



Tower Times

Rock Island District's News Magazine

September 2010



Working alongside Navigation

Lockport Stage III construction well underway



**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Rock Island District

Tower Times

Contents

September 2010

ON THE COVER



An anchor wall was constructed as part of Stage III construction at Lockport Lock on the Illinois River. The anchor wall will be used to support the new canal wall of precast concrete panels. Construction has been taking place alongside the navigation industry to rehabilitate the left descending canal wall. See story on page 4.
Photo by Paul Whitmer, Rock Island District.

3 New Fiscal Year Looks Promising, Productive
Col. Shawn McGinley, District Commander

4 Stage III, Rehabilitating the Canal Wall
Stage III at Lockport Lock is well underway

6 Hispanic Heritage Month

7 District Commander's Awards
Three employees recognized at awards ceremony

8 Safety Corner - Garage Home Safety Tips

9 Violence at Work

10 Around the District

10 Tower Times Survey
Your chance to provide feedback on the Tower Times

11 Spotlight on the District - Paul Whitmer

12 September is National Preparedness Month

Tower Times

Rock Island District, Clock Tower Building
P.O. Box 2004
Rock Island, IL 61204-2004
Email: cemvr-cc@usace.army.mil
Phone: (309) 794-5729

Commander: Col. Shawn McGinley
Deputy Commander: Lt. Col. Jared Ware
Chief, Corporate Communications: Ron Fournier
Editor: Hilary Markin

This publication is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the Tower Times are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, or the Rock Island District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

It is published monthly by the Corporate Communications Office, Rock Island District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Articles or photographic submissions are welcome and should be submitted by the 15th of each month preceding publication. Circulation 1,500.

On the web at: www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/TowerTimes

A message from....

Colonel Shawn McGinley, District Commander



New Fiscal Year Looks Promising, Productive

September marks an end to Fiscal Year 2010 and as the District works hard to close out the budget, we are also preparing for the new fiscal year beginning 1 Oct.

With a budget exceeding \$143 million, not including American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and Supplemental Funds, FY10 was a robust year for the District. And, the allocations were similar throughout the Mississippi Valley Division.

The new Fiscal Year looks to be similar. FY11 allocations are expected to be a little more than \$145 million. But, the difference in our operating budget could be the absence of funding from ARRA and supplemental funds. The absence of these funds could be taken as cause for concern when in fact it should be seen as just the normal financial ebb and flow most organizations experience.

The District's support to New Orleans mission is drawing down. The RINOS team's role in the huge Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System is nearly complete as they finish up work on the West Closure Complex which is a vital part of ensuring the HSDRRS is completed in June 2011. RINOS has been a significant focus for the District but the mission coming to an end is not indicative of any curb to our operations tempo. Even with the West Closure Complex complete, there will be plenty of work for the talented people who have carried out the RINOS mission.

What I want everyone in the District to understand is that jobs and work are not an issue as we head into FY11. It is true that a large portion of our FY09 and FY10 programs came from appropriations that were provided by Congress to address specific situations that were outside the normal budget cycle. Programs like ARRA, HSDRRS, and flood recovery supplemental funds contributed a large portion of our FY09 and FY10 programs. Whether we see those types of additional income in FY11 is unknown at this time but our regular appropriations are expected to be very near last fiscal year's total.

What FY11 does represent is a need to recommit ourselves to fiscally responsible decisions. Fiscal prudence should always be the way to conduct our business and I hope everyone is keeping that in mind as you go about executing your mission. The economy is what it is and the Corps is no different from the rest of the United States. We need to tighten our belts and ensure we are spending wisely. I believe that is how we operate and I know we will continue to do so this coming fiscal year.

As we look to ensure fiscal responsibility, we can also look at FY11 as a time to focus on Division-wide issues like Regionalization. The Division's efforts to regionalize should have significant impacts on how work is shared throughout all the Districts. The regionalization of Planning and Real Estate functions from District Centric to a Regional focus will drive interdependence in the region resulting in more efficient and consistent processes across the region. It is the future and we need to be ready for it.

