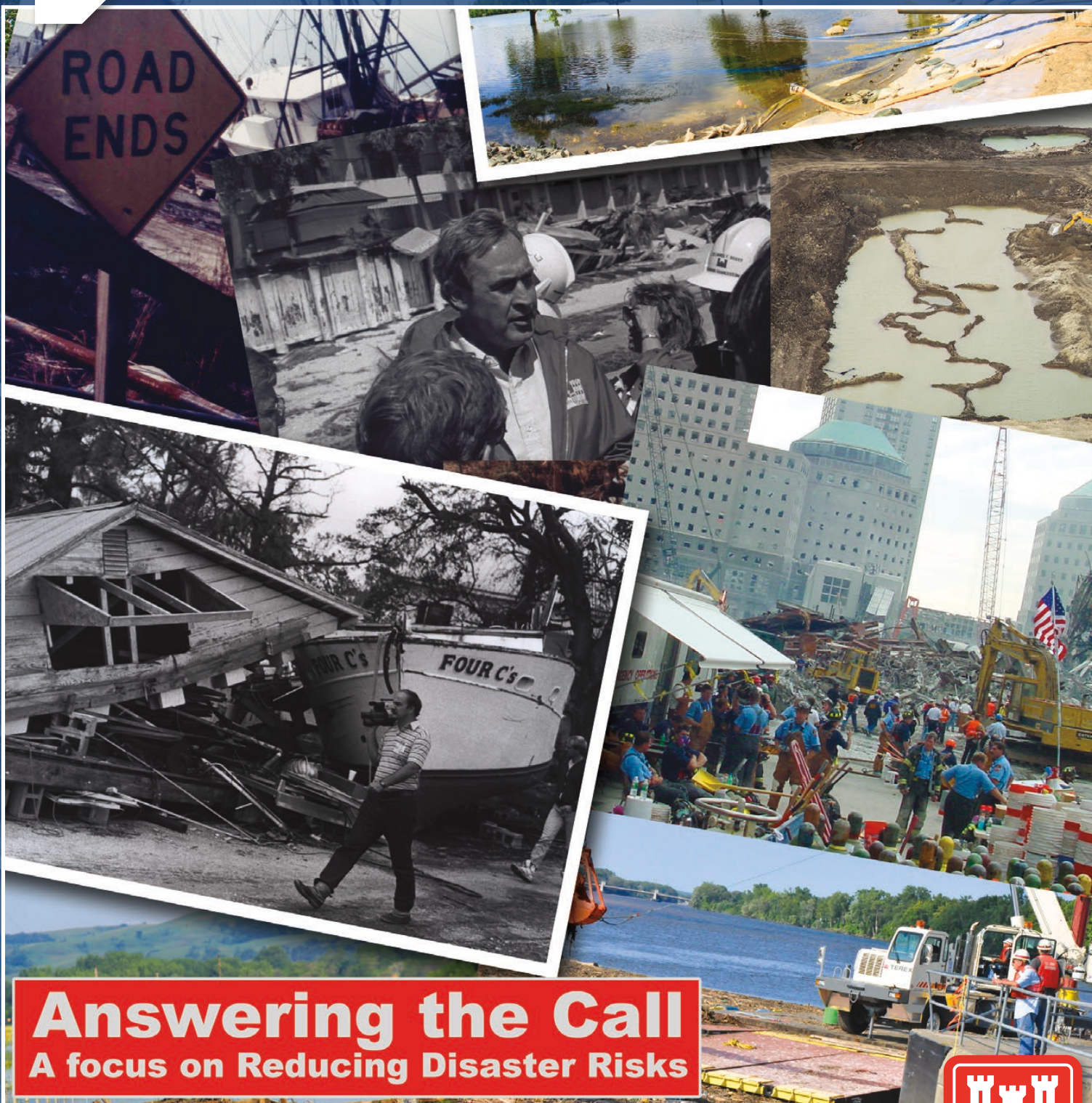


Social Media gets the Corps  
message across

Cascadia Rising brings division  
leadership role to Omaha

Michaels rides the wave into  
retirement

# Omaha Outlook



**Answering the Call**  
A focus on Reducing Disaster Risks

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District

Sept 2016 – Vol. 4, Issue 3





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**On the cover: Collage of USACE support to natural and disasters, including: Hurricane Irene, Hurricane Hugo, 9/11, 2011 Missouri River flood. (All USACE/ DOD photos)**



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## ANSWERING THE CALL

**Team,**

Thank you for your commitment, technical expertise, and teamwork for what has turned out to be a very busy summer for us all. Our team has pulled together to overcome several major challenges on key projects while continuing to deliver world class quality in a sometimes difficult environment. Special thanks to all of you who have put forth extra effort to award important acquisitions, work through significant operations and construction challenges in the field, and react to unexpected events at our projects. The true character of our team really shows when times are tough; thanks to all of you for your dedication to our projects, our stakeholders, and to each other.

With the recent earthquake in Oklahoma that shook our homes and projects here in Nebraska, the floods in Louisiana, storms in the Pacific, and the call for engineers to deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan, it is fitting for us to reflect on the nature of our service to our Nation, our mission to reduce disaster risks (OPLAN Goal #3), and the associated level of readiness required of all of us in order to answer the call of our Nation when needed. Readiness is our Army's top priority; we must all be ready to serve when our Nation calls.

Individual and Organizational readiness is built through a number of ways to include career experiences, broadening opportunities, education, training, safety programs which ensure medical and physical fitness, and of course the tremendous depth of technical expertise that we continuously develop by doing our missions well and delivering our programs. The skills that we develop which are required to accomplish our local day-to-day missions are also of strategic importance to our Nation as we answer the call to serve in response to a litany of unexpected scenarios ranging from natural disasters, to protests, to providing technical support to highly sensitive critical facilities, to providing technical expertise to our national security apparatus during times of conflict.

Our efforts to improve the readiness and the resilience of our critical national infrastructure to mitigate impacts of disaster or deliberate attack is also part of how we build readiness. It all ties together as part of a strategic plan for which we all play a small part. Our part is to continually strive to be our Nation's technical experts, commit ourselves to delivering our program, and to selflessly serve our Nation with a culture of trust, respect, and character. This serves as the foundation for us to be successful when our Nations calls on the highly technical skill set of one of our team members, or needs critical national infrastructure that we designed, built, and sometimes operate to perform under the most difficult circumstances.

So, as we work towards finishing up the FY16 program and ramping up the FY17 program, let's do so with a common resolve knowing that the missions we accomplish through the strength of our team, sometimes under very difficult circumstances, serve as the foundation for the long-term strategic success of the Corps of Engineers and our Nation. Please accept my sincere gratitude for all that you and your families do for our District and our Nation.



**John W. Henderson**  
Colonel  
Omaha District Commander

Essayons.

John W. Henderson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. Henderson".



*Preventing Disasters Before They Happen*

# Prairie Fire: Prescribed Burns on Omaha District Dams

For visitors driving up to the Oahe Dam just north of Pierre, South Dakota, on a gloomy spring evening, a rare spectacle was in full view on the horizon: the 245-foot high, 9,360-foot long earth-fill dam was charred black by recent fire. Other parcels of land adjacent to the dam were still smoldering. As the sun set on the Pierre area, rural fire crews packed up for the day, concluding the prescribed burn operation.

“Prescribed burns are usually conducted yearly: it can only be done when the conditions are just right,” said Oahe Project Natural Resources Specialist Dalton Decker as he inspected the charred fields the day after

the fire. “This morning the humidity is fairly high: that’s good from a safety perspective.”

Decker drove out for a safety inspection to check areas that might have continued burning through the night. “Can you see smoke coming up over there?” he asked, pointing out the vehicle window. “Weeks ago a bale of hay fell out of a passing truck and landed there; the bale’s compacted fuel’s been burning through the night.”

“You can see the trees are protected by a perimeter: and their branches and root structures haven’t been harmed by the fire,” Decker said, pointing out a



A wildland firefighter closely monitors the prescribed flames on a prairie field near the Oahe Dam. Burning is prescribed to prevent catastrophic wildfires, it promotes bio-diversity, and it’s also necessary for annual dam inspections. (Photo by Jesse Roebuck, Oahe Project Office)



medium-sized cottonwood just beginning to bud its spring foliage: a protected circle of life among a blackened field.

The handiwork of a skilled wild-land firefighting crew.

