.

The Corps' first step came late yesterday when the District stood up its Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

The purposes of this step were to begin the process of establishing funding requirements for follow on activity and to bring a team to heightened readiness and preparedness and to establish necessary reporting procedures to keep everyone well informed.

The District has also deployed two flood fight teams into the field.

One team has gone to Valley Park to assist that city on the Meramec River to prepare for an expected crest sometime Saturday, March 22. Valley Park is protected by a levee that was completed in 2005. While the city has conducted drills to exercise preparation to use the levee, this marks the first time the system will be tested under actual flood conditions. Corps experts are coordinating with the city to review procedures and processes for closing access gates and drains in the levee.

The Corps also responded to a request from the city late yesterday by providing some 11,000 sand bags to be held in readiness if they are needed.

Another team has been sent to the Illinois side of the Mississippi River across from Cape Girardeau to assess impacts of overtopping of the Miller Pond Drainage District Levee on Clear Creek. That levee, which is a 50-year-level agricultural levee, was overtopped Tuesday evening and Corps experts are joining their local counterparts to assess damage and plan post-flood steps to be taken. A report from that team today confirmed that the levee was overtopped, and not breached. They observed some scour damage that will require repairs when the water subsides.

In addition, at the Wappapello Lake project south of St. Louis, the Corps has closed the Greenville Campground due to flooding of the access road. The Corps is notifying property owners down stream of projected necessary discharges that will increased to control lake elevations. This will enable them to take steps to best protect their property.

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Current predictions of the National Weather Service also call for some flooding at Corps facilities at Locks 24 and 25 in Clarkesville and Winfield, Mo., as well as in Grafton, Ill. There is also some predicted continued flooding on the Illinois River, although we are not now planning extraordinary measures against these possibilities.

The Corps of Engineers in St. Louis provides technical assistance and advice to municipal and county authorities, who in turn use their public works personnel and equipment as well as contractors to carry out actual flood fighting measures.

Information about river stages is available on the District's webpage at:
<http://mvs-wc.mvs.usace.army.mil/dresriv.html>

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Notes to editors:

- There have been erroneous reports concerning the level of protection offered by the Valley Park Levee. These have stated that the expected crest Saturday, at 40 feet, is only inches below the protection level of the levee. This is not true. The design height of the levee provides protection to a Meramec River elevation of 45 feet. We are confident that the Valley Park Levee is well built and will provide excellent protection against the predicted flood crest.
- There is confusion in terms concerning levees and how they are impacted by floods. A levee that is overtopped has not failed, nor has it been breached.
 - Breaching is the physical failure of a levee, in which one or more locations are destroyed by water erosion or undermining. Parts of a breached levee literally disappear, like the opening of a door.
 - Overtopping occurs when flood waters rise above the design height of a levee. Levees may be compared to insurance. In choosing a level of coverage, one must balance costs with possible benefits of the protection. In making choices about levees, this drives a decision about how much to spend on what level of protection – or how high the levee will be. Levee protection is measured against expected flow heights and how often we expect them to occur. A so-called 50-year levee may statistically be expected to be overtopped each year, with a 2 percent probability. The term “50-year” is somewhat of a misnomer, in that it does not mean that expected floods can occur only every 50 years. Rather, it is the statistical probability of overtopping in any given year, even two consecutive years.