



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
New Orleans District

# News Release

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504-862-2201

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: John Hall, 504-862-2201  
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## **Three dredges sent to restore depth in Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet**

NEW ORLEANS – Three dredges have been dispatched by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to begin restoring the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet. The emergency dredging costs are expected to be about \$17 million.

Sediment deposited by Hurricane Ivan has reduced the depths available to navigation in the channel, which connects the Port of New Orleans' inner harbor and the Gulf of Mexico.

The shoaling has reduced depth to 24 feet, blocking many ocean-going ships from using the channel. For most of its 76 miles, including all inland miles, the MRGO's authorized project depth is 36 feet.

In addition, the Coast Guard has closed the waterway to all commercial traffic until it can restore aids to navigation, such as lights and channel markers, damaged by Hurricane Ivan.

In addition to deepwater ships, the order also stops the shallow-draft traffic, such as offshore-oil craft, fishing boats and towboats and barges, from using the MRGO while aids to navigation are being repaired.

Many navigation aids have been destroyed or are missing, the Coast Guard in New Orleans said. It may be the end of September before repair can be completed.

The Coast Guard order closes the MRGO from Mile 59, near the Paris Road Bridge a short distance seaward from the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. The order ends out in the open Gulf.

Most of the shoaling caused by Hurricane Ivan occurred along six miles of the MRGO channel in open Gulf, known as the bar channel. This is the ocean end of the MRGO and has an authorized project depth of 38 feet.

The first dredge on the scene will be the Corps of Engineers' hopper dredge Wheeler, whose hopper has a capacity of 8,000 cubic yards. It will begin work tonight (Friday), having sailed Thursday night from its home berth on the Mississippi River in New Orleans. Two contract dredges are also being deployed. The Newport will begin work Saturday. And the Eagle is coming from Freeport, Texas.

The Corps of Engineers expects to re-open the MRGO to deep-draft ships in about three to four weeks. In order to speed up the process, the dredges will make what is known as a "pilot cut." This will be a skinny channel, 150 feet wide and 32 feet deep as needed.

Further restoration of the MRGO will require months. The MRGO's authorized project width is 500 feet, 600 feet in the bar channel. More will be known as dredging continues, and the Corps' sonar-equipped boats make more hydrographic surveys to update channel depth contours.