“Before igniting the fire, we use fire trucks to water down a perimeter and water the areas surrounding things like trees that we don’t want harmed,” said Pierre Rural Fire Department Volunteer Chief Jason Roggow, who works full-time for the South Dakota Department of Natural Resources. “When the dam’s prescribed burn comes up each spring, some of the volunteers assist the Forest Service and follow a burn plan that’s based on specific objectives outlined by the USACE and the burn boss.”

All in a day’s work for a U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service firefighter.

“For this burn, I was the firing boss: in a nutshell, that means I’m the person who literally ignites the fire,” said Ryan Cumbow, engine captain and a qualified burn boss for the U.S. Forest Service’s Fort Pierre Ranger District and Fort Pierre National Grassland.

“Prescribed burning is a tool, similar to tilling the land, grazing it or mowing it: from a safety standpoint the burn eliminates the build-up of fuel that could lead to

a wildfire ... on this USACE land we’re limited to what tools can be used,” said Cumbow. “The objective for burning the dam embankment is also to thin it down so it can be inspected. Because the dam stands out on the horizon it’s a bull’s eye for weeds. Prescribed burning during certain conditions allows us to enhance the biodiversity. Decker’s plan is to reinforce pollination plants to provide habitat for pollinating animals and fire helps that a lot.”

In recent decades, naturally occurring prairie fires ignited by lightning storms have been suppressed, and burning in a controlled environment is a safe and beneficial tool for modern wild land managers.

“Prescribed fire is a versatile and cost effective land management tool,” said Amee Rief, Omaha District Natural Resource Specialist. “After years of fire exclusion, trees can be stressed by overcrowding, fire-dependent species disappear and flammable fuels build up and become hazardous. Prescribed burning has many benefits. It can minimize the spread of pest insects and disease, remove unwanted species, provide forage species for game, recycle nutrients back to the soil,

and promote growth of trees, wildflowers and other plants.”

The Omaha District also employs prescribed burning to provide habitat to threatened and endangered species.

“Gavins Point Project recently burned about 250 acres on emergent-sandbar habitat in the Missouri River to remove vegetation and improve nesting habitat for the Least Tern and Piping Plover,” Rief said. “Burning is also used on the face of dams that are too steep to mow as was just completed at the Oahe Project, this also allows better visibility for dam inspections.”

Prescribed burning also provides beneficial experience for the volunteer organizations that take part in the annual exercise.

“It’s advantageous because it benefits everyone involved with these burns,” said Roggow. “The Corps gets their burn objective, we are able to assist them in doing that. And there are benefits to us as a volunteer department. It seems that in working together everyone benefits, and it makes for a good working relationship in the Fort Pierre area.”

***“from a safety standpoint the burn eliminates the build-up of fuel that could lead to a wildfire ...”***







USACE employees from throughout the Omaha District took their day jobs June 7-10, 2016 to a whole new level in response to a catastrophic magnitude 9.0 full-rip earthquake and tsunami along the Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ) impacting both Washington and Oregon. They became the Northwestern Division.

“Based on initial reports of the nature and scale of impacts to critical infrastructure and the number of impacted States/Cities, my assessment is that we will require significant augmentation from across the USACE enterprise to assist with scaling up our response to meet the anticipated national response and coordination requirements,” said Col. John Henderson, Omaha District Commander.

Cascadia Rising 2016 was the name of the exercise, “A fully exercised contingency response plan,” said Matt Krajewski, Emergency Operations Manager, “that has been in motion for a decade by the Corps’ leadership and the necessary personnel participating.” Its purpose was to test the ability of Emergency Operations Centers at all levels of the government, coordinating joint-interagency disaster operations. It included multiple venues in the

states of Oregon, Washington and Idaho, as well as nationally from the D.C. area.

Though it was predominately a 4-day Emergency Operations Center-to-Center functional exercise with limited field play, those who participated were in the moment as if it were the real deal.

Leading the charge were various entities of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, along with Department of Defense, Northern Command, Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Homeland Security.

USACE commands involved included Headquarters, Northwestern Division, Walla Walla, Omaha, and Portland Districts, along with The Dalles, Willamette Valley Project Office and the Rogue River Project Office, Seattle District along with Chief Joe Dam, Lake Washington Ship Canal and Mud Mountain/Howard Hanson Dam. Both Kansas City and Little Rock Districts had limited role-play in this exercise.

Laying out the scenario and scope of the exercise: Cascadia Rising was designed to mimic, to the greatest extent possible, the challenges, issues, and stressors of a Level-1 catastrophic earthquake disaster.

It was achieved through the participation of Emergency Operation Centers at all levels—city, county, state, tribal, federal government, military, and select private sector and non-governmental organizations.

Omaha District fully activated and staffed its respective operations to manage this disaster response within its jurisdiction, while at the same time coordinating with other district EOCs and departments and agencies and first responders in meeting the objective of this exercise.

The “facts” as they were known:

1. In the early morning hours Pacific Daylight Time on June 7, 2016, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake and complete rupture of the 700-mile Cascadia Subduction Zone fault line occurs. The duration of the earthquake lasts for more than four minutes. The affected area encompassed 140,000 square miles directly impacting the states of Oregon and Washington and the Canadian province of British Columbia. Visualize more than 10 million people residing in the direct impact zone.

2. The disaster causes widespread damage to critical infrastructures and the built environment and kills and injures thousands.

3. USACE EOC kicks in and a learning environment ensues:

From June 7 through June 9 USACE EOC hours of play were from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily while The Dalles and Chief Joe project offices supported the exercise play from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.



# DISASTER PLANNING

Exercise participants from the Northwestern Division included Brig. Gen. Scott Spellmon, Northwestern Division Commander; Col. John Henderson, Omaha District Commander; Matthew Krajewski, Omaha Emergency Operations Director; Ryan Buckley, Omaha Emergency Operations Manager and more than three dozen others just

with their phones away from their normal tasks to a disaster of mammoth proportion.

Col. Torrey Diciro, Deputy Division Commander said, “You all took this out of the park this week,” commending the great emergency management teams for working well with not only the staffs throughout this exercise, but also the limited resources.

The contingency scene playing out in the Omaha District was being mirrored at the Walla Walla District Emergency Operations Center along with the Portland and Seattle districts on a smaller scale.

The everyday tasks of most Corps employees participating doesn’t involve assumptions, however through this exercise assumptions are what constituted the implied factual

foundation for the exercise and were assumed to be present before the exercise began. Some of the general assumptions applying to the overall Cascadia Rising 2016 exercise included:

- The exercise be conducted in a no-fault learning environment wherein systems and processes, not individuals, be evaluated.
- Exercise players reacted to information and situations as they were presented in the same manner as if this simulated incident was real.

“Our priorities continue to be personnel accountability, establishing a common operating picture of ongoing operations/

project status, and assessment of resource/augmentation requirements,” said Henderson. “We’ll also prepare to receive, stage and integrate these resources/augmentation.”

When a team of great professionals is brought together, stepping up their game as the “designated” NWD, their routine for the four days consisted of Dam Safety Assessments, Levee Safety Assessments, personnel accountability, FEMA mission assignments, contracting, communications, logistics and real estate actions on a grander scale.

“Omaha gained much information, insight to the District-Columbia,” said John Leighow, Chief of Readiness and Contingency, Northwestern Division. “It’s a win, win, all around. Products developed started with basic quad charts, we walked away with much more. Great forcing function,” he said.

During the final day of wrap up for the exercise, facilitator Carl Pigott from MVD said, “USACE is very skilled at mitigating man-made and natural disasters, including the communication of such disasters, the preparation of teams and plans. Each district shares a role, and makes great use of all available resources. Planning for the Cascadia Rising Subduction Zone earthquake exercise has been ongoing since before the beginning of the 21st century. It just continues to breathe new life as the impending doom draws nearer.”

Kim Thomas, Deputy Chief of Planning, Programs and Project Management, said, “We never tested mission assignments solely

(Continued on pg 23)



Brig. Gen. Scott Spellmon, Northwestern Division Commander was very interested in the Real Estate aspect of this scenario as he discussed action plans with Sue Goding of the Real Estate team. (Photo by Cheryl Moore)

staffing the Emergency Operations Center.

Individuals taking their daily job routines from the Omaha District and incorporating those skills to morph into the Northwestern Division throughout this exercise included Operations, Navigation, Contracting, Real Estate, Planning, Programs, Water Management, and Tribal Government Liaison personnel.

