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U.S. ARMY ENGINEERING AND SUPPORT CENTER, HUNTSVILLE

The Bulletin

Engineers Week

Feb. 22-28

A week-long movement to inspire the next generation of innovators, spotlight the impact of the engineering profession, and strengthen connections across the engineering community.

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The U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville, engineers adaptive, specialized solutions across a broad spectrum of global enterprise covering five main lines of effort: Energy, Operational Technology, Environmental, Medical, and Base Operations and Facilities

HNC Bulletin Content

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Commander's Thoughts

"As we carry this work forward, I want to emphasize the importance of early and open communication, particularly when challenges arise."

Col. Robert Hilliard

As we begin a new calendar year, I want to thank each of you for your dedication, professionalism, and commitment to our mission.

The start of a new year gives us the opportunity to reflect on our accomplishments, reset our priorities, and look ahead with purpose. Our work continues to shape communities, strengthen national security, and deliver engineering excellence for the nation.

That work is only possible because of you.

Our projects and programs play a critical role in strengthening the nation's economy and improving quality of life for communities across the country. Huntsville Center delivers capabilities that enable growth, resilience, and readiness, not only to our nation, but across the world. Each project you support contributes to a larger effort to build, maintain, and protect the systems people rely on every day.

As we carry this work forward, I want to emphasize the importance of early and open communication, particularly when challenges arise. If you encounter issues with projects, schedules, funding, or stakeholder coordination, elevate those concerns early through your leadership chain. Proactively raising challenges allows us to engage the right expertise, align with our partners, and find solutions before issues become obstacles.

In the coming weeks, we will celebrate National Engineers Week, an opportunity to recognize the vital role engineers and technical professionals play in shaping our nation. Engineers Week allows us to showcase the ingenuity, dedication, and teamwork that defines HNC while inspiring future generations to pursue careers in engineering and public service.

Throughout the month of February and into March, we will continue to encounter winter weather and safety remains a top priority. Cold temperatures, icy conditions, and winter storms present increased risks both on and off duty. Please remain vigilant, follow established safety protocols, plan travel carefully, and look out for one another. Safety is a shared responsibility and essential to sustaining mission success.

As we continue moving forward into 2026, let us remain committed to our mission, our values, and one another. I am proud to serve alongside you and confident that together we will continue to deliver engineering excellence no matter what lays ahead.

Photo by William Farrow

Top notch

Col. Robert Hilliard, Huntsville Center commander, presents Michael May with the 2025 Huntsville Center Employee of the Year award during the Center's Program Review Board meeting Jan 21. May is a data visualization specialist within the Business Integration Office, providing dashboards, visual tools, reports and analytical solutions to complex business requirements. His designs are the cornerstone of how Huntsville Center presents itself both to the outside world and within the Center's community. His designs have made Huntsville Center the envy of other organizations throughout the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

By William S. Farrow
Huntsville Center Public Affairs

Observed by more than 70 engineering, education, and cultural societies, and more than 50 corporations and government agencies, National Engineers Week, Feb. 22-28, showcases the true value engineers have in strengthening the nation. This year's theme is Transform Your Future.

National Engineers Week was started in 1951 by the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE) in conjunction with President George Washington's birthday. President Washington is considered the nation's first engineer, notably for his survey work.

From the power grids that light American homes to the bridges connecting rural towns to global markets, engineering serves as the silent engine of the United States' economic vitality and social well-being.

As the nation faces a 21st-century landscape defined by rapid technological change and climate volatility, the field of engineering has transitioned from a supporting role to the primary architect of national stability and security.

The economic impact of the engineering sector is vast.

According to industry data, engineering-related activities contribute billions to the U.S. Gross Domestic Product annually. By designing more efficient manufacturing processes and sustainable energy systems, engineers lower the cost of living and increase the global competitiveness of American products.

This innovation creates a "multiplier effect," where every dollar invested in infrastructure engineering generates significant returns in job creation and long-term commerce. A cornerstone of this developmental success is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

Operating as one of the world's largest public engineering, design, and construction management agencies, the USACE is vital to the nation's "blue economy."

By maintaining more than 12,000 miles of inland commercial navigation channels, USACE ensures that the American supply chain remains fluid, allowing for the cost-effective transport of agricultural goods and raw materials that fuel the domestic economy. Beyond commerce, USACE plays a life-saving role in managing the nation's environmental health and disaster resilience. Its work on flood risk management and ecosystem restoration—such as the massive efforts in the Florida Everglades—directly impacts the quality of life for millions.

