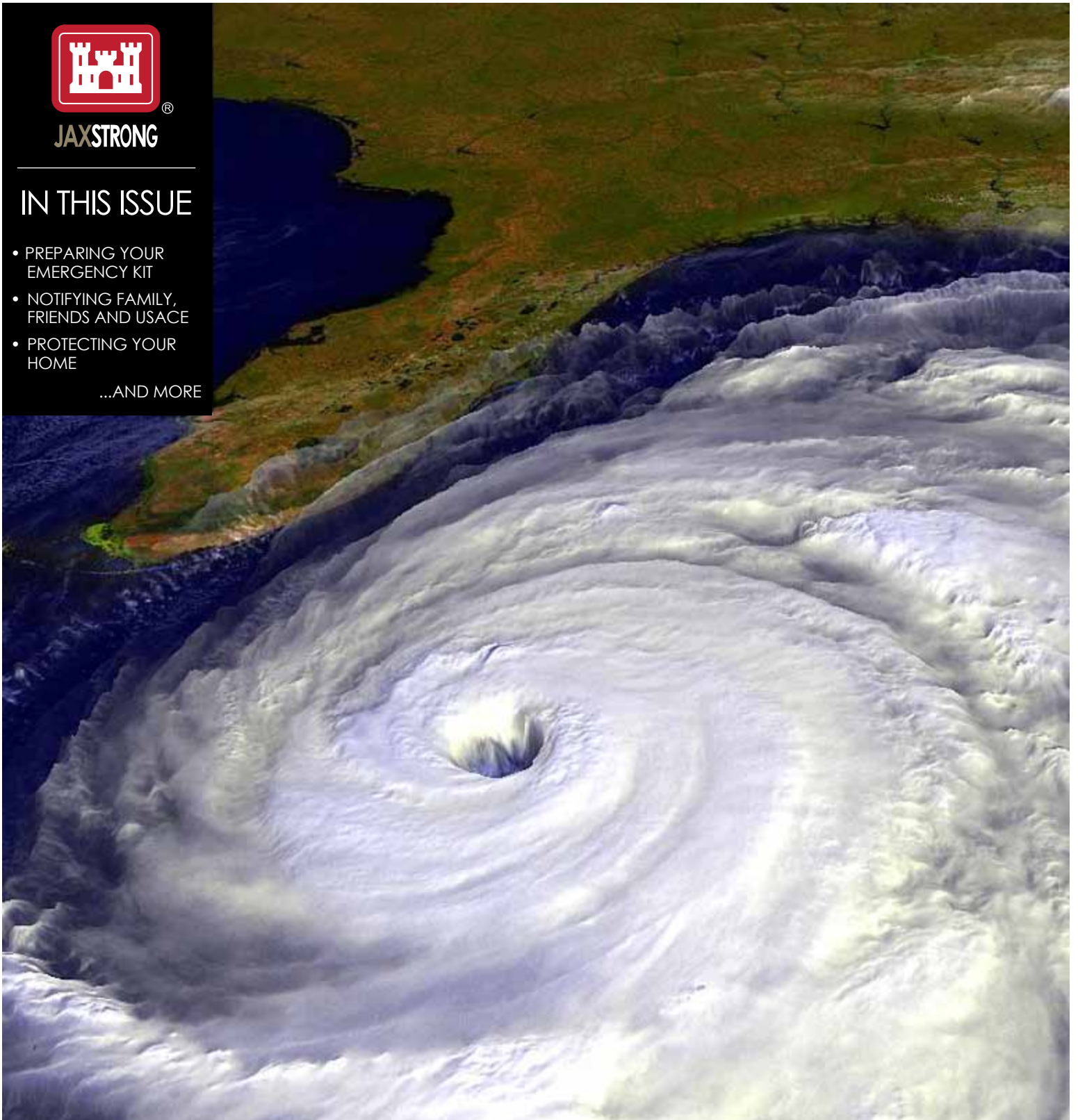




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JAXSTRONG

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JUNE 2012 | Volume 4 Issue 3

Jacksonville District prepares for hurricane season

BY JOHN H. CAMPBELL



Jacksonville District Emergency Management Chief Aaron Stormant (right) asks a question during a briefing conducted as part of a national Logistics Planning & Response Team exercise on Apr. 25. Jacksonville District hosted the event which helped Corps logistics technicians learn more about disaster response successes and challenges from 2011. Also pictured are, left to right, Lt. Col. Ballard C. "Clint" Barker, Jacksonville District deputy commander, Carol Butts, South Atlantic Division logistics manager, and Jeffrey Burbach, director of logistics for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. (PHOTO BY JOHN CAMPBELL)

"It only takes one."