There were many more on hand to include Construction, Engineering, Geotech, Civil Structures, Safety and Occupational Health and Public Affairs. Each taking their work computers from their desks, along



## CISM PROGRAM ADDRESSES THE HUMAN IMPACTS OF DISASTER

Kimberly Martin says throughout her life she has sought to make a difference in the lives of people who suffer...be it life stresses or for unusually strong emotional reactions following crises or disasters. Her plan is to help and assist in any way she can so others may sort through and square away adverse situations and the myriad of nagging issues that arise.

That's why Martin carries two titles: Omaha District Procurement Analyst for the Office of Small Business Programs, and Critical Incident Stress Management Peer Supporter.

"With the kinds of issues the world deals with daily -- on your block, in your county, in your state, nation, counties and neighborhoods over the entire globe -- human care is called for. Each day we witness, on news shows or in person, events chock full of disaster, tragedy, risk, and chilling, bloody scenes of fiery discord," said Martin.

"I'm not a psychoanalyst but I am trained to listen and make any difference I can in a person's life and situation," said Martin. "If we think someone needs a counselor, we will refer you, but CISM is a more immediate contact. And it's here for everybody. We want people to know it is there."

Born from a USACE Operations order mandating that "all divisions, districts, laboratories and field operating agencies identify applicants for new CISM Peer Supporters to ensure full integration of the Command Critical Incident Stress Management." Applications were due no later than February 2016; by September 2016 all USACE Divisions were to "fully implement the CISM program, establishing a minimum staffing level of one trained CISM Peer per district." Martin is that for the Omaha District.

Martin finds it fulfilling--and sadly necessary--that more and more caring people are needed to step up to assist their family members, neighbors, work colleagues and countrymen in need any way they can. That is who Martin wants

to be, and that is who she is.

That is why she is such a dynamic part of the Corp's CISM program.

One of her favorite verses tells a story in itself.

*Grant that I may radiate Thy light, Thy love,  
Thy healing, Thy joy, and Thy peace,  
To all those around me  
And all those in my thoughts  
This day and ever more.*

-- Jonathan Lockwood Huie

"I've deployed once to a project where there was a murder/suicide. That was challenging, but so are the local one-on-one's. No matter the event, we must be proactive in helping the person," said Martin.

She has experienced many "huge challenges," but one incident, in particular, came during the loss of a close friend's child due to a brain aneurysm.

"The death occurred on my oldest son's birthday, which is Sept. 11, and several years after the largest terrorist attack in U.S. history," she said. "It was the second major incident to occur on his birthday. My son was very close to the child and wondered why he had to be born on 9/11 as well as why he had to lose his friend on his birthday. To comfort my son, I spent time addressing the truth about death and the fact that we sometimes lose people we really love.

"In support of the family who lost the child, I made myself available to them by providing meals, actively listening when the child's mother needed to talk and

Martin's interpersonal skills have developed through years of education, including a Master's degree in Human Services (Liberty University, Va.) Biblical Studies at Grace University and a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Bellevue University. (Photo by Jeremy Bell)





providing support to them during funeral service and after,” said Martin.

A program intended to provide peer support and healthy choices in response to stressful work environment incidents, CISM is “designed to lessen the overall impact of acute or cumulative stress, and to accelerate recovery in people having normal reactions to abnormal events,” said Martin.

According to CISM training, any incident may be defined as critical if unusually strong emotions are generated in the people involved. Some examples:

- Line of duty or death or serious injury
- Employee suicide or unexpected death
- Significant events involving children
- Traumatic events including disasters
- Exposure to grieving public, and

According to Martin, the CISM team, which is always looking for volunteers from the District, provides information about critical incidents and stress reactions employees can use to help identify healthy life choices.

The team provides an atmosphere of concern and caring as well as identifying personal options for dealing with stress, including:

- Pre-incident and stress education
- Confidential on-scene group interventions
- Confidential one-on-one to support and individual interventions
- Emergency mobilization and demobilization
- Post visit follow up, and
- Employee Assistance Program referral.

According to Martin the potential need for CISM assistance is ongoing. “Even as we speak today the floodwaters of Baton Rouge, Louisiana are slowly descending on a swamped filthy region of ruined homes, hopes and lives,” said Martin.

“The flooding brings back memories of my time away in New York, especially when I see the posts that have been shared by a fellow USACE employee that was in New York with me. My thoughts almost immediately went to what I witnessed in the aftermath of the storm.....where people’s belongings were literally destroyed and hauled out as debris. My heart goes out to families that have been displaced during the flooding.”

Empathy and caring drive the new program. For additional information visit [corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/cism/cism.cfm](http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/cism/cism.cfm) or stop in and speak with Martin. She is glad to help.



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®



A peer supporter providing a CISM brochure to a Corps employee deployed during a disaster. The brochure included information about transitioning home after a deployment. (photo provided)



CISM peer supporters visiting with Corps employees that were deployed in support of Hurricane Sandy. (Photo provided)

BUILDING STRONG®





# WHEN DISASTER STRIKES OMAHA DISTRICT

When it comes to cyclone-induced extreme-weather in the Midwest, most people think of tornadoes. However, according to research from the University of Iowa, cyclones of the tropical variety, particularly hurricanes, can affect areas as inland as the Missouri River basin. While the high winds of hurricanes don't reach the plains, they can reach into the Midwest in the form of flooding rains.

"Obviously the hurricane is weakened more inland, but as the storm moves northward, it decays into an extra-tropical storm, it can regenerate some of its precipitation. Certainly the lower part of the Missouri River basin is affected by the hurricanes," said U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District Meteorologist Charles McWilliams. "Southern Iowa and southeastern Nebraska can get some heavy rain from residual precipitation from those storms as they move inland."

While hurricane rains can reach into the Midwest, the lion's share of hurricane weather hits states on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts. And when hurricane season comes around each year, the Omaha District stands ready to help its neighbors during a time of need.

"The Omaha District has emergency management responsibilities, and each morning I brief our water control managers on what the weather might do in five or 10 days. Predictions are never 100 percent, but if we think about these scenarios we can get an idea of how we can react," said McWilliams. "Is there going to be some heavy rain? Then prepare to send people out on temporary duty."

When heavy rains fall, creeks and rivers swell causing high water. Flooding means infrastructure can fail, and local governments can declare a state of emergency, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal entities, such as USACE, step in to help restore order.

"When we respond to hurricanes, we do so in support of FEMA," said Omaha District Readiness Branch Chief Matt Krajewski. "USACE is responsible for FEMA's Emergency Support Function Three: public works and engineering. That covers provision of housing, electricity and debris removal. Omaha District is home to a temporary roofing Planning and Response Team: we inspect people's roofs and hire contractors

to put up temporary blue FEMA plastic roofing."

The nature of emergency management PRTs is national: a cadre of mission specialists, resident engineers and subject-matter experts is spread out across all USACE. Omaha District is home to a roofing team, but can send its team members to supplement a different district's PRT. Often, Omaha District employees need to fly out to the disaster area and get to work in a moment's notice.

"We have two programs like that in special projects: something happens without any advanced warning, and then we have a time-sensitive need to do a corrective action," said Contingency Program Manager Tim Gouger, who works in Special Projects at Omaha District. He also deploys as a debris-removal SME for the USACE national cadre for emergency management.

"I help the Corps to understand how to do time sensitive execution because that's what I do: it's the culture I operate in every single day," said Gouger, who, on a busy year, spends up to 75 percent of his time on temporary duty. "In these environments you have to jump out of a box and do the



# READINESS IS KEY

Tropical Storm Irene brought heavy storms throughout upstate New York, causing flooding and leaving tremendous amounts of debris, big and small, in the Hudson River. The Troy Lock was filled with debris including entire derelict boats and docks as well as vegetative debris ranging from leaves and branches to entire trees and power poles. Crews worked tirelessly to clear the debris out of the lock using heavy equipment to move larger pieces onto land for disposal and pikes to move smaller vegetative items in the Hudson River. (Photo by Chris Gardner, New York District public affairs)



When hurricanes and tropical storms strike, the heavy rainfall wreaks havoc on residential homes, and a leaky roof can cause a home to be condemned, forcing residents to relocate. The Omaha District has a team for the USACE emergency mission Operation Blue Roof, coordinating contracts to install the heavy plastic temporary roofing so that residents can shelter in place as opposed to having to leave their homes for a temporary shelter. (U. S. Army Corps of Engineers file photo)

mission: it's hard to transition from the culture from whence you operate into the emergency response culture."

Most USACE employees aren't so flexible. Engineers who work in military construction or civil works have a more regimented pace to their work. That all changes when they deploy with a PRT.