By mitigating the risks of natural disasters through sophisticated levee systems and dam safety programs, USACE protects trillions of dollars in private property and provides the stability necessary for communities to thrive in high-risk geographic areas.

Furthering this mission is the U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville. Unlike traditional Corps districts, Huntsville Center is unique because it is not limited by a specific geographic boundary. It provides specialized technical expertise and "low-density, high-demand" engineering solutions across the globe.

By managing programs focused on military installation support, ordnance and explosives, and environmental and munitions remediation, Huntsville Center's engineers ensure that the military and various federal agencies operate at peak efficiency, ultimately saving taxpayers billions of dollars while enhancing national security.

For the average resident, engineering is most visible in the "unseen" reliability of daily life. It is the assurance of clean drinking water, the speed of 5G connectivity, and the safety of the medical devices in local hospitals.

As the U.S. shifts toward a "greener" economy, engineers are at the forefront of developing carbon-capture technology and resilient urban planning that will define the American standard of living for the next century.

In a competitive global environment, the continued prioritization of engineering education and infrastructure investment remains a non-partisan necessity.

The synergy between government agencies like USACE and the private sector ensures that the United States remains not just a leader in innovation, but a place where infrastructure supports the pursuit of prosperity for all its citizens.

Huntsville Center up for Star recertification

By William S. Farrow
Huntsville Center Public Affairs

Four years ago, Huntsville Center became the first U.S. Army Corps of Engineers organization to earn the Army's prestigious Safety and Occupational Health Star (ASOH Star).

During the award celebration, Amy Borman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Environment, Safety and Occupational Health, presented Huntsville Center's commander with an Army SOH Star flag to fly at the Center's headquarters.

The Army SOH Star is a recognition awarded to Army units that successfully implement and sustain the Army SOH Management System (ASOHMS), demonstrating world-class safety culture, effective risk management, and continuous improvement, marked by achieving specific performance milestones and a successful Department of the Army assessment.

The flag symbolizes the Center's achievement as an enterprise leader in safety and occupational health efforts. However, to keep that flag fluttering on the flagpole at the Center's headquarters, the Center's employees at all levels must complete the required processes to ensure recertification.

In March, Jeremy McCranie, Huntsville Center Safety and Occupational Health manager, will present the journey on all the improvements from 2022 to the SOH advisory council. The presentation includes leadership, supervisors and employees. The Center's Safety Office (SO) will submit the necessary documentation. McCranie said recertification is dependent on the entire Huntsville Center workforce.

"Safety takes full commitment," he said.

To receive recertification, the Center's Safety Office set goals to achieve specific performance milestones such as spot checks, conducting CPR training, instituting a Center-focused wellness program, and reaching out to CESOHMS safety champions around the Center to ensure safety remains a top value. McCranie said the ASOH Star is a substantial accomplishment spotlighting the Center's development, implementation, and continuous improvement in its safety and occupational health programs throughout ever thing we do.

"Organizations achieving the Army SOH Star are recognized for the development, implementation and continuous improvement in the prevention and control of occupational safety and health hazards," he said.

To maintain the ASOH Star certification, McCranie said Huntsville Center is meeting specific performance-based

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U.S. Air Force photo

Air Force Tech Sgt. Daniel Lemons, assigned to the 110th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, pulls out a fuel hose during a hot pit refuel on a B-2 Spirit stealth bomber during a Bomber Task Force mission at Diego Garcia, British Indian Ocean Territory in 2024. Huntsville Center's Fuels program recently repaired fuel infrastructure needed to provide fuel for the generators that power the island, aerospace ground equipment, fuel trucks and other vehicles that support the mission there.

Rapid $1.5 million pipeline repair sustaining critical Diego Garcia operations

By Lillian Putnam
Huntsville Center Public Affairs

Huntsville Center completed repairs of emergency fuel infrastructure at U.S. Naval Support Facility, NSF, Diego Garcia. The $1.5 million Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants, POL, Pier Pipeline was repaired and operational 17 days ahead of schedule, reinforcing the installation's ability to sustain uninterrupted operations in the Indo-Pacific region.