That's the key message coming from Jacksonville District leaders as they undertake activities in advance of the 2012 hurricane season, which officially begins June 1.

For much of the past three months, leaders and emergency planners within the district have been meeting with officials representing numerous local, state and other federal agencies. In addition, the district participated in several training events and exercises, culminating in a drill May 22 where staff dealt with a simulated breach at Hebert Hoover Dike while simultaneously planning response actions for an incoming major hurricane.

"The exercise challenged us in the sense two events were occurring simultaneously," said Lt. Col. Ballard C. "Clint" Barker, deputy commander. "We had to respond and apply resources to one event, while planning disaster contingencies and continuity of operations with the second event."

The exercise built up over a period of five days, as district staff received messages advising the formation of what would eventually be known as Hurricane Gispert. Each day, responders were given the latest position of the storm, and were able to see maps tracking it from its beginnings south of Cuba to the point where it entered the Gulf of Mexico and made its way toward Tampa.

As all attention by Jacksonville staff focused on responding to the pseudo-storm, messages starting coming in describing problems with the Herbert Hoover Dike. Exercise planners then told staff the dike had breached, and the district was suddenly facing two huge events.

It was a challenging scenario, according to Aaron Stormant, Emergency Management Branch chief.

"We had to deal with Blue Roofs, debris, power and all the major [Federal Emergency Management Agency] FEMA missions," said Stormant. "Additionally, dealing with the breach in the dike at Lake Okeechobee really stretched us and challenged our decision-making as we wanted to get in and repair the dike, but weren't allowed to do so for 12 hours because of the simulated hurricane. It certainly tested us."

"The exercise was helpful because it built relationships between all people who respond," said Jim Jeffords, operations chief for Jacksonville District. "[This includes] people at the state and our partners in ESF (Emergency Support Function) #3."

It's been a busy spring according to Stormant. One of the first items was a briefing and presentation with emergency management officials in the Virgin Islands, which included discussions on the Corps capabilities to respond to an event.

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ON THE COVER

A VIEW FROM SPACE AS HURRICANE FLOYD APPROACHES FLORIDA, SEPTEMBER 1999. (PHOTO COURTESY THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION'S NATIONAL CLIMATIC DATA CENTER WEBSITE, WWW.NCDC.NOAA.GOV.)





JACKSONVILLE (continued from PAGE 2)

"We conducted a video teleconference with all the islands," said Stormant. "I thought it went very well."

On May 8, a discussion was held between all districts in the South Atlantic Division, focusing on response to two hurricanes; one that hit the U.S. mainland, and another that hit the Antilles. Stormant says that scenario tested the division's all-hazard plan.

"Part of our plan is to have the capability to run multiple Recovery Field Offices (RFOs)," said Stormant, "and we proved we could do that; it was another good exercise."

Sandwiched between those events was a training and exercise session for members of the Corps' national Logistics Planning & Response Team (LPRT). They converged on Jacksonville in late April to train USACE logistics staff from across the country on best practices and lessons learned from other events.

"If the event is so bad that we get a mission from FEMA, they (the LPRT) will help set up an RFO," said Stacey Nolan, Jacksonville District logistics manager. "They'll work with Contracting and Real Estate. Additionally, they'll conduct RSOI—Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration operations. That means once all the responders start coming in, the LPRT issues equipment and tracks property. They also assist with hotels, rental cars and other forms of transportation."

Nolan said the team has been tested multiple times in the past year, to include deployments to Joplin, Mo. and Tuscaloosa, Ala. following devastating tornadoes.

"In Omaha last year, the team ran a sandbag warehouse for 30 days," said Nolan.

The 10 Corps employees who participated in the exercise received their certification to be members of the LPRT.

"When they were here, they practiced processing people using ENGLink, and practiced fielding requests for supplies," said Nolan. "Logistics is critical, you can have all the plans you want, but if you overlook logistics and contracting, you're dead in the water. You won't be able to execute your plans."

