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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Fire stations destroyed by tornadoes opening with temporary structures Huntsville Center providing resident engineer, contracting support

By Debra Valine

When the call came in for help with temporary structures for critical public facilities, one of Huntsville Center's engineers was quick to volunteer.

Jason Adams, Huntsville's Electronic Security Systems program manager, wanted to do what he could to help.

Following the tornadoes of April 27, 20 public facilities were identified as potentially needing temporary structures to include office space and vehicle housing. Of the 20 facilities, seven were approved for temporary structures. The last facility was completed June 15.

"The Corps of Engineers is tasked by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) to support entities such as fire departments (including volunteer departments), police departments and city or county governments to provide temporary offices or stations until they can get the damaged offices or stations repaired or rebuilt," said Adams, the resident engineer and contracting officer representative for the critical public facilities mission. "Before I came on board, they had already talked with many of the effected departments and performed site investigations to determine if the locations would get temp facilities."

The seven sites where the temporary facilities are being constructed are the Hackleburg police and fire station office buildings; Birmingham Fire Station 18 near the Pratt City area of Birmingham; Webster's Chapel Volunteer Fire Department in Wellington; Johnsons Crossing VFD in Hanceville; Fultondale VFD; and the North Smithfield VFD in Birmingham.

The temporary facilities are modular trailers for the offices and tent structures for the fire departments. The sizes of the facilities were determined by the number of personnel needing office space and how many trucks needed to be housed.

The tent structures are pre-fabricated by a company in Memphis. It's a basic metal structure that is covered with a tent fabric. It is designed so that it can be put up or taken down in a couple of days. The largest tent structure, 40' x 80', is in Fultondale where the department needed to house four large trucks, two in each bay. The largest modular unit, 41' x 62', was installed for Birmingham Station 18. Fire Station 18 is a full-time operation with requirements for office and reception areas, sleeping quarters and a kitchen area.

"I think the Birmingham 18 facility will definitely be great," said Birmingham fire chief Ivor Brooks. "It's good for the guys; it will be home for them. It will be big enough. You just have to go outside to get to the trucks. It is also good for the community. I think it will be a catalyst for rebuilding the community. I do

not know how long it will take to get a permanent facility built. The work and time has been very timely. I do not have any criticism. I am very happy. We just want to get into the facility and get back to work.”

The temporary facilities will be available to the departments until they no longer need them, Adams said. For the Corps’ part, they are under a contract lease for the first six months, and then if the department needs the facilities longer, they will work out additional lease time and costs with FEMA and the contractor.

“Fultondale has trucks in and they seem happy with it,” Adams said. “They also seem happy with the structure at Webster’s Crossing. We’ve had good response from all the users.”

Huntsville Center has employees deployed to support many of the tornado recovery missions in multiple locations. Adams, who is also a member of Huntsville Center’s Housing Planning and Response Team, is the only one from Huntsville Center working on the critical public facilities mission.

“The CPF team has been slowly decreasing in size since I got here,” Adams said. “We had multi-disciplinary engineers with a total team size of about 12 to the current staffing of four. I will be the last one to leave since I am the RE/COR. As we finish up, the remainder of the team will be going back home or moving to a different mission. The supporting district for the CPF mission was Jacksonville District.”

Adams, who deployed to New Orleans for emergency support after Hurricane Katrina, plans to move to the housing mission when this one is complete. “Since I am a native Alabamian I want to stay on this effort as long as Huntsville Center will support me in doing so.”

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