Closing out a fiscal year can be a stressful time. But I want everyone in the District to know that we are well prepared and ready to meet the challenges we face in FY11. We are prepared because of the vast talent throughout the District. I appreciate everything you do on a daily basis. I think everyone should know that FY11 looks to be another opportunity for this District to excel. It looks to be another busy, productive and successful fiscal year. **CONTINUE BUILDING STRONG®** 

Stage III, Rehabilitat

By Hilary Markin, Editor

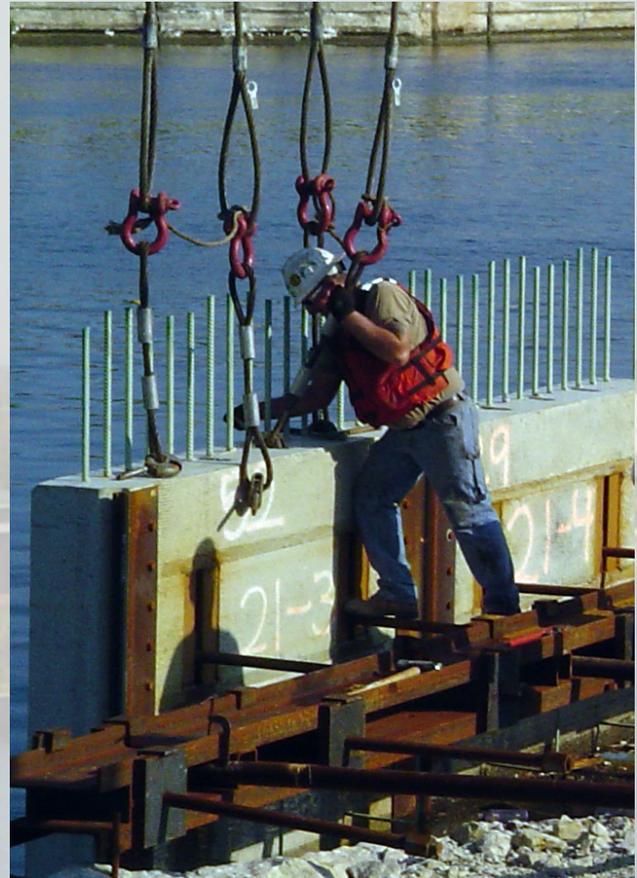
The largest project in the District's history is well on its way to completion. The advanced stage of deterioration of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal embankments along the three-mile upper pool approach area to Lockport Lock has led to the \$110 million multi-year repair program in coordination with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago. This also includes the rehabilitation of the Lockport Controlling Works in Stage Two which was awarded in July with completion scheduled for 2012.

The first stage of the project was completed in September 2009 with the rehabilitation of the right descending Lockport Approach Dike. Stage Three is currently underway, rehabilitating the left descending Lockport Canal Wall that was in the advanced stages of deterioration. Walsh Construction Company, Chicago, was awarded the \$64 million contract in September 2009 and began working on the project in November 2009.

Prior to awarding the contract, Rock Island District was hard at work coming up with a design to address the issues and find solutions that will last.



The crane maneuvers a nearly 71,000 pound precast panel into place along the Lockport left descending canal wall.



Contractors from Walsh Construction work to unhook the concrete panel from the crane after placing it into the trench underwater. The panel is then secured to the anchor wall.

The canal wall was built in the late 1890s-early 1900s of concrete made with lime cement. This material has deteriorated over the last hundred years at an accelerated rate compared to modern day Portland cement.

“Two different design concepts were considered. The biggest hurdle was creating a design that didn't disrupt navigation but still fixed the deteriorating existing structure without causing further damage. The design team included multiple geotechnical, structural, civil and electrical engineers working together to solve the problems the Lockport canal wall presented,” said Amy Moore, design engineer.

The chosen design concept constructs an anchor wall along the

ing the Canal Wall

Contractors work to airlift rock spoils from the recently excavated trench below the Lockport Canal Wall. Precast concrete panels will be placed into the trench and tied to the anchor wall.



entire length of the existing wall, approximately two miles. The contractor then drills and excavates a trench for precast concrete panels to sit in. The panels are then connected to the anchor wall and the area in between the panels is filled with material. The final step is to place a concrete cap on top of the precast panel and fill creating a solid surface.

