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Major flooding threatens Mississippi River Valley, Army Corps flood fighters fully engaged

Photos

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VICKSBURG, Miss., December 29, 2015 – The Mississippi Valley Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, fully activated its flood fighting emergency management operations for the Rock Island, St. Louis, Memphis, Vicksburg and New Orleans districts to manage rapidly rising water levels on the Mississippi River and several tributaries, with the highest Mississippi River levels since the Great Flood of 2011.

The St. Louis District is now battling flooding along the Missouri, Mississippi and Illinois rivers with forecasts to go higher over the course of this week. The St. Louis District team is coordinating with the states of Missouri and Illinois to reduce risks to impacted areas, with a focus on levees that are currently overtopping or forecast to overtop by January 1. The near record flood levels have already inundated agricultural areas and are causing evacuations of small towns and cities.

The Memphis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, initiated its flood fight on December 28 for the Mississippi, Upper St. Francis and White rivers, with rapidly rising river levels forecasted for the rest of the Memphis reach of the river.

Memphis District flood-fight activities begin when the Mississippi River gage at Cairo, Ill., reaches 49.0 feet. The river stage at Cairo will reach 52 feet on December 30, with a forecasted crest of 59 feet expected Tuesday, January 5. Forecasters believe the river will remain above 49 feet for several days depending upon additional rainfall. During flood-fight activities, Corps personnel monitor all federal flood control works including levees, flood walls and pumping stations.

Based on National Weather Service forecasts indicating Cairo will crest at 59 feet on January 5, the third highest on record, the Corps began mobilizing people, barges and operational equipment from



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 Vicksburg District

The Vicksburg District encompasses a 68,000-square-mile area across portions of Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana that holds seven major river basins and incorporates approximately 460 miles of mainline levees. The district is engaged in hundreds of projects and supports disaster response in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee. (Photo by Bucky Wall)

various locations to begin possible Birds Point - New Madrid floodway operations. Although we do not anticipate operating the floodway, we are preparing for any contingency that will protect the integrity of the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project. Additionally, the Corps' Great Lakes and Ohio River Division is maximizing use of its available storage space in the Kentucky-Barkley reservoirs, essentially reducing the crest from 61.0 feet or higher. Confidence in this historic river forecast is high.

As the crest moves south, major flood stages are forecasted for Memphis, Vicksburg and New Orleans. These major flood stages also create the potential for activating the Bonnet Carre' spillway and the Morganza floodway. Additional public announcements will be issued as the crest nears the lower river.

The Corps' division headquarters in Vicksburg, Mississippi coordinates all flood-fight activities in the Mississippi Valley. The division's Emergency Operations Centers in each of the impacted districts direct flood-fight activities in conjunction with the affected states, levee districts and other local interest groups.

The federal flood protection works in the Mississippi Valley protect many thousands of homes, millions of lives and vast tracts of fertile cropland. The overall flood control system, also known as the Mississippi River and Tributaries project prevented more than \$230 billion in flood damages during the Great Flood of 2011, and over its history - \$639 billion, a 44.5 to 1 return rate, and that figure will increase following this year's flood event.

The Mississippi Valley Division is responsible for water resources engineering solutions in a 370,000 square-mile area, extending from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and encompassing portions of 12 states. Work is carried out by district offices located in St. Paul, Minnesota; Rock Island, Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; Memphis, Tennessee; Vicksburg, Mississippi, and New Orleans, Louisiana.
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