



# News Release

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## Corps closes auxiliary chamber at Melvin Price Locks and Dam

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District, announced today to the river navigation industry that the 600-foot-long auxiliary chamber at Melvin Price Locks and Dam, near Alton, Ill., will be closed. As a result, all traffic will be routed through the 1200-foot-long main chamber, which will remain open throughout the closure.

The reason for the closure is an inability to fully recess the upstream miter gates into the lock walls of the auxiliary chamber. This makes it impossible for barge tows to safely enter and exit the chamber. When opened all the way, the miter gate leafs are supposed to be flush with the lock walls.

Debris from high water may be preventing them from opening fully. Efforts were made to clear debris or silt over the weekend, using both pneumatic and mechanical means, but they were unsuccessful.

As a result, Mike Quinn, Lockmaster for Melvin Price Locks and Dam, said it will be necessary for divers to inspect the area for the cause of the obstruction. “We anticipate the divers getting here late this afternoon, but they probably won’t dive until tomorrow morning,” Quinn said. He did not want to speculate on the type of the obstruction or when the lock chamber would be returned to service.

The auxiliary chamber, which is normally used to pass smaller tows and recreation vessels, will remain closed until repairs can enable to gates to operate properly.

The Melvin Price Locks and Dam is a low water structure. The dam maintains a safe, dependable 9 foot deep, 300 foot wide navigation channel upstream, and the locks provide river traffic access between the pools. The lock site is the second busiest on the Mississippi River and the newest, put into operation October 10, 1989. It normally conducts about 6,500 lockages each year, moving more than 65 million tons of commodities up and down the Mississippi River.