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Honolulu District Provides Structural Inspections for State, Inspecting Federal Civil Works Project Sites

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By Honolulu District Public Affairs

(FORT SHAFTER, HI - NR 34-06) Several teams of structural engineers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently deployed to provide structural inspections in support of FEMA's post-earthquake assessments and to inspect federal civil works project sites for possible damage in Hawaii.

One team of nine structural engineers, including three from the Honolulu District, assisted FEMA in assessing damage to public structures on the Big Island and Maui in the aftermath of the 6.7 and 6.0 magnitude earthquakes that rattled the Big Island of Hawaii Oct. 15.

Honolulu District's acting Chief of Engineering and Construction Curtis Yokoyama led the initial preliminary damage assessment (PDA) joint U.S Army Corps of Engineers / FEMA structural damage assessment team of volunteer Corps structural engineers from Honolulu District and five mainland Corps districts and divisions. The team began assessments on Oct.17 and completed work Oct. 23.

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2-2-2 CORPS PDA

Yokoyama said their job was to make quick visual damage assessments, primarily to assess structural safety of public buildings and bridges for continued use.

“Our entire team initially deployed to Kona, but due to the large amount of structural assessment requests that we received from FEMA, we split into three separate sub-teams,” Yokoyama said. “One team remained in Kona, one deployed to Hilo and one deployed to the island of Maui. In total, our team inspected 15 schools, four hospitals, 29 public buildings, 35 bridges, two dams and one tunnel. Each member of our team reacted quickly and expended whatever effort and skill was required to insure public safety. It was extremely gratifying to be able to serve the public in their time of need and we received many expressions of thanks and appreciation throughout our mission.”

Another Corps assessment group of two teams which deployed Oct. 19 is still assessing damage to federal deep draft harbors, small boat harbors, flood control and shoreline protection projects under the authority of the Public Law 84-99 Rehabilitation Inspection Program.

This group assessed damage to federally constructed flood control projects at Alenaio, Wailoa and Paauau; non-Federally constructed flood control projects in the PL84-99 Rehabilitation and Inspection Program at Keopu and Waiakea Uka; and the federally constructed shore protection project at Alii Drive. The two teams also inspected navigation projects for a gross survey of damage and made contact with the local sponsor for reports of damage. Those assessments included: federal deep draft harbors at Hilo and Kawaihae plus federal small boat harbors at Kawaihae, Honokahau, Lapahoehoe and Pohoiki.

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3-3-3 CORPS PDA

“The basic mission of a Preliminary Damage Assessment Team is to quickly assess 11 projects constructed by the Corps to see if there is damage,” said Honolulu District’s Emergency Management Chief Joel Hendrix. “If there is damage detailed inspection will follow. Projects assessed so far include flood control, shoreline protection and navigation harbors.”

On Oct. 20, Honolulu District Geologist Eric Bjorken deployed to Maui to assist Maui County and FEMA officials to assess the structural integrity of the one-lane Paihi Bridge that leads to Haleakala National Park at Kipahulu. Under advice from Bjorken and the FEMA assessment team, Maui County officials closed the bridge to vehicular traffic. The bridge is on Hana Highway about seven miles south of Hana town and a half-mile past the 45-mile marker.

Bjorken says deterioration in the bridge’s foundation was a primary cause for closure.

“The right abutment of the bridge was founded on a thin lava flow over softer pyroclastic sediments,” Bjorken said. “These sediments were eroded by the headward erosion of Paihi Stream resulting in undermining of the basalt layer and abutment with no support other than the fractured rock. County highway inspectors determined the layer was continuous beneath the bridge a year ago when last inspected. Therefore, the foundation of the right abutment was in a progressive stage of failure and closure was necessary to prevent a catastrophic collapse of the bridge if used.”

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4-4-4 CORPS PDA

Immediately following the earthquakes on Oct. 15, four members of Honolulu District's Emergency Power Planning and Response team (Power PRT) mobilized to the Corps' Pacific Ocean Division Emergency Operations Center at Fort Shafter to prepare for a potential deployment of power generators for emergency power assistance to the local or state agencies. This specialized management cell team works with the 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power), contractors, and local and state entities to assess, install and maintain emergency generators at critical facilities.

Following a request from the City and County of Honolulu, two-15 ton 560 kilowatt (KW) emergency generators from FEMA were installed by the 249th Engineer Battalion at the Sand Island wastewater pump station to serve as temporary backup generators while the pump station's normal backup generators are under repair. Under a memorandum of understanding, the city will provide maintenance for the emergency generators while installed at Sand Island.

Emergency Response team member Edwin Hargis deployed to the state Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at Diamond Head Crater Oct. 15 as the Corps liaison to FEMA and the EOC.

Also, John Emmerson from the Corps' Pacific Ocean Division deployed Oct. 16 to the Island of Hawaii on a FEMA initial assessment team to provide immediate assessments on the needs of Hawaii County beyond county and state capabilities.

Geographic Information System [GIS] specialist Kimiko Emerick, from the Corps' Sacramento Engineer District arrived Oct. 19 to support FEMA with GIS products at the Initial Operating Facility in Honolulu.

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5-5-5 CORPS PDA

The Corps of Engineers will continue to provide damage assessment services for FEMA post-earthquake mission requirements. In addition, the Corps will perform a Visual Conditions Survey on all dams in Hawaii as requested by the state government and authorized by FEMA. FEMA will completely fund the inspections which are scheduled to begin Oct. 29.

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