Diego Garcia is a coral atoll consisting of a joint United Kingdom and United States military base located south of the equator in the British Indian Ocean Territory. NSF Diego Garcia provides logistic support to Navy and Air Force operational forces forward deployed to the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf areas of responsibility in support of national policy objectives.

"NSF Diego Garcia is a critical part of our nation's national defense that relies on fuel not only for refueling of ships, planes, etc., but to fuel vehicles and the generators that power the island," said James Clark, Huntsville Center Fuels Program geographical project manager.

"Everything on the island depends on these systems working as designed."

In May, a Huntsville Center Fuels Program inspection uncovered deterioration in a 6-inch gasoline pipeline beneath the POL Pier. The affected line supports delivery of fuel essential for base operations, including aircraft ground equipment, automobiles and generators supplying power across the island.

"At a location like Diego Garcia, reliability isn't optional, it is essential to sustaining operations across the area," Dennis Bacon, Huntsville Center Fuels Chief explained. "It was critical that our team reacted quickly and efficiently to prevent the risk of a fuel spill into the ocean."

Following the inspection, Huntsville Center issued an Emergency Service Order contract to replace the deteriorated pipeline section. This pipeline served as the island's sole receiving line for this fuel type, making timely execution essential.

Before repair efforts could begin, fuels personnel were required to safely remove fuel from more than a quarter mile of pipeline running along the pier.

When additional technical resources were needed to support the project, Huntsville Center's Fuels team coordinated contractor-provided equipment and specialized

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criteria and progressing through the 'three stages of maturity' requirements and six capability objectives.

The three maturity stages are documentation (establishing the policy and framework), implementation and execution (actively applying safety protocols in daily operations) and sustainment and continuous improvement (demonstrating a mature, self-correcting safety culture.)

The six capability objectives (CO) are: CO1: Leadership Engagement and Personnel/Soldier Readiness; CO2: Mishap, Incident, and Illness Reporting and Investigation; CO3: SOH Training and Promotion; CO4: Inspections and Assessments; CO5: Hazard Analysis and Countermeasure Development and CO6: Health Protection and Readiness. Efforts to recertify for the ASOHM Star had the Center's safety team create automated digital tools to collect data on the safety needs of employees and to identify and track hazards.

Alicia Hodge, Huntsville Center Safety and Occupational Health specialist, said a key component to recertify is focusing on educating the workforce through easily accessible information, quality on-site training and sharing best practices tools.

"We recruited Center supervisors and division and program chiefs as our 'safety champions,'" Hodge said.

"They are opening staff meetings with safety briefs, giving safety a 'spotlight' before getting on with business."

Hodge said that 'safety first' mindset is trickling down to employees.

"Proactive safety engagement earns buy-in from leaders to managers to employees—and it's a measurable competitive advantage," she said. "When safety becomes a daily habit, employees can focus on performance and collaboration."

Under Army Directive 2024-09, all Army commands and organizations are required to adopt the ASOHMS framework by the end of calendar year 2030. Notable recent ASOHM Star recipients from USACE are Middle East District, New York District, Albuquerque District, Seattle District and Charleston District.

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labor to execute the de-fueling effort in accordance with fuels safety requirements.

"One of the biggest challenges was sequencing the work so we could defuel, access and replace the line without disrupting ongoing operations more than necessary," Clark said.

"That required constant coordination across a variety of organizations and time zones."

Logistics planning played a critical role in ensuring the project stayed on schedule. Due to the urgency of the repair and the atoll's distance from traditional supply routes, materials and personnel were transported via military aircraft, enabling work to proceed without waiting for scheduled sea lift deliveries.

"Operating in a remote environment forces you to be flexible and decisive," Clark said. "We had to move people, equipment and materials quickly to stay ahead of the risk."

While the de-fueling process was underway, custom access systems were engineered and installed beneath the pier to support pipeline replacement activities.

Crews conducted installation work from small watercraft, adjusting daily schedules to accommodate for shark infested waters, tides, weather and maritime safety considerations.

The replacement pipeline contains carbon steel piping consistent with the original system design. Fabrication and protective coating were completed on the atoll to streamline installation. Certified welding inspectors verified each weld to ensure long-term integrity of the piping.

In addition to replacing the damaged pipeline section, the project included replacement of pipe supports throughout the under-pier fuel system, to improve stability and extend the service life of both new and existing infrastructure.

"This project required rapid decision making and technical precision," Bacon said.
"Our team and partners adapted to the environment and delivered under challenging conditions without compromising safety or quality."

