

REGION 2 BI-WEEKLY

Vol. 2 Issue 13

July 16, 2010

On The Gulf: How I Spent My Summer Vacation By John Kapsimalis



Editor's Note: *The Response Division's John Kapsimalis was in the Gulf since May 16, when he was activated by the US Coast Guard. John is a member of the Atlantic Strike Team, and has specialized training in response to WMD, Oil and HazMat incidents. His deployment ended July 14th. Here are some highlights of his tour.*

For the past two months, I've been up every day at 4:30am to begin a 12+ hour day. It was over a month before I had my first day off.

Despite the long hours and unrelenting heat, my shipmates and I would all do it again, in a heartbeat. Economically, ecologically and commercially — failure will have national consequences, not to mention the devastating impact on the people of Louisiana.

Challenges: The oil hasn't stopped. We're

in a "recovery" mode, yet we're still stuck in the "response" gear, and are going through resources quickly.

The boom we are getting from foreign nations require modifications because of compatibility issues, and we are competing with other states, that also need boom, as they prepare for potential impact. All the responders (USCG, BP, etc) have sent their most experienced people to fight this and now rotations are coming up, and the bench is a bit lean. I've been asked several times to stay an additional six months.

During my tour, I was assigned to numerous positions, including **Deputy In-Situ Burn Group Leader** (see photo above) ...Continued page 3

VITEMA'S NEW SITE FACES OF THE REGION

Last month, VITEMA's new building opened for business.

Attending last month's dedication ceremony was USVI Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr., second from left, who thanked Region II's Mark Walters, second from right, and Regional Administrator Lynn Canton, who was represented by Maria Gonzalez of the CAD, left, and the entire FEMA team for their enormous contributions and efforts to equip the island to efficiently and effectively prepare for emergencies.

Construction began in March 2009 with the build-out of the EOC, the Fusion Center, the Secure Compartmentalized Information Facility (SCIF), and the 911 Emergency Communication Center. Completed in one year, this building will now support—and enhance — St. Thomas' emergency response efforts by placing all response partners in one location. The EOC has been outfitted with a web-based information system that will enable agencies to share data in a secure environment.

The estimated cost of the project is approximately \$7.3 million. \$1M was awarded by FEMA to support it.



Cathleen Carlisle recently joined Region II's Mitigation Division as a Senior Mitigation Planner, where she will serve as team leader for plan review and program delivery in the development and implementation of multi-hazard mitigation plans.

Cathleen comes to Region II from FEMA Headquarters' Mitigation Directorate where she managed projects and led program efforts in the Building Science Branch to fulfill FEMA's responsibilities under the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP). These activities included training and outreach, and the development of guidance and tools to reduce earthquake risk to existing buildings. While working at HQ, Cathleen was deployed to Hurricane Katrina, where she worked in the New Orleans AFO as a ESF-14 member, providing technical assistance on mitigation planning, grant programs and the NFIP.

Prior to working with FEMA, Cathleen was a Program Coordinator for City of Portland, Oregon, Office of Planning and Development Review. There she worked with senior staff and regional, state and federal agencies to successfully develop and implement earthquake and flood hazard mitigation policies.

Although a native of Washington, DC, Cathleen grew up in the western U.S. and earned her Master's degree in Planning, Public Policy and Management at the University of Oregon.

She and her spouse enjoy outdoor adventures like backpacking, hiking, fly fishing and golf. Now that she's living in Brooklyn, she's looking forward to new adventures at art museums and especially jazz concerts, as she is taking up piano again. To get back in touch with the outdoors, she enjoys occasional treks through the Prospect Park wilderness.



FUGATE ON FEMA, @ NEWSTANDS, ONLINE

The Spring 2010 issue of IBM's *Business of Government* magazine is out, and Administrator Craig Fugate is in it, sharing his thoughts about FEMA's mission, what it's like to lead FEMA and his thoughts on the challenges we face. Fugate also continues his plea for personal preparedness, citing the new tools and technologies we use to get the word out.

To read the article, visit: <http://www.businessofgovernment.org/sites/default/files/Craig%20Fugate.pdf>

To listen to the full interview, visit: <http://www.businessofgovernment.org/interview/craig-fugate-interview>

Summer on the Gulf, Continued from p.1

I assisted with the make-up of the “Burn Fleet” and the coordination of the Air Operations Group and the Dispersal Group. An aerial photograph I took (see p.1) was later displayed on the DHS home web page, and appeared in the Washington Post. It was later picked up and distributed by Reuters worldwide, becoming one of the iconic images of the disaster. Although there were an army of professional photographers with very expensive equipment, my Wal-Mart special camera took that shot.

As the **Deputy Operations Section Chief in Plaquemines Branch-Venice, LA**, I oversaw the daily operations of the Decontamination Group, LA National Guard Units and numerous Staging Areas, a shot of our staging operation is at right.

I was also tasked to be **Louisiana National Guard Task Force Leader: Plaquemines Branch-Venice, LA**, where I served as the Liaison with, and supported the activities of, multiple Louisiana National Guard units that were engaged in the Plaquemines Branch Response Plan.



While the **Decontamination Group Supervisor: Plaquemines Branch-Venice, LA**, I monitored six in-shore and supervised dockside DECON of all vessels, recovered containment boom, wildlife cages, repair of oil boom and oil debris disposal.



As the **Staging Area Manager: Plaquemines Branch-Venice, LA**, I monitored 11 staging areas (inshore and shored based) as well as the identified “safe haven” locations.

establish booming operations, see photo above. The oyster beds and oysters cover tens of thousands of acres, and represent millions of dollars in product, as well as area jobs, jobs, jobs.

As the **Oil Boom Strategic Planner: Plaquemines Branch-Venice, LA**, I assisted in the development of oil boom strategies’ for all Plaquemines Branch divisions. I made on-site inspections and monitored boom placement and maintenance.

Working **Public Affairs: Plaquemines Branch-Venice, LA**, I participated in community forums to provide information and answer questions with stake holders and the public, giving interviews to local TV and print media, national media (New York Times) and international media: “Kristeligt Dagblad” (Copenhagen, Denmark) and “NRC Handelsblad” (Rotterdam, Netherlands).

