



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Contact:
Public Affairs Office
NAB-PAO@usace.army.mil

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers activates Emergency Operations Center in support of Potomac Interceptor Spill response efforts

Emergency contract executed in under 24 hours in alignment with “Build Infrastructure, Not Paperwork” transformation initiative for the Army’s Civil Works program

WASHINGTON – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Baltimore District, activated its Emergency Management Operations Center on Feb. 20 under Public Law 84-99, in support of the Washington, D.C. Emergency Declaration for Potomac Interceptor Collapse Response efforts.

Following interagency coordination and on-site assessments with local, state, and federal officials, Baltimore District executed an emergency contract on Feb. 21 focused on stormwater runoff management ahead of expected inclement weather. The rapid response effort allowed for mobilization prior to midnight, with crews initiating work at the Potomac Interceptor repair site by sunrise on Sunday, Feb. 22.

Initial work includes construction of a catchment cofferdam that will address I-495 overpass runoff by diverting water away from DC Water pumping operations necessary to continue critical emergency repairs and prevent additional discharge into the Potomac River. Operations will later expand to mitigation of additional runoff areas in the vicinity of the spill to further reduce flow over contaminated areas during future perception and snow melt events.

In a Feb. 22 [news release and operations update](#), DC Water details how stormwater runoff from the American Legion Bridge and Clara Barton Parkway inundated the Potomac Interceptor repair pumping site following recent heavy rains. Floodwaters not only put the pumps at risk but make it difficult for workers to perform the maintenance and cleaning to keep operations moving. Increased flow from stormwater rushing into the bypass system also places additional strain on the pumping equipment.

“Our crews are prepared to deliver the engineering solutions that enable our partners at DC Water to complete their important repair work on the Potomac Interceptor as soon as possible,” said Baltimore District Commander Col. Francis Pera. “Working under direction of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the lead federal agency, USACE will work collaboratively to support restoration of the site and protection of our region’s sole water supply, a vital resource for our operations at the Washington Aqueduct.”

The Baltimore District’s expedient emergency response was executed in direct alignment the “Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork,” initiative for the USACE Civil Works program, spearheaded by Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Adam Telle.

“Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork” will provide greater focus on the USACE core Civil Works missions, while minimizing non-core programs, direct funding to priority water resources projects that will provide the greatest benefits to the nation, shorten permitting timelines, and reduce or eliminate extraneous regulations and paperwork that slow USACE’s delivery of Civil Works projects and programs.

“President Trump has empowered his administration to work with lightspeed efficiency to make our government deliver more for all Americans. The Army Civil Works’ ‘Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork’ initiative will enable the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deliver critical projects and programs for the nation more efficiently, sooner, and at less cost than the current ways of doing

business,” said Telle. “This will eliminate bureaucratic delays and provide fast, clear decisions needed to save lives and empower our economy.”

“Building Infrastructure, Not Paperwork” will enable USACE district commanders around the nation to execute the Civil Works projects and programs that benefit the nation. USACE commanders will be empowered to take informed risks in advancing critical water resources projects and programs to completion faster and at less cost. The policy changes will also bring greater transparency and accountability for the program to the American public, project partners and sponsors, industry, and the elected leaders who make the annual funding decisions for the Civil Works program.

Parallel to emergency operations in support of DC Water at the Potomac Interceptor repair site, USACE Baltimore District will continue to ensure continuity of operations for the Washington Aqueduct, a federally owned and operated public water supply agency that produces an average of 150 million gallons of water per day at two treatment plants located in the District of Columbia.

USACE officials confirm that the regional drinking water supply remains safe and unaffected, as the Washington Aqueduct’s drinking water system is entirely separate from the regional wastewater infrastructure. The spill site occurred downstream of the Aqueduct’s primary water intake at Great Falls. Out of an abundance of caution, staff has increased raw water quality testing to a daily schedule (7 days/week) and have kept the secondary intake at Little Falls closed, which is located downstream of the spill site.

Residents supplied by Washington Aqueduct’s three wholesale customers: DC Water, Arlington County, and Fairfax Water, can be confident that all water sourced from the Potomac undergoes multi-stage purification at one of two treatment plants that meets or exceeds all EPA safety standards.

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Additional Information

Baltimore District delivers vital engineering solutions in collaboration with its partners to serve and strengthen the Nation, energize the economy, and reduce disaster risks. Headquartered near Baltimore's Inner Harbor, Baltimore District provides design, engineering, construction, environmental, and real estate expertise to various important projects and customers. This support spans five states, the District of Columbia, overseas, and the Susquehanna, Potomac, and Chesapeake Bay watersheds. These civil and military missions and diverse engineering services support communities and warfighters while addressing the ever-growing list of emerging national security requirements and ultimately protecting the Nation.