Despite environmental challenges, geographic isolation, and coordination across multiple time zones, Huntsville Center's Fuels Program delivered the project ahead of schedule.

The project was completed 17 days earlier than required, which allowed sufficient time for system testing in advance of a planned fuel delivery.

"Completing this work early was a direct result of teamwork and communication," Clark said.
"Everyone involved understood our mission's importance, and that focus ensured Diego Garcia remains ready to support the warfighter."

Huntsville Center's Fuels Program provides specialized engineering, acquisition, and technical oversight of preventive and corrective maintenance for government fuel systems worldwide. That expertise was critical throughout a project that required quick and complex problem solving.

"The Huntsville Center Fuels Program is designed to respond worldwide," Bacon said.

"Completing this repair ahead of schedule demonstrates our team's quick ability to protect critical infrastructure and support the warfighter even in the most remote locations."

Courtesy graphic

Jeremy McCranie, left, Huntsville Center Safety and Occupational Health manager, and Josh Moskowitz, Honolulu Safety and Occupational Health specialist, collaborated for a research paper published in a construction management journal.

Duo improving safety through academics, research

By William S. Farrow
Huntsville Center Public Affairs

Jeremy McCranie, Huntsville Center Safety and Occupational Health Manager, doesn't see himself as an academic.

He has his Bachelor of Science degree, more than a decade working in the safety and occupational health field for the Navy and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and holds more than 150 specialized training certificates.

He feels he's at his best working with people to ensure their wellbeing.

"I see myself as more of a 'boots on the ground' Safety and Occupational Health (S&OH) practitioner," McCranie said.

However, McCranie does utilize academic methods to validate and advance field practices and is the co-author of a doctoral-level case study published in the International Journal of Construction Management.

The Journal's focus is 'Advancing the knowledge of construction management, including topics on built environment, construction economics, property law and risk management.'

The paper, titled *Investigating the Impact of Army Safety and Occupational Health Management System Implementation on Safety Performance Indices: Case Study of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District,* was submitted to IJCM in November 2024 and after peer review, accepted and published to the journal July 2025.

"The case study was a rigorous, 18-month endeavor completed entirely on our own time," McCranie said.

"The scientific data gathered is crucial for substantiating and advancing the Army Safety and Occupational Health Management System (ASOHMS/CE-SOHMS), affirming the importance of the safety protocols being implemented across the Army and the Corps of Engineers."

It was by chance McCranie became involved in the research. He was Honolulu District's Safety and Occupational Health chief when co-writer Josh Moskowitz was assigned to Honolulu District as a USACE fellow.

"He (Moskowitz) previously interned with the Honolulu district as a Project Manager through the fellow's program," McCranie said. "It was during his rotation in the safety office with me that his passion for safety truly ignited."

Moskowitz, enrolled in a doctoral program with Capitol Technology University, a Science, Technology, Mathematics and Engineering (STEM)-focused academic institution in Maryland, became so interested in the SOH career field that he changed focus from project management to SOH.

Under McCranie's guidance, he met all training requirements for the Professional Certificate in Safety and Occupational Health (PCSOH/CP-12), in addition to

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Medical summit

Col. Robert Hilliard, Huntsville Center commander, addresses representatives at the Operation and Maintenance Engineering and Enhancement program's annual contractor meeting Jan. 7 at the Center. More than 50 representatives from a dozen industry partners attended the event. The OMEE program provides a simplified process to respond to the growing operation and maintenance needs of Department of War medical facilities through a $2.35 billion Multiple Award Task Order Contract.

Photo by William S. Farrow

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earning three other professional certifications in emergency management, explosives safety, and industrial safety.

"I originally became interested in the impacts of ASOHMS/CE-SOHMS while rotating through the District's Safety Office as part of the Army Fellows Program," Moskowitz said.

"At the time, only three Districts had successfully implemented CE-SOHMS and there was still some uncertainty surrounding its usefulness to benefit safety outcomes in the workplace and USACE project sites."

That's when McCranie and Moskowitz began collaborating on the impact of the Army Safety and Occupational Health Management System (ASOHMS).

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Safety and Occupational Health Management System (CE-SOHMS) is the USACE counterpart of ASOHMS.

They wanted to understand whether putting the (ASOHMS) into practice actually improves safety in a real Army work environment, so they focused on Honolulu District as a case study, scientifically investigating potential relationships between progress in implementing the system and accident rates among USACE employees and contractors.