“The biggest hurdle was creating a design that didn’t disrupt navigation but still fixed the deteriorating existing structure without causing further damage.”

“This has been a tremendous learning opportunity for me. As I watch the concept transform from paper drawings to steel and concrete I am amazed by the planning and design processes that were used in creating such a unique project. Our engineering and design group has really done a great job – now it’s on the construction side to see that the work is done properly,” said Paul Whitmer, construction control representative.

Although the District has used precast panels before during lock rehabilitations, they have not used them in this way. The precast panels allow for more quality control of the concrete since it is cured at the factory and trucked to the site. Each panel

is approximately 8 feet wide, 16 inches thick and 36-40 feet tall depending on channel depth that weigh up to 71,000 pounds.

The new design concept has posed challenges turned into opportunities to deliver a higher quality product. The team has worked through utility issues, including a redesign around an AT&T phone line as well as logistical issues stemming from a single access road to the site. Work was also halted for nearly four weeks during a strike by the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 150 and the Laborer’s District Council of Chicago and Vicinity.

Funding for Stage Three construction is from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 to improve and strengthen the area’s water resources. The remaining ARRA funds will be used to complete Stage Two.

The entire process has involved many offices and people within the Rock Island District to make it all happen as well as coordination with the Chicago District of the Corps of Engineers. Chicago District provided the technical review of the construction project in 2009. The two Districts share a unique relationship with the Rock Island District maintaining the locks and dams on the Illinois Waterway within the Chicago District. 

Photos by Paul Whitmer, Rock Island District.

Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15 - October 15

By Victoria Terronez and Felix Castro-Canderon, Hispanic Employment Program Co-managers

Hispanic Heritage Month is September 15 through October 15. This year's theme is - Heritage, Diversity, Integrity and Honor: The Renewed Hope of America.

This year marks the 22nd annual celebration since President Lyndon B. Johnson obtained authorization from Congress to proclaim a week in September as National Hispanic Heritage Month. In 1988, President Ronald Regan expanded the observance ending on October 15.

During this month, we celebrate the rich ethnic culture, beautiful traditions, and festive music of U.S. residents who can trace their roots back to Spain, Mexico and other Spanish speaking nations in Central America, South America and the Caribbean. The term Hispanic refers to Spanish speaking people of any race. More than 35 million people identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino.

There will be several Hispanic Heritage Month Celebrations held throughout the communities of the Rock Island District. The "Viva Quad Cities Fiesta" will be held Saturday, September 11, from Noon-11 p.m. at Bass Street Landing, 17th street and River Drive, Moline, Ill. For more information on the Viva Quad Cities events please visit www.vivaquadcities.com.

Vive La Hispanidad will be held Friday, October 8, from 6-11 p.m. at Galleria Marchetti, 825 West Erie Street Chicago, Ill. For more information please visit www.Latinoculturalcenter.org

Fiesta en el Rio- Peoria Riverfront Peoria, Ill., will be Saturday, October 9, from 5-11 p.m. Fiesta en el Rio will feature authentic Latin American food and drink, a children's area, local musicians and much more. For more information visit www.peoriahispanics.org

2010 is the year of the Bi-centennial Celebrations in Mexico commemorating 200 years of Independence from Spanish rule and 100 years since its Revolution began in 1910, toppling Dictator Porfirio Diaz. El Grito, September 16, is the Mexican Fiesta to celebrate Mexico's independence from Spanish rule. Other Latin American countries that share this celebration are Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

LULAC (League of Latin American Citizens) will commemorate the Bi-centennial of Mexico's Independence with the Mexican Independence Fiesta, Saturday, September 18, at the LULAC Club, 4224 Ricker Hill Road, Davenport, Iowa, from 6 p.m.-midnight. For more information please visit www.lulac10.org. 



August Answer: 2010 Visitor Assistance Training

New recreation staff receive pepper spray training during Visitor Assistance Training earlier this summer.

Can you name where this photo was taken? If so, send your answer to Hilary.R.Markin@usace.army.mil. The first correct answer will receive a special prize and be recognized in the next Tower Times.