"When you're home doing your day-to-day work, everybody has a general idea of how their day is going to go," said Gavins Point Power Plant Superintendent Michael Welch. "During disaster response duty you may know where your day will start, but

you have no idea where it will take you." Welch manages the day-to-day operations at the Gavins Point Dam power plant, and he's a subject-matter expert for the USACE disaster response Operation Blue Roof program.

"When you're deployed, you will spend time working with the management for the contractors, you have federal employees put under your charge and you need to manage them," Welch said. "You have to communicate with the public as well. The situation changes on a minute-to-minute basis."

While USACE employees are deployed for emergency

management missions, they leave behind their day-to-day work which can pile up in their absence. They're also away from their home and family. It begs the question: why do it?

"I was a volunteer firefighter in Charleston, North Carolina, when Hurricane Hugo hit, so I have empathy for what those people are going through," Welch said. "My life is stable back home, so if I can go out and I can bring my experience in disaster management to an area and help restore that area to a semblance of normal, it's a very rewarding experience."



## Safety:

BEYOND JUST NUMBERS, ACROSS OUR CULTURE



Recreation and water safety outreach helps to educate visitors to USACE recreation areas of the importance of learning how to swim, wearing life jackets, and practicing boating safety. (Courtesy Photo)

Across the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and its diverse missions are constants that make USACE the federal engineer of choice. Among those constants are a skilled, professional workforce focused on safety and quality.

From Military Construction projects, to managing reservoir systems, to restoring ecosystems, remediating sites with environmental contamination, and providing engineering support in times of disaster, the safety of our personnel, the environment, and the public must be the first priority.

The committed-to-safety culture in the Omaha District has led to 25 consecutive years of recognition from the National Safety Council with a Double Platinum Award of Honor with Distinction.

“With a large, widespread, diverse, high-risk workload, the USACE Omaha District team continues to commit to making safety a priority in all our missions. The Omaha District workforce and contractors have the right attitude when it comes to safety. With this great culture the organization can excel and continually improve,” said Chief of Safety and Health, Jeff Skrivanek.

Safety is a team effort and the District’s low mishap rates can be attributed to all District employees and leaders emphasizing safety in all activities. Safety can sometimes be viewed as statistics and metrics. However there is a human element behind the scenes.

“Dedicated, hardworking USACE employees and contractors who recognize, respect, and understand the value of safety. Major efforts take place every day to evaluate and control hazards across the District. Bottom line, it’s truly amazing!” said Skrivanek.

“I believe when it comes to disaster response, Omaha District Planning Response Team members take their instilled safety attitude, culture, and training with them and apply it to the disaster mission’s high stress/hazard work environment. This is essential to a disaster mission. If the safety element is missing, a catastrophic injury, illness, or property loss becomes unavoidable during response or recovery,” said Skrivanek.

Mike Welch, Powerhouse Superintendent at Gavins Point Dam, served in the U.S. Navy before coming to work for USACE. For the past 20 years Welch has served as a volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician. Welch also serves as a subject



# PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

matter expert at a national level when USACE responds to disasters in support of FEMA missions for Operation Blue Roof. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages Operation Blue Roof for FEMA by providing homeowners in disaster areas fiber-reinforced plastic sheeting to cover damaged roofs until permanent repairs can be completed.

For the powerhouse, Welch talks about safety in terms of lock out or tag out for equipment, fall protection, steel toed boots, and knowing CPR.

Welch says safety is a program that affects how every mission is completed.

“When we work safely, it reflects a higher level of professionalism - not just in our daily jobs but also in disaster response and our personal lives. Without safety, project output can decline because of increased labor costs and even in reassuring the public that we are responsibly spending taxpayer dollars,” said Welch.



Nathan Tillquist, Maj. Arlo Reese, Jeff Skrivanek and Annette Fowler accept the Double Platinum Award of Honor with Distinction from the Nebraska Safety Council recognizing 25 consecutive years of excellence in the Omaha District Safety Program. (Photo by Thomas O'Hara)

Welch says when he deploys, safety takes a more personal perspective. Welch has responded to disasters including Hurricanes Katrina and Rita as well as tornadoes and flooding. He has also deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq.

“We look out for each other, we ask questions to check to see if each other is okay or feeling stress. We need to ensure we have the right tools to do our jobs and we have crisis intervention teams to address when we need support through a disaster response,” he said.

“In disasters, the destruction itself can adversely impact our ability to get the job done. If we are overwhelmed, it impacts how we accomplish the mission,” said Welch.



Repairing infrastructure at USACE dams often requires trained divers who can perform maintenance and repairs, including welding in an underwater environment. Dive crews must ensure they perform their work safely while monitoring physical health, air supply and dive equipment. (Courtesy Photo)

Disaster response teams such as the Operation Blue Roof team can mean working in unusual, dangerous or even deadly situations. Responders may face communication barriers, cultural barriers or other challenges that can affect safety awareness.

“We have to be professionals in establishing safety parameters and enforcing safety for the public, ourselves, and the contractors hired to perform the work,” said Welch.

Skrivanek says the goal is everyone goes home safely at the end of the day. For the Omaha District, that applies to each employee across the District whether within the District's focused areas of responsibility, or supporting projects across the United States and overseas.



For contractors working on repairs to the plunge pool at the bottom of the spillway at Fort Peck Dam in Montana, worker safety is often a key element of heavy equipment safety. (Courtesy Photo)



## Exercising Safety

Three companies are repairing the spillway tainter gates at the Garrison Dam near Riverdale, North Dakota.

To help educate new project team members on the challenges they might face if a spillway rescue was needed, the companies performing the work, DIX Corporation, S&S Coatings, and Thomas Industrial Coatings, held a rescue drill in July. It was the second rescue drill since work began in 2012.

Spanning 1,336 feet, the 28 tainter gates, each 40 feet wide by 29 feet high, hold back the Missouri River helping form Lake Sakakawea, the third largest reservoir in the United States. The spillway gates opened operationally for the first time in the dam's near 60-year history in 2011 when runoff in the upper Missouri River Basin led to record reservoir levels. The force of water flowing through the spillway damaged the gates and structural concrete.

Working from the top to the base of the gates, crews may require fall protection and operate lifts and other equipment in the difficult-to-access spillway area. A person requiring an emergency response in the spillway area would have to be transported nearly a quarter of a mile to a location where they could be safely lifted to an area accessible by an emergency vehicle.

A retired firefighter and

emergency response instructor for area ambulance and fire crews, Jim Privratsky helped preplan the rescue drill.

"We had everyone working on the project that day participating in the drill including 28 people from the three contractors and Corps employees from the Omaha District Construction Division," said Jim Quade the site safety and health officer for Dix Corporation.

"As they went through the scenario, participants talked through what they were doing working through the difficulties of each process and making recommendations for improvement. The drill gave everyone a clear picture of how a rescue would occur," said Loren Nishek, USACE project engineer.

"The drill was helpful. With all the employees, managers, owners and Corps staff, we were able to come up with ideas to respond

better, safer and swiftly. It was a good learning experience including using the lift and placing the rescue basket in the lift. Working through issues now helps us do it better for the next drill or if a real world need arises," said Quade.

The spillway gate renovation project includes a contract with AECOM to create a 3-D model of the gates to provide the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and contractors details for classifying, prioritizing, and detailing procedures for weld and member repairs. Contractors on site are performing structural repairs as well as side and bottom seal replacement, wire rope replacement, cathodic protection replacement, abrasive blasting and painting the 28 spillway gates and concrete repairs. The project is scheduled for completion by early fall 2017.