Correlations discovered between implementation progress and contractor accident rates on USACE projects were completely unexpected and ended up becoming a major focus of the study.

"This research contributes valuable insights to the enterprise and broader safety community," McCranie said.

Moskowitz said one single certainty coming from the research is that there needs to be more research.

"Future studies need to be conducted to assess if the same impacts are being seen across the USACE, the Army, and other DOD agencies. As part of continuous improvement, we will be aiming to further our research to identify causation and greater empirical evidence of this relationship."

Although McCranie and Moskowitz are now sitting in different locations several time zones away, they are still focused on improving CE-SOHMS and are currently conducting further research on another case study of Huntsville Center.

McCranie said they are using a similar research methodology and design but are using Huntsville Center data with hopes to have their latest paper published before this summer.

"Since Huntsville Center and Honolulu District are similar in that the majority of the work is done by contractors, I expect the results will mirror each other," he said.

"What will be interesting is when Josh begins his research on the USACE enterprise as the data will include wage-grade USACE employees."

Moskowitz's dissertation work aims to investigate the impacts of CE-SOHMS across a larger sample size to include all 12 USACE sub-organizations that have achieved Army SOH Star status with an emphasis on change management and safety performance trends during the implementation period.

Fort Bliss UESC project comes to a close

By William Farrow
Huntsville Center Public Affairs

A utility company contracted by the U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville (Huntsville Center) recently completed a $58 million third-party financed agreement project at one of the Army's largest installations.

Huntsville Center's Utility Energy Services Contracts (UESC) project at Fort Bliss, Texas, implemented three Energy Conservation Measures (ECMs): LED lighting upgrades, water security, and resilience through microgrid and energy storage. It is predicted to save the installation more than $136 million over the lifespan of the 24-year contract.

For the Fort Bliss project, New Mexico Gas Company (NMGC) was selected as the Utility Contractor. Partnering with Energy Systems Group (ESG), an Energy Services Company (ESCO) – NMGC assessed the energy savings opportunities, fronted the capital costs, and designed and installed various ECMs.

The UESC contract also calls for NMGC to perform operations and maintenance on the microgrid ECM, allowing Fort Bliss Department of Public Works maintenance resources to be spent on other activities while allowing the garrison to focus its appropriated funds on mission critical requirements.

The return for NMGC is payment from the resulting savings over the length of the contract.

The project's goal is to provide resilience through the microgrid and energy storage systems to power 40 percent of its critical facilities. The contract also addresses water infrastructure and security needs while decreasing energy and water consumption.

A project of this magnitude didn't come without challenge, said Aubrey Glynn, project manager for this UESC.

Courtesy photo

Huntsville Center recently completed a $58 million third-party financed UESC project at Fort Bliss, Texas, that included the installation of microgrids to provide back-up power to over 140 critical buildings at the installation.

'Working closely with Fort Bliss Department of Public Works (DPW) staff, particularly the garrison's energy manager, Marivi Travieso, the UESC Project Delivery Team (PDT) was able to overcome challenges with schedule constraints, pricing, material availability, design around existing utilities and permitting," Glynn said.

Travieso recalls the water infrastructure improvement portion of the project as being uniquely problematic.

"One of the most confounding issues, was with the water system as the transmission waterline originates from the Tobin well field, located north of main cantonment area, and terminates in a developed industrial area with high utility congestion," Travieso said.

To get around the congestion, Fort Bliss Water Service Company (FBWSC) planned and designed a 20-inch diameter waterline to run across major roadways, existing sanitary sewer mains, storm drains, high pressure gas mains and other conflicting utilities.

Due to the impact of the FBWCS waterline plan's functionality of the water system, FBWSC had to submit the plans to the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality for review and approval prior to commencement of construction activities. FBWSC had to account for this planning and permitting within the already tight schedule.

Upon construction completion FBWSC had to make additional improvements to the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA)

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and chlorination facilities to be able to seamlessly transition from water purchased from El Paso Water (EPW) utility to FBWSC well water on a moment's notice.

These improvements provided much needed ease of use to the FBWSC operations team to meet system demands on either water source. Since the project completion in 2024 the monthly water purchase by Fort Bliss from El Paso Water reduced on average by 49%, a decrease that directly correlates with cost savings.

The success of the Fort Bliss project, Glynn said, is in generating energy savings.