Jacksonville District has also been reviewing the status of local PRTs for Roofing and Temporary Housing. Stormant said teams are currently fully staffed, but that interested employees are still encouraged to volunteer.

"We're always looking for new volunteers," said Stormant. "At any given time, people can say they really don't want to do it anymore. Thus, we're always looking for new candidates."



Steve Schneider (left), civil engineering technician with the South Florida Operations Office (SFOO), passes a note to Ed Mottley (right), supervisory facility manager at SFOO, during the Herbert Hoover Dike exercise conducted May 22. SFOO personnel participated in the event, in which they discussed their response actions to a simulated breach at the dike with a major hurricane getting ready to slam the western coast of Florida. (PHOTO BY JOHN CAMPBELL)

Stormant encouraged anyone interested in participating in a PRT to come see him in his office. Some training is involved, and the employee's supervisor will need to sign a statement of understanding.

Jeffords says operations staff have been preparing for hurricane season just as they've been preparing for all emergencies—by ensuring they have adequate supplies of rock, sand and sandbags.

"It's more than just preparing for hurricane season," said Jeffords. "We embrace a philosophy to be prepared for emergencies that can occur any time of year."

Trained personnel, equipment and supplies will be very important if the Jacksonville District ever experiences another storm like Hurricane Andrew.

"There have been disasters since, but none like Andrew," said Jeffords.

Andrew came ashore near Homestead, Fla. in August 1992. It left widespread destruction and forever changed how local, state and federal officials respond to disasters.

"It's been 20 years since Andrew, and that occurred during what was supposed to be a less-than-normal season," said Stormant. "It's just a good reminder that it only takes one storm to change the lives of a lot of people." ♦

Leaders encourage individual preparedness BY JOHN H. CAMPBELL

Were you ready for Tropical Storm Alberto? Although it didn't amount to much, Jacksonville District leaders say the storm should serve as a reminder that hurricane season has now arrived, even if June 1 is the official date to its start.

The tropical system developed suddenly May 19 off the coast of South Carolina, and started moving toward northeast Florida before retreating to the east May 21.

"Regardless of predictions, storms are unpredictable, as evidenced by Alberto coming within 90 miles of Jacksonville," said Lt. Col. Ballard C. "Clint" Barker, deputy commander. "Hurricane Andrew was the only storm to hit the U.S. in 1992, a year in which tropical activity was forecast to be below normal. It only takes one storm to forever change lives."



Tropical Storm Alberto off the Georgia (PHOTO COURTESY NASA)

(CONTINUES ON PAGE 5)

Go Tapeless! BY NANCY J. STICHT



According to the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH), nearly seven out of 10 homeowners believe that taping windows and glass doors with masking tape, duct tape or window film is sufficient protection in the event of a hurricane. And they would be wrong.

Taping glass, even with tape marketed specifically as “hurricane tape” does nothing to strengthen the glass or protect against flying debris. In fact, the tape may create larger, more dangerous shards of broken glass. If a window or door is breached by hurricane winds, the resulting pressure can damage interior walls and create upward pressure on the roof. This can lead to roof failure, exposing the interior and its contents to the storm.

The Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory’s Hurricane Research Division in Miami, Fla. recommends the use of shutters as a first line of defense against hurricane-strength winds and wind-borne debris. Properly installed temporary plywood shutters work well in an emergency too. Instructions for do-it-yourself plywood shutters may be found at: www.aoml.noaa.gov/hrd/shutters/index2.html.

To learn more about why shutters are more protective than taping, visit www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/hurricane_videos.html#shortvideos and click on the link, “Tape Strikes Out,” produced by Pinellas County Emergency Management.

Learn – before the first storm arrives – all about hurricane preparedness by visiting FLASH at www.greathurricaneblowout.org, on Facebook (facebook.com/ghblowout) and Twitter (@ghblowout). ♦

EMPLOYEE ACCOUNTABILITY HOTLINE

1-877-HI-USACE
(1-877 448-7223)

In the event of a natural or manmade disaster, or a catastrophic event that results in evacuation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers accountability system for all USACE employees is 1-877-Hi-USACE (1-877-448-7223). The hotline is staffed 24/7 by the USACE Operations Center (UOC) to receive calls from employees when they are unable to reach their supervisor or report for duty due to an evacuation.