DISTRICT COMMANDER'S AWARDS



Rebecca Costello, purchasing agent, Contracting Division, was presented the March District Commander's Award by Col. Shawn McGinley. Costello has been a steadfast leader in Contracting Division regarding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). She has led the office through the intricacies and requirements of ARRA which are extremely complex. One of the biggest challenges has been getting all of the District's contractors receiving ARRA funds to report the number and nature of jobs created due to their ARRA funded contract award(s) each quarter. Under the direction and organization of Costello, the Rock Island District was the only district last quarter to have 100 percent of their ARRA receiving contractors reporting to the necessary websites.



Jim Ross, archeologist, Environmental and Economic Branch, Regional Planning and Environmental Division, North, was presented the April District Commander's Award by Col. Shawn McGinley. Ross became involved with the Neal Smith Trail rehabilitation project following the retirement of a fellow employee. He hit the ground running and was instrumental when unexpected resistance and disagreement from the State of Iowa arose in regards to the past and present cultural coordination. Ross went above and beyond in pulling together all of the District's documentation of cultural coordination on the Neal Smith Trail. This high profile project combined with deadlines to expend funds created an urgency to resolve the issues. Ross's extra effort in corresponding with all partners, organizing documents and resolving the issue resulted in only a minor delay to the trail construction contractor.



Gene Vandusseldorp, hydrologic technician, Water Control Section, Hydrology and Hydraulics Branch, Engineering and Construction Division, was presented the May District Commander's Award by Col. Shawn McGinley. Vandusseldorp has gone out of his way and performed beyond expectations assisting ACE-IT and the District as a whole. He shared his vast knowledge of the buildings existing wiring with current personnel since he did much of the original wiring himself. He has also readily provided expert opinions on types of hardware and recommended vendors when needed. Vandusseldorp is a great example of someone willing to share his expertise and talents for the greater good of the District even though it is outside his current job duties.

Good things are happening all over the District - please take a moment to recognize fellow employees who are making a difference and going the extra mile to Build Strong. All employees are eligible to nominate fellow employees. If you have questions regarding the criteria or format to submit nominations, please contact Anne Marie Roarty at 309-794-5436.

SAFETY CORNER

Garage Home Safety Tips

For many, the garage has become an extension of the home. Most families use the garage for storage or projects that are too big or too messy for indoors. Unfortunately, the garage can be a magnet for junk, which also makes it a place where falls, poisonings and fires can happen. If your garage has become an extension of your home, follow the steps below to make it safer.

Storing Chemicals and Poisons

- Read the label of products you buy and keep in your garage. If you see the words “Caution,” “Warning,” “Danger,” “Poison,” or “Keep Out of Reach of Children,” be very careful to store them out of reach of children and away from heat.
- Store poisons in a place where children cannot see or touch them. Use child safety locks to secure cabinets. Examples of products to keep locked up include: automotive fluids, anti-freeze, paint thinner, pesticides and turpentine.
- Keep products in the container they came in, do not put them in a different bottle or jar for storage.
- Do not mix products together; the contents could mix with dangerous results.
- Pool chemicals are poisonous and can catch on fire; follow the manufacturer’s directions when storing pool chemicals. Keep pool chemicals dry, tightly covered, in the container they came in and away from other chemical products.
- Never pour chemicals down a sewer drain to discard, contact your local city or county for disposal locations.



Gasoline

- Gasoline is very dangerous inside a home or garage. Gasoline vapors can explode with only a tiny spark.
- It is best not to keep gasoline at home. If you must keep some, use a container specifically for gasoline and approved by an accredited laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories.
- To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, never run a barbecue grill, car or generator in the garage or any other room of your home.



Garage Organization

- Avoid tip-overs, make sure garage shelves are not overloaded and anchor them to the wall.
- Always store heavier items close to the ground.
- Organize all items in designated, easy-to-reach places.
- Store ladders horizontally and off the floor to prevent tripping. Secure ladders with hooks and brackets that are secured to the wall.
- Store shovels, rakes, lawn chairs, bikes and other sharp and large objects on the wall and out of high traffic areas.
- Organize and store sharp or electrical tools in a locked cabinet or up high where children cannot reach.
- Organize and store safety accessories close to the tools they should be used with (safety glasses with the weed trimmer).
- Safely dispose of oil or gas-soaked rags after use, do not place them in the garbage. If you do not have a special container for these items place them outside away from the house and combustible materials.