### The drill scenario:

- Worker collapses on concrete surface walking from the break area to spillway work site
- Minutes later, another crew member discovers victim breathing but unresponsive
- Initiates emergency response plan calling (simulated) 911 and power house
- Crew members place 200-pound victim (simulated with sandbags) in rescue basket
- Crew members lift rescue basket onto back of ATV and drive 1,300 feet to a lift at edge of the spillway near equipment transfer platform
- Crews place basket into lift hoisting victim up 30 feet to loading dock area
- At loading dock, emergency responders assess victim for treatment or transport to hospital



# PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

1. A crew member initiates the emergency response plan calling (simulated) 911 and power house after discovering a co-worker has collapsed walking from the break area to spillway work site. The victim is breathing but unresponsive. (All photos by Loren Nishek, project engineer)



2. Crew members place 200-pound victim (simulated with sandbags) in rescue basket



3. Crew members lift rescue basket onto back of ATV and drive 1,300 feet to a lift at edge of the spillway near equipment transfer platform



4. Crews place basket into lift hoisting victim up 30 feet to loading dock area



5. At loading dock, emergency responders assess victim for treatment or transport to hospital

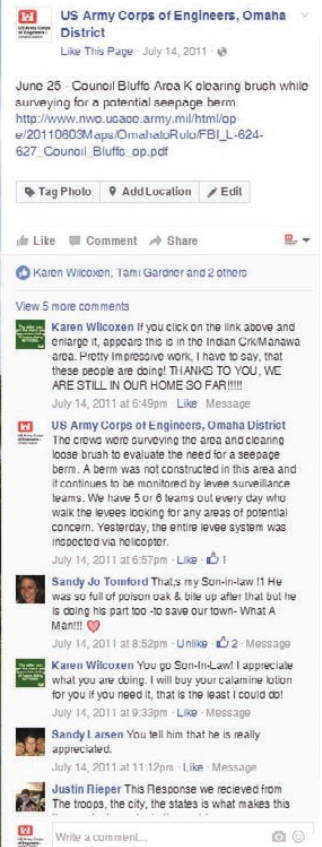




## 5 Years of Omaha District Social Media efforts



Among the most viewed posts on the Omaha District Facebook page is this photo from 2011 showing crews checking for boils in an area of seepage near Council Bluffs, Iowa. (Photo courtesy USACE, Omaha District)



Communicators have evolved the way they interact and Public Affairs specialists are evolving and adapting to an environment increasingly dependent upon the technical skills social media demands. Lt. Gen. Todd T. Semonite, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has embraced social media with a YouTube campaign called “On the Road Again” with short educational and informational videos about the USACE mission and current topics.

In November 2010, the Omaha District joined the world of social media launching its Facebook page. In February 2011, the District sent its first tweet. That March, the first YouTube video and photos to Flickr were posted.

At the time, there were 6 followers on Twitter and 209 on Facebook. The goal was to tell the stories already being told. Public Affairs uses various communication strategies to share the USACE mission. From employee spotlights to military construction projects to civil works projects to disaster responses and every other mission the Omaha District is charged with reaching various audiences with these messages. Social media provides another avenue for communication.

In May 2011 a major storm over much of Montana and parts of North Dakota dumped record rainfall on heavy snowpack causing flooding through much of the Missouri River basin. Social media engagement skyrocketed with Facebook followers shooting to nearly 8,000 and Twitter to nearly 2,300. By the end of 2011, Omaha District posts, pictures, and videos had been seen over 10 million times. Social media allowed the District to communicate directly with the public about flood fighting efforts and water releases from Missouri River dams.

Despite that, it’s naïve to believe everyone saw it. In 2011, North Dakota had devastating floods on the Missouri and Souris rivers. Toni Erhardt, a project manager in the North Dakota State Regulatory Office said, “During the [2011] floods we were often told we should be on social media so people knew what was going on.” Meaning, even with everything that was posted, a lot of people didn’t see it.

Social communication is a significant part of today’s culture that evolves, within the requirements established by the U.S. Army. Social media messages require planning, understanding the audience, and sometimes the nuance of choosing specific words.



# GETTING THE CORPS STORY TOLD

The Deputy for District Plans Programs and Project Management, Kim Thomas said, “I think social media efforts definitely help. Many people get news from social media. In a disaster, sometimes social media is the only update you have.”

Ryan Buckley, an Omaha District emergency manager says the readiness branch follows state, county and local emergency managers; FEMA Regions; National Weather Service offices; and numerous national and local news outlets on Twitter and Facebook.

“During the flooding in Colorado in 2013, I saw a tweet about evacuations in an area near a dry dam in the USACE PL 84-99 program. Before the tweet, we weren’t aware the dam was overtopping. It gave us the information we needed to contact the sponsor and deploy USACE personnel,” said Buckley.

During flooding in the summer and winter of 2015 in Oklahoma, Brannen Parrish, a Tulsa District public affairs specialist, said Col. Richard A. Pratt, District commander at that time, charged the public affairs team with providing photos and video as quickly as possible to social media. Ed Johnson, Tulsa District Chief of Public Affairs was adamant that social media managers be responsive and show empathy to those affected by the flooding.

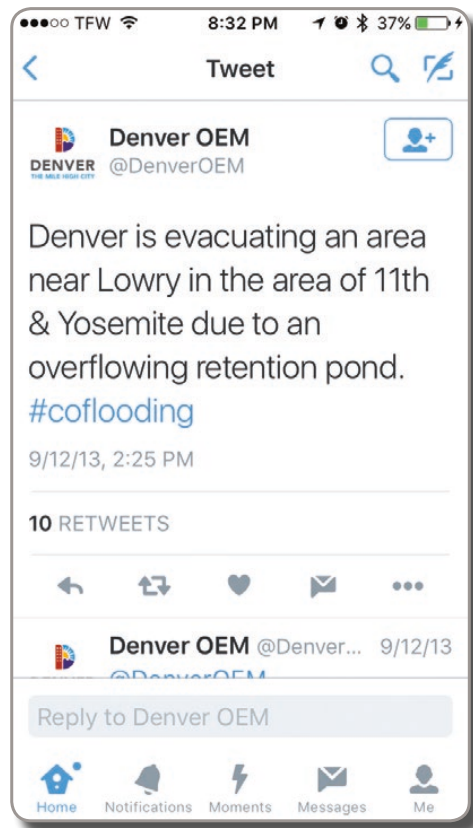
“Social media allowed us to show people why we had to close campgrounds. We were able to have conversations with the public about what was going on, how releases were impacting recreation at sites downstream of the dams, and to explain that by

holding water and flooding recreation areas, we were reducing downstream impacts,” said Parrish.

For Tony Krause, flood risk manager for the Omaha District, social media is about opportunities and finding ways to reach people who might otherwise not be listening.

“When a message about something like flood risk tied to a popular topic gets attention, social media becomes more than a tool for delivering a message, it’s a foot in the door where doors don’t exist – a chance to connect and gain trust before it’s needed,” said Krause.

Among the Omaha District’s social media successes is an audience of contractors, reporters, and partner agencies on Twitter. Messages are geared toward this audience including Public Notices, Contracting Opportunities, Job Announcements and Press Releases. Website traffic from Twitter proves this success. From Sept. 1 to mid-November 2015, the District saw nearly 1,000 hits on District-posted contracting opportunities to FedBizOpps.gov with nearly 800 from Twitter.



A tweet from the Denver Office of Emergency management indicated a dry dam in the USACE PL 84-99 program was overtopping. Omaha District emergency managers saw the tweet and were able to contact the sponsor and respond. (Photo courtesy Denver Office of Emergency Management, Twitter)

*“Sometimes, if I am waiting for a project to be announced, I learn about it from Twitter first,” said Thomas.*

Continued on pg 16



## 5 Years of Omaha District Social Media efforts

(Continued from pg 15)

Despite its success, there are still opportunities for the District's social media program.

Karla Zeutenhorst, a park ranger at the Gavins Point project, says guests often ask why the visitor's center isn't on Facebook.

She says a social media account focused entirely on recreation or Gavins Point would allow activities, recreation areas, campsites and updates, articles and photos about projects to be featured. "With one site for the entire District covering the breadth of the USACE mission, content featuring recreation gets lost. It isn't personalized," she said.

But, with 27 dams and several large recreation areas, the Public Affairs team can't reach everywhere and must rely on project personnel to submit photos and videos featuring recreation projects and wildlife. The regulations that permit USACE to establish sites on social media also require regular reports about site engagement and limit social media manager roles to Public Affairs. Social communication has become significant enough that there will likely always be some form of social media, but it must support strategic communication goals to ensure transparency with the public.