The Hi-USACE system enables employees to call the number and provide contact information so that the chain of command is informed of personnel status. The system is simple – employees call the number and leave a message, including at a minimum:

- Complete Name (spell last name);
- Telephone number, with area code, where you may be reached;
- Address at current location; and
- Home district, job title, and supervisor’s name.

When a USACE employee leaves a message on the 1-877-Hi-USACE system, the on-duty watch officer logs and transcribes the message and notifies the appropriate supervisor, district emergency manager and division emergency manager. The UOC will investigate calls to the hotline, so Hi-USACE is to be used only in emergencies. This does not replace the need to use local calling trees or alert rosters in accordance with district policy. ♦

American Red Cross “Safe and Well Website”

The American Red Cross “Safe and Well Website” provides a way for you to register yourself as “safe and well” following domestic disasters. From a list of standard messages, you can select those that you want to communicate to your family members, letting them know of your well-being. Concerned family and friends can then search the list of those who have registered. Successful search results will display a loved one’s first and last name, the “safe and well” message(s) selected and an “as of” date. For more information, please visit the American Red Cross website at: <https://safeandwell.communityos.org/cms/index.php>. ♦



(PHOTO COURTESY AMERICAN RED CROSS WEBSITE.)

LEADERS (continued from PAGE 3)

While the district has been taking steps to ensure it is prepared to respond to hurricanes, Barker says Corps employees need to take similar steps on an individual level with their families.

"First, have a family plan in place," said Barker. "That means have supplies on hand, have an evacuation plan on where to go, and have a communications plan on who to contact."

Barker says anyone needing help with individual and family planning need look no further than the Internet, and websites like www.floridadisaster.org.

"Finally, heed warnings when they are issued by local officials," said Barker. "If you are told to evacuate, then do so. Don't put material things over family safety. Material things are replaceable; family is not."

Barker further encourages Jacksonville District employees to know their role in the agency's response plans.

"All employees need to have an understanding of disaster responses for the Corps, and have a basic understanding of the Incident Command System," said Barker.

Resources available on the Jacksonville District Intranet include the district's emergency response Standard Operating Procedure (also known as the "Red Book") and the district's continuity of operations plan. More information on the Incident Command System is available at the Federal Emergency Management Agency website, www.FEMA.gov. ♦



DISASTER SUPPLY KIT CHECKLIST



- WATER** - at least 1 gallon daily per person for 3 to 7 days
- FOOD** - at least enough for 3 to 7 days — non-perishable packaged or canned food / juices — foods for infants or the elderly — snack foods — non-electric can opener — cooking tools / fuel — paper plates / plastic utensils
- BLANKETS / PILLOWS, ETC.**
- CLOTHING** - seasonal / rain gear/ sturdy shoes
- FIRST AID KIT / MEDICINES / PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**
- SPECIAL ITEMS** - for babies and the elderly
- TOILETRIES / HYGIENE ITEMS / MOISTURE WIPES**
- FLASHLIGHT / BATTERIES**
- RADIO** - Battery operated and NOAA weather radio
- TELEPHONES** - Fully charged cell phone with extra battery and a traditional (not cordless) telephone set
- CASH (WITH SOME SMALL BILLS) AND CREDIT CARDS** - Banks and ATMs may not be available for extended periods
- KEYS**
- TOYS, BOOKS AND GAMES**
- IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS** - in a waterproof container or watertight resealable plastic bag — insurance, medical records, bank account numbers, Social Security card, etc.
- TOOLS** - keep a set with you during the storm
- VEHICLE FUEL TANKS FILLED**
- PET CARE ITEMS** - proper identification / immunization records / medications — ample supply of food and water — a carrier or cage — muzzle and leash

HELPFUL WEBSITES

 Ready America

www.ready.gov

- Also available in Spanish version, www.listo.gov
- Includes "Ready Kids" pages to help children prepare, featuring the beloved characters of Sesame Street

 Disaster Assistance .gov

www.disasterassistance.gov



www.floridadisaster.org



American Red Cross

American Red Cross: www.redcross.org



Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.fema.gov



Department of Homeland Security: www.dhs.gov



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: www.noaa.gov



National Hurricane Center: www.nhc.noaa.gov



National Weather Service: www.nws.noaa.gov



U.S. Coast Guard: www.uscg.mil ♦