



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

News Release

Public Affairs Office, 7400 Leake Ave.
www.mvn.usace.army.mil

Tel. 504-862-2201
Fax 504-862-1724

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: John Hall, 504-862-2201

June 1, 2001

Despite long drought, Corps says levees in south Louisiana are in good condition

*Speeding vehicles, not levee failure, are the danger
arising from superficial cracks caused by lack of rain*

NEW ORLEANS – What about cracks appearing in the levees in rain-starved south Louisiana? With hurricane season beginning today (June 1), does the drought mean danger?

“The short answer is no,” said Bill Caver, geotechnical chief for the New Orleans District of the Army Corps of Engineers.

“The drought has caused cracks to appear in some places, but they are only superficial and pose no danger of levee failure,” Caver said.

In some places, the Corps is filling cracks in the interest of safety. The trouble: Drivers speeding atop the Mississippi River levees might not mix well with cracks along the edge of the crown.

“Some people think nothing of driving 50 or 60 miles an hour on the crown of the levee. At some locations, the river levees have cracks just big enough for a tire to drop in and flip the vehicle into the river,” Caver said.

In Plaquemines Parish, clay was used to fill a 1½-mile long crack just below Port Sulphur. Upriver near Donaldsonville, a crack was filled in a one-mile stretch.

No fill has been needed for the Corps' hurricane-protection levees. The cracks are small enough that a good rain would close them up, Caver said.

It's no accident that Corps-designed levees can handle the drought.

"We design levees for all conditions. Our designs are shaped to deal with droughts that are far worse than this one," said John Grieshaber, chief of the Structure Foundation Section of the Geotechnical Branch.

The New Orleans District is responsible for Corps projects in 30,000 square miles of Louisiana south of Alexandria. <http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/>

River levees. The district has 961 miles of levees in the Mississippi River & Tributaries Project, including 449 miles in the Atchafalaya Basin.
<http://www.mvd.usace.army.mil/Nwsinfo/MRTBrochure.htm>

Hurricane levees. The district has 340 miles of hurricane-protection levees, most of them in the New Orleans area. See Hurricane & Emergency page:
<http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/pao/response/index.asp>

Mississippi River Levee by Ell Pilie, a Corps levee engineer, one page.
http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/pao/releases/riv_ell3.pdf

Filename: levee_drought_w_header.doc
Directory: \\mwnweb02\public\$\PAO\RELEASES
Template: C:\Documents and
Settings\b2imimpm.MVN01\Application
Data\Microsoft\Templates\Normal.dot
Title: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Subject:
Author: John Hall
Keywords:
Comments:
Creation Date: 5/31/2001 4:44 PM
Change Number: 3
Last Saved On: 5/31/2001 5:36 PM
Last Saved By: SirVive
Total Editing Time: 16 Minutes
Last Printed On: 5/31/2001 5:44 PM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 2
Number of Words: 387 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 2,209 (approx.)