



# VIDEO NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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## Local Corps team members continue to deploy for Alabama tornado recovery

**SAVANNAH, GEORGIA** – While thousands of families struggle to rebuild after devastating tornados swept across the Southeast this spring, members of the [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District](#) continue to volunteer their time for recovery efforts in northern and central Alabama.

To date, 24 members of the Savannah district have deployed to Alabama to manage debris cleanup, assess safety situations, facilitate temporary housing for displaced residents and provide vital public facilities such as temporary police and fire stations.

These deployed team members come from various locations within the Savannah district's boundaries, including the Savannah area, as well as three dam and lake projects on the Upper Savannah River. Other team members deployed from the Regulatory Division field office in Morrow, Ga., and construction field offices at Fort Bragg, N.C., and Fort Benning, Ga.

“We are putting forth a unified effort throughout the Savannah district to answer the call for emergency relief,” said [Col. Jeffrey Hall](#), district commander. “We’ve deployed park rangers, resident engineers, power plant operators, public relations specialists—people with a wide range of talents and skills—who are coming together to help families in need.”

The Corps’ deployment effort began immediately following the April 27 storms that killed more than 230 Alabama residents and left an estimated 3.5 million cubic yards of debris in its wake, according to reports from the Alabama Emergency Management Agency.

“We are working 12 hours a day, seven days a week to clear out a tremendous amount of debris – it’s incredible,” said David Quebedeaux, Corps park ranger from J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake Project in Clarks Hill, S.C. Quebedeaux arrived in Alabama June 1 and will stay for at least 30 days.



[Park Ranger Ruth "Pepper" Shields](#) (left) from the J. Strom Thurmond Dam and Lake Project discusses how to assess truck loads of debris with [Laura Jo Brunson](#) of FEMA in Rainsville, Ala.

“These people need help – they’re trying to get their lives back together,” Quebedeaux said. “There are whole sections of forests ripped out, entire houses torn to shreds – you see pieces of people’s lives scattered everywhere.”

The Corps of Engineers forms part of the federal government’s unified national response to disasters and emergencies. The Corps assists the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) by coordinating and organizing public works and providing engineering-related support.

FEMA has tasked the Corps to separate debris by type, such as vegetation, white goods (appliances), and construction materials, household hazardous waste, and electronics.

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Corps team members work closely with prime contractor Phillips & Jordan to ensure safe and timely debris removal under “Operation Clean Sweep,” – an initiative that allows the government and its contractors to remove debris from private property.

Small businesses or independent contractors can sign up to subcontract with Phillips & Jordan to help with the debris removal and clean-up effort by visiting <http://www.pandj.com/contact-us/emergency-recovery-subcontractor-sign-up.aspx>

The team is conducting cleanup efforts in 20 counties and 30 cities throughout the state.

Savannah district spokesman and Savannah resident Billy Birdwell deployed to the Corps’ Recovery Field Office in Birmingham on May 10 as an external affairs specialist, where he provided vital information to the public.

“In the five weeks I was deployed, I witnessed progress everyday as we cleared out more debris and helped communities rebuild,” said Birdwell, who returned to Savannah last week. “It was both professionally and personally satisfying to keep the public informed during a time when communication is needed most.”

Others from Savannah district’s Regulatory Division have volunteered, such as biologist Chikita Sanders, who works at the district’s Regulatory field office in Morrow, Ga. Sanders deployed May 14 and has volunteered for a time extension through July 10—nearly two months spent for disaster recovery.

While her normal duties with the Corps require her to evaluate stream and wetlands permits, her job in Alabama is a debris quality assurance inspector.

“We make sure contractors are doing their jobs safely, we monitor dumpsites where debris is collected, and we measure the amount of debris coming and going,” Sanders said. “Back home in the Savannah district, I had to interact with the public everyday about our stream and wetland programs, so that has enabled me to better communicate here with contractors, Corps employees, and the public. Having that skill has helped me make a difference here.”

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Members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers coordinate debris management, to include separating debris piles and conducting debris clearance and removal, in northern Alabama.

## Note to Broadcast Media:

Download :27 of b-roll w/nat sound featuring debris removal in Alabama’s tornado-stricken regions. Video is in Quicktime Movie (.mov) format.

To download, go to <ftp://ftp.usace.army.mil/pub/sas/VIDEOS> and look for the file titled, VNR-ALABAMA CLEANUP B-ROLL.mov. For questions on the video contact Sandra Hudson at 912.652.5760 or e-mail her at [sandra.d.hudson@usace.army.mil](mailto:sandra.d.hudson@usace.army.mil). Video will be available until 21 Jun 2011.