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# News Release

## **Recovery Team relies on 500 years of Engineering Experience**

**Lincoln, NE.** -- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) hires recently retired US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) engineers to expand the technical capabilities of emergency managers and speed recovery from the March storms and flooding in Nebraska.

Each year, the Corps sends teams of engineers and technicians to respond to disasters around the world. In any disaster, one of the top three priorities for the USACE is to initiate recovery efforts by assessing and restoring critical infrastructure. Working with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and local officials they plan and implement measures to recover vital facilities such as water treatment facilities, utilities and hospitals.

FEMA Public Assistance program has been designated for 76 Counties and five Tribes in Nebraska. The process involves a local government or tribe completing an application called "Requests for Public Assistance (RPA)". Under this grant program, applicants may be eligible for reimbursement for the repair, replacement or restoration of disaster-damaged publicly owned facilities. In addition, buildings of certain private nonprofit organizations such as houses of worship may also be eligible for restoration. The program also offers more protection of these damaged facilities from future events by providing hazard-mitigation measures during the recovery process.

During the March floods, in addition to roads and bridges, critical infrastructure such as water treatment and sewage treatment facilities were also damaged. One major task is to prioritize which buildings and equipment receive attention first. FEMA prioritizes infrastructure – the facilities such as utilities or waste water treatment facilities which are vital for the public's health and safety to have operational. With applications due by June 20, 2019, FEMA's Infrastructure Branch calls on the technical expertise of USACE to conduct site inspections and write damage assessment reports. To date FEMA has received 388 RPAs. This is followed by a Recovery Scoping Meeting with state and local officials who help ensure that the application is complete. To date 62 of these meetings have been held.

Alfonso Quintero, PA Site Inspector Task Force Leader, has a team of 15 retired USACE engineers from all disciplines (Civil, Chemical, Mechanical and Electrical) who have been hired by FEMA to work on disasters. Together the team in Lincoln represents more than 500 years of expertise.

Quintero himself had 40 years of experience with the Corps prior to his retirement. He shared the

excitement he feels while leading his team on these humanitarian projects. Quintero has made a four month commitment to work here in Nebraska.

"This is a stressful position, these are complicated and complex projects, as we work with the applicant to identify what was damaged, and understand how the applicant intends to repair the facility," he said. "it is critical that we work together to restore this infrastructure to operational status."

Earl Imler, State Coordinating Officer for NEMA, also highlighted key elements of the state's disaster preparation, which are prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery. He noted the importance of Nebraska bringing NEMA's expertise to the table, which is huge for the state's recovery. He said the coordination between agencies that this program provides will help fill a gap in emergency response and management.

"What makes emergency management work is the collaboration that we have with different entities," Imler said.

For the Plattsmouth waste water treatment facilities, a team of six spent two days at the site working with the applicant conducting the preliminary inspection. Then the team writes their assessment report which is forwarded to a second group who works with the applicant to do a cost evaluation that leads to a repair estimate. Once the project has been approved by FEMA and the State, the applicant works through with the repair process to closeout the grant process.



Plattsmouth, NE waste water treatment facility May 15, 2019 (USACE)

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*FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters.*

*For disaster updates from the State of Nebraska, visit Nebraska's website at [NEMA.Nebraska.gov](http://NEMA.Nebraska.gov). You can also follow [@NEMAtweets](https://twitter.com/NEMAtweets) on Twitter, and [www.facebook.com/nema.page](https://www.facebook.com/nema.page) on Facebook.*

*The U.S. Small Business Administration is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps businesses of all sizes, private nonprofit organizations, homeowners and renters fund repairs or rebuilding efforts and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. For more information, applicants may contact SBA's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955. TTY users may also call 800-877-8339. Applicants may also email [disastercustomerservice@sba.gov](mailto:disastercustomerservice@sba.gov) or visit SBA at [SBA.gov/disaster](http://SBA.gov/disaster).*

*Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has faced discrimination, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-3362 or 800-462-7585 (TTY). Multilingual operators are available.*