



Corps Points!

**US Army Corps
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A weekly compendium of facts and talking points to help leaders tell the Corps story.

WEEKLY FOCUS: Panels to Evaluate Performance of Hurricane Protection System

Shortly after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, Corps officials committed to a thorough and independent investigation of how the New Orleans area hurricane protection system performed. This review will provide critical information about how to improve flood and storm protection in the New Orleans area.

As soon as the situation in the New Orleans area stabilized, the Corps, along with experts from the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) began collecting data on how the system performed. The team has shared their preliminary data with Task Force Guardian, the Corps team that is responsible for restoring the system to a pre-Katrina level of protection before the start of next year's hurricane season.

In early October, the Chief of Engineers commissioned an Interagency Performance Evaluation Task Force (IPET), made up of representatives from the Corps and other federal and state government agencies. The IPET will evaluate the performance of hurricane protection systems in New Orleans and the surrounding areas.

Its mission is to obtain facts and data by collecting, analyzing, testing, and modeling data and information on the performance of the New Orleans hurricane protection system during Hurricane Katrina. It will focus on existing levees and/or floodwalls that were overtopped, breached, or failed during Hurricane Katrina. The team will attempt to determine whether those situations were the result of factors such as design, construction, or operation and maintenance issues, soil and geo-technical conditions, or the severity of Hurricane Katrina.

The Chief of Engineers also asked for the IPET's work to be reviewed by a panel of outside experts and engineers. ASCE will convene an independent review panel of engineers and scientists to review the IPET's work. This panel will examine and validate the methods, models, data and findings of the IPET team and produce its own findings.

On 19 October, the Secretary of Defense directed the Secretary of the Army to convene an independent panel of national experts under the direction of the National Academies which will conduct the study through its National Research Council. The ASCE panel will report its findings directly to the NA panel, which will be comprised of experts from the public and private sector and academia. The panel will perform a high-level review of the data gathered by the IPET and the ASCE Independent Review Panel and other information, and then issue its own findings and recommendations. This final report is expected to be issued by July, 2006.

In the interim, the IPET will share lessons learned with Task Force Guardian as it repairs existing hurricane protection system. This will ensure that any design or construction issues identified during the investigation can be corrected in time and incorporated into the rebuilt system.

This process is in keeping with the Corps desire of incorporating peer review and outside analysis in our work. Given the stakes of this investigation, it is imperative that the public has confidence in the scientific and engineering quality and independence of this important evaluation.