Prevent Injuries in the Garage

- Organize and store sports gear, toys and recreational items together and off the garage floor to prevent tripping.
- To prevent falls, keep the garage floor, steps and entries clear of clutter.
- Clean up grease and other spills when they happen. Keep saw dust and other dirt swept up to prevent slick surfaces.
- Make sure your garage is well lit, use bright lights at the top and bottom of stairs.
- When purchasing or remodeling a home with a garage, make sure the door has an auto-reverse feature, test by placing a paper towel roll under the garage door as it closes to test the safety device. The door should open quickly meaning it won't trap people or pets. 



Violence at Work

SECURITY OFFICES

During September the Rock Island Arsenal is conducting an Active Shooter training exercise. Do you know what actions to take to enhance your survival? Do you know what information to report if you find yourself in an active shooter situation? Do you know what to do if confronted by a shooter?

The potential for a shooting in the workplace exists in every city throughout the United States. Although the possession of firearms on or around federal/military buildings is rare, the availability of firearms and past national and county shootings dictate the need for a response plan, in case a shooting or other violent attack occurs.

All District employees must be continually vigilant to the risk of violence at work. Every employee is urged to be aware of:

- Unusually aggressive, odd, or scary behavior of coworkers
- Threats of violence or retribution, either serious or said jokingly
- Co-workers who are distraught or suicidal
- Overheard comments or rumors of some kind of planned or intended violence
- Presence of gangs or cults that have a history or suggestive behavior of violence
- Fights or other acts of violence in the workplace
- Presence of guns, other weapons, suspicious objects

If you become aware of a possible situation notify the Security and Law Enforcement Office immediately. If there is no answer, and you feel there is an immediate threat, contact local law enforcement.

If a shooting occurs, take immediate action. When the shooting begins or you are advised that a shooting has taken place, you should do the following:

- Get to a safe place and get everyone to lie down, away from windows or "fields of fire."

- Dial 911 to contact law enforcement (9-911 if you are on the Island).
- Identify your workplace and exact location. Remain calm and answer the operator's questions. They are trained to obtain the necessary and required information for a proper emergency response. Stay on the phone only if it is safe. If not, keep the phone on, so it can be monitored by the dispatcher.
- Instruct employees to shelter in place, drop to the ground immediately, face down as flat as possible. If within 15-20 feet of a safe place or cover, duck and run to it.
- Move or crawl away from gunfire, trying to utilize any obstructions between you and the gunfire. Remember that many objects of cover may conceal you from sight, but may not be bulletproof.
- Try to get inside or behind a building and stay down.
- When you reach a place of relative safety, stay down and do not move. Do not peek or raise your head in an effort to see what may be happening.
- If confronted by the shooter, barricade the area, throw objects at the shooter, rush the shooter as a group or attack the best you can.
- Wait and listen for directions from responding law enforcement.

If you are in another area of the building or an adjacent building of the incident and it is not safe to leave, everyone in the office should duck and cover onto the floor, behind protective objects or into side rooms. Make required emergency telephone calls to law enforcement from this position. It is crucial that telephone calls be limited to emergency calls only.

Phone calls, other than for emergency purposes, should be made only after law enforcement has cleared a phone line for that purpose. A phone call to friends or family will bring onlookers, bystanders or concerned loved ones to the area, interfering with the operation of emergency personnel and unnecessarily placing more people in danger. It is not safe for them to come to the location of a shooting.

For more information regarding this topic please contact the Security and Law Enforcement Office (CEMVR-SL). 

Remember When...

Highlights from previous Tower Times editions

September 1978 - District employees and friends gathered at the Arsenal cafeteria on Friday night, 11 August, to bid farewell to our outgoing District Engineer Colonel Lycan, and welcome the District's new DE Colonel Frederick W. Mueller, Jr.

September 1982 - Corinne A. Paaske, a Real Estate Specialist for the NCD Rock Island Real Estate Field Office, was named "Women of the Year" of 1982 by the Rock Island District Federal Women's Program (FWP).