### Fast Facts

*All our Social Media accounts are OmahaUSACE We're on: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, and Instagram*



### Common Hashtags

Hashtags create a link and allow users to click the link for a fast search for any posts on a specific social media platform using that topic. Frequently Used @ OmahaUSACE Hashtags include:

**#FedBizOpps** – District Contracting Opportunities from FedBizOpps.com

**#Contracts** – Contracts awarded and announced by the District

**#PublicNotice** – Regulatory Public Notices – includes a second hashtag for the state with the two letter state abbreviation

**#Alert #EM** – Alerts from District Emergency Managers

**#EM #EmergencyMgt** – Non-Emergency news from District Emergency Managers

**#WaterSafety** – Water Safety messages

**#MissouriRiver** – Missouri River Water Management news, water releases for Main stem dams

**#JamesRiverBasin** – James River basin water management news for Jamestown and Pipestem dams

**#WaterLevels** – Water level changes from Omaha District dams such as the Colorado Tri-Lakes dams, Salt Creek Dams and Papillion Creek Dams

**#Regulatory** – Press Releases from the District Regulatory Office

**#GavinsPoint** – News specific to Gavins Point Dam

**#FortRandall** – News specific to Fort Randall Dam

**#BigBend** – News specific to Big Bend Dam

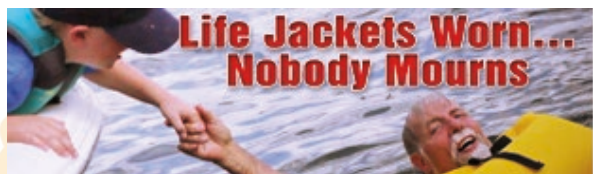
**#Oahe** – News specific to Oahe Dam

**#Garrison** – News specific to Garrison Dam

**#FortPeck** – News specific to Fort Peck Dam

**#PlanningNotice** – Release of Environmental Assessments and announcements of public meetings

**#RPAvailNotice** – Real Property availability notices such as firewood cutting or plots available for haying



**PleaseWearIt.com**





## YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE, BE VIGILANT IN ITS PROTECTION

Although the power of social media has its certain advantages in telling the Corps story, it is also a vehicle to exploit for those who wish to do harm. Fraudulent accounts representing Army leadership and organizations spread misinformation and risk damaging reputation and public trust. USACE Headquarters actively monitors and reports impersonation accounts to social networking sites, and assists districts, divisions and labs to resolve fraudulent accounts at their level.

Since the beginning of the 2013 calendar year, 1,340 fraudulent social media accounts have been identified by USACE Headquarters and deleted. 812 accounts portrayed current or former USACE personnel. Of these, 791 represented officers and 21 represented non-commissioned officers. An additional 17 presences falsely represented organizational entities within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 512 other

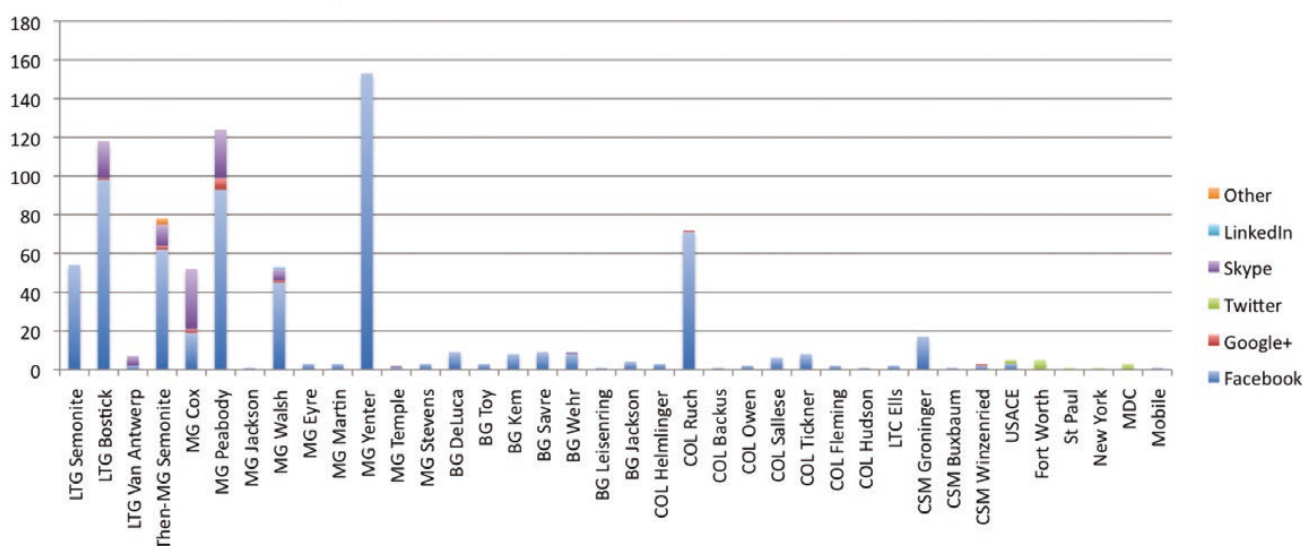
accounts — ranging from “romance-scam” profiles of non-existent Soldiers to representations of top Army leadership — were also addressed.

Accounts are identified through routine scans or as a result of their interaction with our official presences on Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn. Fraudulent accounts are also identified on Skype. Area offices of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also conduct scans for their respective leaders.

The purposes for fake accounts can be as diverse as legitimate social media presences. However, a common theme involves “romance scams” in which accounts representing Soldiers attempt to entice others to send money or provide personal information of value to malicious parties. Anyone who feels they have been defrauded online in any way is encouraged to file a complaint with the Internet Crime Complaint Center, a partnership between the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National White Collar Crime Center, at [ic3.gov](http://ic3.gov).

**REPORTING IMPERSONATIONS:** If you suspect a fraudulent social media account, contact your local Public Affairs Office with a link to the questionable account. It can then be evaluated and appropriate action can be taken.

**Fraudulent accounts directly tied to USACE: 2013-Present**





## An IRISH Bard's Tale

Kevin Quinn is a story teller. It doesn't matter if it is from behind his guitar, in front of his keyboard, or alongside fellow engineers and citizens, he knows how to craft a tale. Pay him a compliment about it and he will roll his eyes and tell you that's what happens when you kiss the Blarney stone. But for those who have worked with him these last 35 years, they will tell you such eloquence and perspective is not developed overnight.

"Working with Kevin has been a real joy of my career and he has served Gavins Point and the Corps well," said David Becker, Operations Manager for Gavins Point. "No one has told the Omaha District story as well, and for as long, as Kevin Quinn."

### Perspective

Quinn has been there to tell the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers story through more than a third of a century: through the creation of the air launch cruise missile, B-1 and B-2 bomber support facilities; the birth of Superfund, total environmental restoration contracts; base realignment and closure; Space Command, reductions in force; Persian Gulf War; Operation Iraqi and Enduring Freedom support; Hurricane Hugo, the Loma Prieta earthquake, a decade of full-scale dam safety exercises; historical floods like the Missouri River in 2011; droughts; wildfires; workforce tragedies; and countless other chapters of the Omaha District and USACE history.

Before he joined the communications team for the Omaha District as an intern in 1980, Quinn led a much different team. As quarterback for the University of Omaha Mavericks in 1976/77, he was able to guide a team to score by weaving

together the talents he had around him, and when necessary, using a little brute force of his own. Off the field he developed a love for Irish music and became a well-respected local Irish musician in Omaha, filling his free hours entertaining tavern patrons and weaving tall tales through a myriad of limericks, Irish classics, stage banter and charm.

Following graduation in 1980 with a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from UNO, and after a short career in the public sector working for The Nonpareil in Council Bluffs Iowa, he joined the Omaha District public affairs team in 1982. Government communications was different back then. It was a time when public affairs was accomplished more with face time than Facebook, when success was measured by a shared understanding, not a shared post, and when getting 'liked' was secondary to being understood.

"The tools have changed, but the need to tell our story is still there," said Quinn. Nowhere is this more important than in times of emergency. For Quinn, that realization was born in the fall of 1989 when he responded to the devastating effects of Hurricane Hugo on the east coast, then travelled across the country to cover the USACE efforts following the Loma Prieta earthquake in California.

"Through the lens of the camera you could see the destruction and the palpable level of loss by those impacted – death, rot, and disaster were in the air," said Quinn. "In the midst of such destruction, the importance of serving others by accurately informing



Quinn performs his last gig March 17, 2016 to a packed pub of local fans who have followed his career, some for more than 30 years. (Photo by Thomas O'Hara)



them and literally telling them THEIR story, is critical. We provide hope.”

