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## Huntsville Center project manager takes on significant role in recent Alabama disaster relief effort

**HUNTSVILLE, Ala**— A Huntsville Center employee currently detailed on a one-year assignment with Mobile District helped with the Alabama tornado recovery effort here in Madison County.

Neal Graham, a project manager with the Installation Support and Programs Management Directorate took on the job of resident engineer with the Federal Emergency Management Agency led Federal Response Team May 6. FEMA set up a Regional Field Office in Birmingham, Ala., to support the Federal Response Teams.

Graham said he communicates with legal, environmental, contracting, quality assurance, safety, and security teams on a daily basis to receive the current guidance to make sure that the teams comply with local, state and federal government laws.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has tasked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with removing what they have estimated to be more than 1 million cubic yards of debris that must be sorted, loaded and disposed of in north central Alabama. The cleanup effort will take place over the next 60 days.”

Graham oversees the operation of the debris removal effort for Blount, Cullman, and Limestone, Madison, and Morgan counties in north central Alabama. Much of Graham’s day is spent supervising two large debris removal teams that have been put in place for Madison and Cullman counties.

The debris cleanup effort will take place for the next 60 days, and more teams will be set up as contingency operations continue to grow. Graham said he anticipates standing up teams in other sections of the state by the end of the week.

The cleanup takes significant coordination effort, and has requested 40 Corps employees to fill the contingency positions needed to support the effort, Graham said. To date, he has filled 11 vacancies.

“We have set up a process. Once Corps employees are selected for positions, they go to Birmingham, Ala. to receive their assignment and are then sent out to sites,” Graham said. “We have filled engineering and construction, contracting and real estate, public affairs and administrative support and park ranger positions for this effort, he said. “It takes many different people to make something like this work. Every position is important to us.”

Graham said the Corps of Engineers awarded Phillips and Jordan; a contractor based in Robbinsville, N.C., the contract for the debris removal because of their expertise in disaster recovery. Graham worked with Phillips and Jordan during past deployment and was given a chance to see how rapid the contractor’s crews are in responding to the needs of a community during a disaster effort.

The contractor debris teams will not remove items from commercial areas or go onto private property, he said. Residents are asked to place items along the right of way in residential areas.

This is not the first time Graham has volunteered to help with other contingency efforts. He deployed during Hurricane's Ivan, Katrina, and Operation Blue Roof. Graham said although he knew he would sign up for future deployment opportunities, it was the location of his current assignment was a surprise for him, and has become his most memorable one.

"I've responded to disaster efforts before, but never dreamed that it would be in my own back yard," Graham said. "I am proud to help those who were devastated by the disaster that occurred on April 27," he said. "I enjoy helping out wherever I am needed. This is what I'm trained to do."

Graham attributes his past deployments and work as a project manager at Huntsville Center to preparing him for his current position. He said the experience he gained by working in the Chemical Demilitarization and Facility Repair and Renewal programs gave him the right skill-set needed for the mission.

Graham is scheduled to return from his Mobile District detail to Huntsville Center in July.

As of May 23, we have 13 employees deployed to support the Alabama tornado recovery effort said Jeffrey Davis, deployment, housing planning and response team coordinator said. Huntsville Center also received and directed phone calls from those in the affected areas in the days and weeks following the destruction caused by a series of storms and tornadoes that passed through the area on April 27.