September 1989 - The Rock Island District will be assisting the state of Iowa in providing water to residents of Packwood Iowa.

September 1990 - Ken Barr, PD-E, received the Rock Island District and the North Central Division "Planner of the Year" award for Planning Excellence in 1989 for his outstanding personal contribution to the planning process, technical expertise and leadership. 

Around the District



Tower Times Survey

The Tower Times continues to evolve and meet the needs of District employees. This survey provides an opportunity for the readership of the Tower Times to provide feedback and ensure all needs are being met. Please follow the link below to participate in the survey. If you would like a hardcopy of the survey please email Hilary.R.Markin@usace.army.mil or call 309-794-5730.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8B32ZCD>

Upcoming Events...

The Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Drive is hosting a Blood Drive, October 12 in the ABC Conference Room at the Clock Tower.

The 14th Annual Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Chili Cook-off will be Thursday, Oct. 7. Please watch for more information about the annual fund-raising drive conducted by federal, postal and military employees throughout the fall benefiting thousands of non-profit organizations.

Congrats...



Col. Shawn McGinley promoted Capt. Phillip Valenti to Major on Aug. 2 during a ceremony near the Mississippi River Visitor Center. Maj. Valenti is currently serving the Rock Island District as an environmental engineer in Engineering and Construction Division.

Valenti has served four times overseas in Iraq and Afghanistan. His previous assignment was as the Company Commander of 57th Snapper Company, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Good to Great - Communication and Collaboration are Essential

Meeting Management

- At the start of every meeting, regardless of how informal it is, the convener should always state the purpose and desired outcome of the meeting, as he/she sees it. This allows people to orient their thinking, or even opt out.
- If you can't attend a meeting, make sure you agree with the chair/your supervisor who should attend for you rather than having no representative.
- To try and keep a meeting on topic and on time, don't be afraid to ask people to park conversations or ideas if they go off tangent and ask them to discuss at another time outside of the meeting. If you want to discuss a document or proposal, issue it in advance so people have time to digest it and compose their views.
- With any of these areas, think about your audience and what they want or need to know, rather than what you want to tell them. It'll make it much more interesting and you'll have more chance of getting your message over.
- Finish each meeting by agreeing how and to whom you will communicate any actions, outcomes, decisions or discussions from the meeting. 

Rock Island District - **BUILDING STRONG®**

ONE DISCIPLINED TEAM - in thought, word, and action - meeting our commitments, with and through our partners, by

"SAYING WHAT WE WILL DO, AND DOING WHAT WE SAY."



Spotlight on the District

Paul Whitmer

**Construction Control Representative, Eastern Area Office
Construction Branch, Engineering and Construction Division**

There is an old saying: “go out and explore the world but then come back home.” That is exactly what Paul Whitmer has done. After growing up in Bloomington, Ill., he joined the Army at 17 where he was stationed across the country and throughout the world.

He served in the Army for 14 years becoming a Captain commanding two Explosive Ordnance Disposal units (recently featured in the movie “The Hurt Locker”). He spent much of his time at Fort Lewis, Wash., Fort Benning, Ga., and Fort Campbell, Ky. He also had tours in Korea, Egypt, Kuwait and Panama.

Following active duty, Whitmer began looking for jobs in the federal government to continue federal service. He applied for and was hired by the Mobile District as a park ranger at Lake Lanier in 2001. Part of his position included serving as a Quality Assurance Construction Representative for projects during the non-recreation season. He also served on the Mobile District’s Planning and Response Team as the Quality Assurance Supervisor for debris.

As the doors opened, Whitmer jumped at different opportunities presented to him including three tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. His first tour to Iraq was in 2003 as a part of Task Force - Restore Iraqi Electricity. His experience in the military with unexploded ordnance proved to be extremely valuable.

Whitmer was assigned to a team that took care of unexploded ordnance found around transmission towers throughout the desert of Iraq.

“We went along with the contractor and blew stuff up every day,” said Whitmer. “This served to create a safe work site for the contractor as well as deny insurgents the materials to make improvised explosive devices (IEDs).”