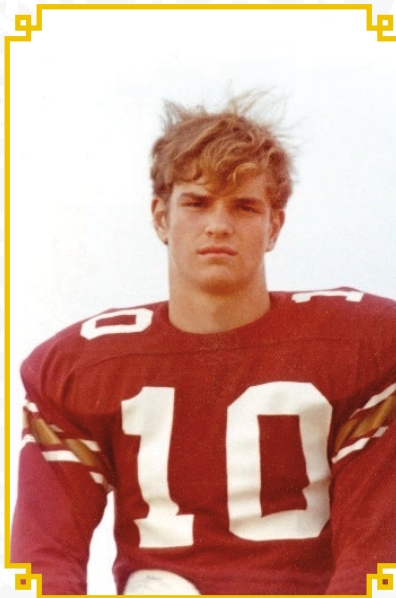
Quinn has never forgotten conducting an impromptu news conference on a soon-to-be flooded South Carolina beach. “We were there to share news of their lives with ocean side home owners. Families cried and hugged us, thanking everyone in a red USACE coat or shirt.” For balance, he was once spit on by an angry homeowner with chemical warfare materiel beneath his property. “Face-to-face can get hand-to-hand quickly,” he said. But that’s how he likes it.

Quinn maintains he has the utmost respect for those who are able to keep up in the new information age of immediate satisfaction over compressive understanding. He will admit he was born in a different era. While different, he still sees similarities in the social media era. “You still have to feed the beast, even when their appetite changes,” said Quinn.

## Pioneer

According to those who led public affairs efforts in the later 90s, Quinn set the bar for its operations and in a large part is credited for where public affairs contributes to today’s mission within USACE. While the realization of integrated strategic communications would become commonplace for the Army and the USACE during Operations Iraqi/Enduring Freedom and Hurricane Katrina, Quinn was beating that drum more than a decade before. In the era of BRAC and during government downsizing and escalating mission needs under dwindled resources, Quinn championed public affairs from being more

than just the passive responders to media questions and occasional authors of magazines. He pushed for integrated communication efforts in public outreach, environmental public engagement and proactive messaging during emergency operations. In doing such he was recognized as the first recipient of the USACE Public Affairs Practitioner of the Year in 1999.



In the 70s, Quinn led a different team as quarterback for the University of Omaha Mavericks football team. (Courtesy photo)

“While the community was clamoring to get a ‘seat at the table,’ Quinn was already there,” said Carol Sanders, now retired, who served as the Headquarters U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chief of Public Affairs from 2001-2006.

“Kevin was such a wonderful supporter to me from the time he came to Charleston (District) to help out with Hurricane Hugo back in 1989,” said Sanders.

“Through his great advice and counsel we worked to make communication more relevant and integrated into the Corps processes.”

“In 2005 he definitely was a huge help during the Katrina response when the Corps was ‘all-hands’ to help out,” Sanders continued. “He is the consummate Corps storyteller as well as singer of Irish songs. A good friend and great professional. You could always count on Kevin to respond with his smile and willingness to help out--and a bear hug or two.”

In addition to being the go-to field public affairs specialist in the late 90’s and early 2000s, Quinn helped develop a generation of communicators still practicing today. “I know his mentoring took a lot of PAOs from good to great,” said Sanders. She is not mistaken -- at last count no less than a half dozen of

(Continued on pg 20)

More than three dozen individual and team awards reflect the impressive professional career of Kevin Quinn as a communicator of the Corps story. (Photo by Jeremy Bell)



# TELLING THE CORPS STORY

By THOMAS O'HARA, Public Affairs Director

(Continued from pg 19)

his direct-subordinates and peers have gone on to lead district, division and national USACE teams, while others have ventured out into the private sector. Professionals who still attribute lessons gleaned with their time along Quinn as key to their success and growth.

"Kevin is a great coach and mentor, and a great friend. As a boss, he was honest and he gave me opportunities to learn and fail in private versus on a public stage. He would counsel me to help me understand my opportunities for improvement. He made it okay for me to take risks and improve my skillset, and he wholeheartedly supported my professional development. Not every practitioner is as lucky," said Monique Farmer, Director of District Communications at Omaha Public Schools, Omaha, Nebraska, who worked as a member of the Omaha Public Affairs staff from 2001 through 2013.

"To this very day, when I encounter a communication challenge I've not experienced before, I call Kevin because I know I will get sound, trusted, objective communication advice from a legendary pro who has been doing this for 30 plus years," said Farmer. "That's invaluable to me."

## Dedication

These days, Quinn's workday starts much earlier than most and lasts well into the evening. The 6-foot 4-inch frame that once punched through defensive backs is now challenged to lift itself from his car into his scooter and then back into his office area. The mere effort of getting to work each day is a tedious process, but you won't see this Irishman complain.

Last spring, with years and health issues mixing with a myriad of medical concerns that come with age and activity, Quinn reluctantly 'retired' from the Irish music with his official 'last gig' on St. Patrick's Day. It wasn't an easy decision and one he faced with a heavy heart, realizing an adjustment of priorities was needed if he was going to be able to keep up the pace and his health. "I'll always have Irish music in my heart," Quinn said, "But my first priority is my family, and I can't be there for them if I am not healthy."

Fingers that sometimes struggle with new technology, tiny smartphones and mini-keyboards linked to iPads and other web based systems can't quite dance like they used to on the guitar.

Nonetheless, he still has ideas for the future of communications. "How does an agency

like the Corps, with its mix of millennials and old guard, communicate within so it can communicate properly without?" asked Quinn. "That's a big deal."

Today, when he is not enjoying life as grandfather and spending time with his own family you will find him sitting down with his USACE family -- especially with the new employees -- actively listening to them and figuring out how to make their USACE story unique. "While crisis communications is the focus during contingency operations, it is the 'peacetime' communications that enables retention, recruiting, overall understanding, and ultimately the long term ability of our district to continue providing an exceptional level of service to our nation," said Col. John Henderson, Omaha District commander.

Admittedly physically slower than he was in his day, Quinn is reluctant to talk about hanging it up. While his official music career may be over, in his words, he knows he still has some songs left to sing and stories left to tell.

Said Quinn "There's still gas in the tank. "Don't start singin' Danny Boy for me yet."



Kevin and his band, Donneybrook, played for the Omaha District during its 80th Anniversary Social in 2014 (Courtesy photo)



Quality time away from work now is spent with family passing along stories and music (Courtesy photo)



# Surfer turned Construction Division Chief bails after 33 years of riding Corps wave

There aren't a great number of Omaha District employees who grew up surfing: perhaps this has to do with the absence of sea water here. After more than three decades with the organization, Robert Michaels is retiring from his position as the Omaha District Chief of Construction. Something that stands out: he isn't originally from these parts, but he managed to reach one of the district's most senior positions by the time he was 43.

Michaels' career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers started out almost by chance. He grew up in southern California, and right out of college he became an intern with the Los Angeles District.

"I hadn't heard of the Corps until I was interviewing for jobs with engineering firms," said Michaels. "I read that the Corps did big projects all around the world and they offered me a job."

Michaels came on to the USACE in 1983 just after winter storms battered the California coast. The high winds claimed 17 lives and millions in damages.

"I started out doing storm damage assessments on jetties and piers up and down the coast," said Michaels. "As a surfer it was a great experience to now be an engineer working on these structures I had surfed around and seen at the beach for years."

Soon after that, Michaels' work with the USACE took him away from the beach. His career is distinguished by work around the world. From the Los Angeles District Robert moved to Germany twice, spending 11 years working in Europe.

In 1999 Michaels came into the Omaha District family when he was offered the job as Rocky Mountain Area Engineer in Colorado Springs, Colorado. In 2005 he was promoted to Construction Division Chief and made the move to Omaha.

How does somebody move up in an organization so quickly? What does it take?

"Robert is probably the most intellectually gifted government engineer I know," said Construction Division Deputy Jay Hodges. "He is unbelievably brilliant."

"Looking at Robert's career progression, his increasing levels of responsibility, it speaks well for his abilities," said Civil Works Branch Chief Kayla Eckert-Uptmor, who also came from the Los Angeles District. "He's very intelligent and able to get things done: he's incredibly strategic."

When speaking on his career progression, Michaels gives credit to mentors and co-workers he's had through his years with USACE.

(Continued on pg 22)





# PREPARING FOR TOMORROW

(Continued from pg 21)

“Russ Ukita was an Engineer I knew during my first tour in Europe: he taught me how to deal with contractors and how to negotiate,” Michaels said. “Construction representatives taught me how to deal with different people in a construction office and how to get things done. Con-reps are invaluable and they have day-to-day experience that engineers don’t always get.”

Roberts’ colleagues argue that it’s his winning personality that have earned him his position.

“He doesn’t have expectations from his staff to do something that he wouldn’t do himself,” said Vincent Turner, Omaha District Military Branch Chief. “He leads by example, and he doesn’t micro-manage: he lets people do their jobs unless he sees them going off the rails. He is directive when it’s necessary.”

