



US Army Corps
of Engineers
New Orleans District

Media Advisory

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Annual test at Bonnet Carré Spillway Apr. 1

Operational procedures will practice lifting wooden needles at one bay

What: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District will be performing an annual operational test on a portion of the Bonnet Carré Spillway on April 1. Corps crews will be practicing the removal and replacement of 10 to 20 wooden needles at bay #305 of 350. The Corps performs the test annually when water is over the weir and passing through the needles to simulate conditions in place during an actual opening. It takes about one hour to lift and replace up to 20 needles. The test is done during high water season as an opportunity to practice spillway operational procedures, especially for new crew members. As designed, the operation of the Bonnet Carré Spillway is very labor intensive; safe needle lifting and replacement as well as familiarization with the procedure are a priority.

When: Tuesday, April 1 at 10 a.m.

Where: Bonnet Carré Spillway, 16302 River Road, Norco, LA 70079

Media R.S.V.P.: Please call the District Headquarters' Public Affairs Office at 504-862-2201 by **4 p.m., Monday, March 31**. The media will not be allowed on the structure. All media will be in a marked off area near the spillway. There is no significant parking available at the spillway office, and the crowd for the event may be heavy; consequently, the media is encouraged to arrive early.

Directions to the spillway: The Bonnet Carré Spillway is located about 28 miles above New Orleans. To get there, take I-10 and exit at the I-310 interchange, proceeding south toward the river and the Luling-Destrehan Bridge. Before reaching the river, exit I-310 at the Norco-Destrehan exit. Take the Norco exit, which brings you to River Road. Turn right, toward Norco, and stay on River Road for about 6 miles. Just past Norco's Shell Refinery, the road rises onto the Bonnet Carré Spillway levee; nearby is the Corps' Bonnet Carré office.

Event is not open to the public.

Current High Water Background: The Corps activated Phase I flood fight procedures on March 24 to assist local levee authorities and districts with increased levee inspections and surveillance operations along the Lower Atchafalaya and Mississippi Rivers. The efforts are being done after the National Weather Service (NWS) forecasted the Mississippi River to crest at 16.5 feet on or about April 7 at the Carrollton Gauge in New Orleans due to heavy rains and melting snow upriver and along the Ohio River Valley.

Under Phase I, Corps sector teams and emergency operations operate three days a week, 10 hours each day on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays until further notice. The coordinated efforts check for areas along the levee that may impact the integrity of the levee including scours, seepage or sand boils. Phase two is activated when river predictions are 17 ft and rising at the Carrollton Gauge in New Orleans, which could increase the efforts to 24 hour surveillance.

Based on current forecast, the Corps does not intend to open the Bonnet Carré Spillway structure. Operation of the spillway is determined by water flow and velocity, not river stage. The spillway structure is put into action when the high river flows exceed 1.25 million cubic feet per second (cfs). When open, the spillway is able to divert up to 250,000 cfs from the river into Lake Ponchartrain; thus relieving pressure on local levees, lowering river stages, and reducing the velocity of the river current south of the spillway.

The decision to open the Bonnet Carré Spillway structure is made by the Mississippi River Commission President, Brig. Gen. Michael Walsh, commander of the Corps' Mississippi Valley Division in Vicksburg, Miss. The spillway was last opened during the 1997 high water season.

For more information, please visit www.mvn.usace.army.mil.