

District PRT supports recovery in Prattsville, NY

By Chris Gardner, public affairs

Members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District's Temporary Housing Planning and Response Team have deployed to Prattsville, N.Y., to support the Federal Emergency Management Agency's temporary housing efforts there following devastating flooding caused by Tropical Storm Irene in 2011.

Tropical Storm Irene caused the Schoharie Creek and one of its tributaries to overflow, destroying or severely damaging several dozen homes and much of the downtown of the town of approximately seven hundred.

While FEMA will often call the Army Corps in quickly to manage temporary housing missions where several hundred or several thousand temporary housing units will likely be needed, FEMA opted to manage the installation of temporary housing units itself in the case of Prattsville. This primarily included the installation of individual temporary housing units on the property of homeowners for them to live in while they rebuild their homes.

FEMA called upon the Corps of Engineers when it became apparent that a temporary housing group site, essentially like a neighborhood of temporary housing units, would be needed in addition to the individual temporary housing units already being installed.

Once officially assigned the temporary housing group site mission by FEMA, New York District's PRT

got to work on coordinating with local officials and stakeholders, site selection and designing the group site that could accommodate up to 20 temporary housing units in one site.

"A group site like this in such a small community helps so the people who did have their homes destroyed from the flooding are close enough to rebuild," said Mission Manager Lucia Gamba, who noted that many residents had to relocate significant distances after the flooding. "This temporary site will allow the residents to support rebuilding the town as well."

A temporary housing group site is very similar to a neighborhood, so when the team designs a site it needs to plan for everything

a neighborhood might have like roads, sewer lines, power connections, water, etc. This infrastructure must be planned out, put in place and, most importantly, connected to the existing local infrastructure.

Once trenches have been dug and underground sewer, power and water lines have been placed, tested and have hookups above ground, each housing plot in the group site must be graveled and graded to prepare for the placement of a temporary housing unit. The identification of tenants for the group site and the installation of the individual homes will be managed by FEMA once the site is complete.

While the teammates deployed to Prattsville said the weather could have been colder in Prattsville for



FEMA Technical Monitor Randy Still and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resident Engineer Don Braun take a look at work being done to install sewer lines at a temporary housing group site being constructed in Prattsville, N.Y., under the supervision of the Army Corps on Jan 10, 2012. (Photo by Chris Gardner, public affairs)





Mission Manager Lucia Gamba inspects a newly installed manhole at a temporary housing group site under construction in Prattsville, N.Y., on Jan. 10, 2012. New York District's Temporary Housing Planning and Support Team is supporting FEMA's temporary housing efforts there by managing the design and construction of the group site. (Photo by Chris Gardner, public affairs)

them, they still had to regularly contend with below freezing conditions and a layer of frost about 20 inches thick during trench work.

The team generally has four members deployed to Prattsville at a time, with some spending time working in FEMA's Joint Field Office in Albany – about an hour away. The Corps team manages the overall mission, coordinates with FEMA and stakeholders and oversees the work being done on the site by the contractor. The team also gets both engineering and contracting reachback support from the District office in Manhattan.

Engineers at the District office



FEMA Technical Monitor Randy Still, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mission Specialist Walter Grauling, USACE Resident Engineer Don Braun and Antonio Abrantes from contractor Cutting Edge Group look over specifications for a temporary housing group site being constructed in Prattsville, N.Y., after devastating flooding caused by Tropical Storm Irene. (Photo by Chris Gardner, public affairs)

design plans and specifications and develop cost estimates. They also respond to requests for information from the field as they come up said Steve Weinberg, a team leader in the Engineering Division that helped manage the development of the designs and specifications for the Prattsville mission.

He said the reachback team will regularly get questions from the team in Prattsville that come from the contractor that can range from needing to know what types of insulation are acceptable because they can't find what the contract calls for to redesigning most of the power to be underground for the site because of local concerns over power poles and space limitations.

Contracting specialists at the District office are also in daily contact with the teammates deployed forward said Scott Helmer, of the District's Contracting Division. He noted that contracting managed the award of the contract for the group site work in Prattsville to Cutting

Edge Group, a Small Business Administration certified 8(a) small business based in upstate New York in Lake George. The work was awarded in two contracts totaling approximately \$2.26 million. The site is slated to be complete and turned over to FEMA by the end of January.

New York District's Temporary Housing PRT's last major deployment was to Joplin, Mo., after a massive tornado devastated that city in summer 2011. The team took on a unique, non-housing mission there and managed the design and construction of temporary critical public facilities, including fire stations and schools, in support of FEMA.

Editor's Note: The physical site work was completed by the end of January while this publication was being put together and FEMA began moving their temporary housing units to the site before the end of January as well.