A constant feature of Michaels’s career has been new experiences and continual development. Apart from Michaels’ 11 years in Europe, he’s also served a four-month tour in Iraq, as well as a seven-month and a 12-month tour in Afghanistan. He also served Omaha District as the Deputy Engineer for Project Management.

“Robert is always seeking advancement in regards to his knowledge,” said Hodges. “He’s always looking for training and wants to stay on top of all issues, and that translates into his personal life as well: for his daughter’s wedding Robert took dancing lessons so that he could take the first dance with his daughter. That’s how serious he is about improving himself.”

Michaels’ co-workers agree that he may seem reserved at first, and some may underestimate him for that, but there’s much more to Michaels than meets the eye.

“He’s really fun to travel with,” said Turner. “Most people when they travel will just stay in their hotel room: not Michaels. He likes to get out and see things: and he can sing too. When we would go to Colorado Springs there was a bar with a piano and he would sing along: he has an amazing singing voice.”

“He is a brilliant public speaker,” said Hodges. “When he knows that he’ll be addressing a crowd he writes his speech, he rehearses it and his delivery is great. He did a 15-minute comedic routine for his area engineers. The material was spot on.”

Talk to any of Robert Michaels’ co-workers and it’s easy to see how this surfer from California came to be in charge of billion-dollar construction programs

in the mid-west and around the world. He’s a highly capable, polished, strategic and well-rounded human being.

“He admires without jealousy, he can praise without flattery, follow without imitating and lead without manipulating,” Eckert-Uptmor said succinctly. “That’s an interesting way to move. I think the world of him: he’s going to be missed.”



Photo caption for Key presentation, Reword to say-Robert Michaels presents a USACE key to a former Peterson Air Force Base Mission Support Commander upon turning over the building during a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a mission support addition in 2007. (Courtesy photo)



Project Engineers Chris DeVries and Chad House, Area Engineer Robert Michaels, and Deputy Area Engineer Steve Daniels board a flight to Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan in 2013. Michael’s spent 23 months deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan as a USACE civilian. (Courtesy photo.)

Spread: Before beginning his illustrious career as a USACE engineer, Michaels grew up in Southern California and spent much of his free time surfing at Pacific beaches. While his work has taken him away from the beach, he enjoys the surf when he visits California. (Courtesy photo.)



# DISASTER PLANNING

(Continued from pg 5)

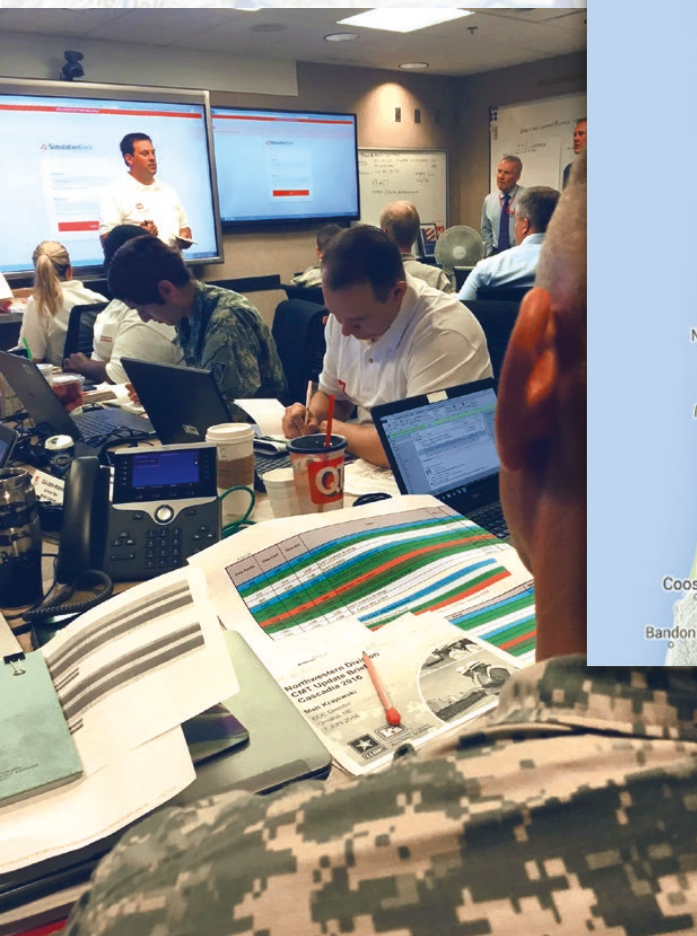
for the Omaha District. We became Northwestern Division, working with Walla Walla. We became “One Corps.”

Long after the aftershocks have become motionless and USACE, FEMA and other agencies have re-established civil works operations

in the Pacific Northwest, accounted for its personnel, re-established life support functions, and stabilized essential infrastructure including its dams, the lessons learned from this exercise environment continue to tremor in the minds of the participants.

The Cascadia Earthquake exploded in the 1700s and could happen again. Recent news reports speak of the potential in the west coast. And the Northwestern Division and Districts know preparation is key.

(Below) The Emergency Operations Center was a buzz with Emergency Operations Center Manager Ryan Buckley updating Team members on an as needed basis to keep the lines of communication open and flowing during the catastrophic exercise. (Photo by Tom O'Hara)



(MAP) In response to a catastrophic earthquake along the Cascadia Subduction Zone, impacted Northwestern Division commands implement necessary plans, personnel accountability procedures, and initiate organizational reconstitution in order to account for all USACE personnel, support federal response and recovery missions, assess, repair and sustain operation of USACE Civil Works infrastructure and shape long-term infrastructure recovery.



# Dedication and teamwork yields high rewards



As the fiscal year came to a close, many employees were recognized for their outstanding efforts throughout the year in an awards ceremony held September 23. It started with an On-the-Spot award to Nick Geibel.

Members of the Aurora Replacement Hospital Acquisition Team, earned the FY2015 USACE Excellence in Contracting Awards Program Team of the Year.

Another team award was presented for execution of the Defense Attaché Office renovations located in



the U. S. Embassies World-wide with more than 60 locations being renovated to date totaling \$120 million since FY 10. Those members were awarded the Fiscal Year 2015 Intelligence Community Facilities Program of the Year Team award.

The teamwork theme continued, as Jimmy Harding, Vince Turner, John Offen, Robert Collupy, Brian Nohr, Andy Temeyer, Jay Ling, Mark Huckle, Scott Lindgren and Melissa Dye earned the USACE 2016 Building the Future award for their partnership with the 13th Combat Aviation Brigade ASB Hangar at Fort

Carson, Colorado and the 2016 Presidential Green Gov award signed by the president and vice president respectively, Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

Many received Commander's Coins from Col. John Henderson, including Tina Keimig, Adam Ashton and Matthew Olijnek, Donna Jackson, Lynn Reed and Mark Young. All going above and beyond their duties to support the District and its mission.



Coins from the New York District Commander, Col. David Caldwell, were received by Jeffrey Wyant, Timothy Gouger and Mark Herse for their support of the New York City River Bridges projects.

Others were recognized with Awards for Civilian Service including, John Ruden, Andrea Pickrell,

John Kochevko, Seth Reedy, Kevin Vogel, and the Garrison Project was awarded for their conscious behavior and commitment to employee and public safety which resulted in more than 6,583 days without a lost time accident.



Clay Haraseth and a Pioneer Award for Teamwork to Troy Kluthe.

(Photos by Jeremy Bell)



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

# PAINT-A-THON

## LIVES ON

Another house within our community gets a makeover from the volunteers and family members of Corps employees as Brush-Up Nebraska Paint-a-thon 2016 came to a close recently.

The ultimate goal was to transform the house in North Omaha from a drab white to a sparkly white with dark trim. It progressed into much more as not only were the scrapers busy scraping old paint, and the brushes busy brushing on new paint, but there were branches and bushes being bundled for pick up.

The gutters were cleared out, along with calking of minor repairs.

And once again the Omaha volunteers pulled off another grand district tradition of giving back to the community.



While most were grabbing paint brushes, others were bundling up brushes of a different sort.

First year Paint-a-thon "rookie" Keith Fink sings the tune, "If I had a hammer....."



This is team Omaha District volunteering their efforts at the 2016 Paint-a-thon event, showcasing their latest "masterpiece".

(USACE photos)



A good mix of paint brushes and volunteers makes for a shiny new house.







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**PHOTOS · 2014**

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