His most recent tour was to Afghanistan in 2007-2008 as part of a Provincial Reconstruction Team. This was a non-conventional deployment assignment. His prior experience with small infantry units and the equipment that they use made him a perfect candidate. He was assigned to the 173rd Airborne Combat Team, an airborne infantry brigade combat team of the United States based in Italy.

“I was dropped by helicopter or inserted by humvee with a backpack and a platoon of infantry along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The area is all mountains and very difficult to traverse. We met with elders of remote villages and provided support for small projects like irrigation, micro-hydro plants, schools, road improvements, etc.,” said Whitmer. This occurred in the provinces of Nuristan and Konar, one of the most contested in all of Afghanistan.

During his deployment a job opportunity became available in Peoria, Ill., as a chance to move closer to home. He applied and accepted the position as a Construction Control Representative

at the Eastern Area Office specifically to oversee the Lockport Construction project.

“I remember doing the phone interview at 2 a.m. Afghan time, crouched in a bunker on the fire base. There were no lights allowed after sundown – so here I was in the pitch black surrounded by sandbags trying to land a job,” said Whitmer. “That’s pretty unique.”

He finished out his tour in Afghanistan researching the construction process for Lockport and planning his move back home.

Since starting with the Rock Island District in 2008, Whitmer has hit the ground running as the eyes and ears for the District at Lockport.

“I have nothing but good things to say about everyone in the Eastern Area Office and Rock Island District,” said Whitmer. “The people that I work with are all doing lots of different things and it’s great to watch it all come together. Being able to reach back for advice and support has been the key to my success.”

He followed this up with “every person counts, no one person can do it alone,” referring to the amazing teamwork that goes in to completing the Corps missions.

Whitmer is married to Karen who works at the local school in Lexington. They live on a 30-acre farm where there is always something to do.

Some of his hobbies include reading anything from field manuals to fiction to history. He has even traded books with Maj. Gen. Michael Walsh, who he developed a relationship with after serving together overseas and during Hurricane Katrina.

He also enjoys the outdoors and hunting. He and his wife have three dogs that they train for hunting upland game. Together they also enjoy gardening and canning during the summer. Moving back home has also allowed them to spend more time with family.

When asked about advice, Whitmer shared this, “if given a choice between an easy job with success assured or a hard job where success may be questionable – always take the hard job – challenge yourself at all times – you may not always succeed but at least you had the courage to try.” 



September is National Preparedness Month

By Jeremiah Cowgill, EM/CBRNE Operations Specialist, Rock Island Arsenal

It's important that you know the potential emergencies that can happen in your state, region and community. For specific questions about the area where you live, contact your state or local Office of Emergency Management, and look for us at festivals and other events in the area.

Include a battery operated radio, such as a NOAA radio with tone alert, to stay apprised of developments during emergencies. It is always important to listen to and follow the advice of local officials in the event of an emergency.

- State of Illinois information is at this link- <http://www.ready.gov/america/local/il.html>
- State of Iowa information is at this link- <http://www.ready.gov/america/local/ia.html>

You may not realize it but you are your family's first responder, and in many ways you are your organization's first responder. All of us as members of our communities, organizations, and families need to be informed and take concrete steps to proactively prepare for emergencies and disasters. Local, state, and national authorities are going to help, but they may not be able to get to you right away. We all need to be prepared for those first 72 hours before help arrives.

Your kids need to be informed too. It's important to explain to your children that families can prepare for emergencies before they take place and that they can help, too. By doing so, you can alleviate anxiety if an emergency does occur and help to nurture a more prepared society for generations to come. Visit www.ready.gov/kids today and get Ready!

Ready Kids is a family-friendly, children-oriented tool to help parents and teachers educate children, ages 8-12, about emergencies and how they can help families better prepare. The Ready

Kids Web site at www.ready.gov/kids features fun activities such as a Scavenger Hunt, Pack It Up Matching game, crossword puzzles and coloring pages, as well as age-appropriate, step-by-step instructions on what families can do to better prepare for emergencies and the role kids can play in that effort.

Don't forget to review your insurance policy annually and make any necessary changes-renters, too! When a disaster strikes, you want to know that your coverage will get you back on your feet. 

Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:



- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps
- Cell phone and chargers