However, she said that it took buy-in from a lot of different stakeholders to ensure the project's accomplishment.

"Our success is a product of the solid working relationships built between Huntsville Center, Fort Bliss' Department of Public Works, Fort Bliss Garrison leadership, Army Installation Management Command, Army leadership and our utility team partners, NMGC and ESG," Glynn said.

Fort Bliss is the second-largest Army installation covering 1,700 square miles in west Texas and southern New Mexico. Home to the 1st Armored Division, Fort Bliss has more than 40,000 people working out of more than 2,000 buildings (not including housing) on the installation.

Huntsville Center is considered the Army's expert in UESCs with projects completed or in progress at Forts Irwin, California; Fort Detrick, Maryland; Forts Gordon and Stewart in Georgia, Fort Polk, Louisiana, Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington and Anniston Army Depot, Alabama. The UESC program also has projects Warner-Robbins Air Force Base in Georgia and the Pentagon.

Center's REM program gathers energy data for Army Reserve

By William Farrow
Huntsville Center Public Affairs

Maintaining and documenting data for Army Reserve's growing network of automated, data-driven facilities is a daunting mission. A contractor serving as a resource efficiency manager (REM) under the Huntsville Center's Energy Division is turning that mission into reality.

Alexandra Pitts, a Lindahl Reed, Inc. contractor working under the management of the Center's REM Program, is the technical link powering the Reserve's unified energy control system.

Energy data collection and facility automation are becoming essential to military readiness, and the Army Reserve's digital modernization efforts are bringing thousands of facilities together under one secure, unified system.

With over 200,000 Soldiers and Civilian employees operating within more than 40 million square feet of building space spread across the nation, the Army Reserve is a major energy consumer. Accessing energy is essential for the Reserve's resilience, and Pitts plays a major role in ensuring the Reserve's energy resilience.

Melissa Johnson, REM program manager said Pitts' position is unique to the REM program.

"She doesn't have the normal REM focus, nor does she cover one garrison or even a region; she assists with all Army Reserve locations," Johnson said.

Pitts' experience and knowledge with controls systems and troubleshooting issues are valuable to the USAR installations to have properly running systems, which allows them to have accurate system controls and reporting building information.

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EM CX efforts improving Environmental Liability Estimates for FUDS program

By William Farrow
Huntsville Center Public Affairs

The Environmental and Munitions Center of Expertise (EM CX) is supporting Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with a complex environmental and munitions financial audit focused on future cleanup costs to ensure the Army meets its environmental and munitions response obligations.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of War Comptroller (OUSW(C)) contracted independent public accounting (IPA) firm KPMG to perform a financial audit covering costs associated with the Environmental and Disposal Liability (E&DL) reported by active Army, Army National Guard, Army Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and the Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS) programs.

The Army goal is to resolve "material weaknesses" identified by auditors by the end of 2026 and achieve a clean audit opinion by 2028. FUDS accounts for nearly 50% of Army's event-driven environmental liability (EL), so resolving FUDS audit issues is critical to Army's audit success. Within the FUDS program, a majority of the EL is in the future cleanup costs which are documented in Cost to Complete (CTC) estimates.

The EM CX, as part of the U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville, plays a critical role in CTC estimates by providing training, subject manager expertise (SME), guidance documents, and estimate reviews for all FUDS districts. The EM CX provides audit support for CTCs, inventory completeness and serves as the backup support for quarterly environmental liabilities reporting. The audit support teams work with Headquarters U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop corrective

File photo

A munition found and removed in 2018 from a Formerly Used Defense Site in Puerto Rico. Huntsville Center's Environmental and Munitions Center of Expertise is assisting with a financial audit to ensure the Army meets its FUDS remediation obligations.

actions and implement remediation of audit findings called Notice of Finding and Recommendation (NFR). An NFR is a formal issue written by auditors that explains what is wrong, why it matters, and what the Army needs to fix to improve audit results. The EM CX provides critical support during audit testing by pulling the required documentation for samples and coordinating resolution of questions.

In preparation to meet the 2028 audit goal, Donna Sharp, FUDS Liaison from the EM CX, said the EM CX audit teams are working on audit readiness which is the proactive approach to identify and resolve audit issues before they become audit findings.

"We've been supporting HQ USACE and the Districts to achieve the goal to downgrade the Army's material weakness for the FUDS portion of the E&DL and have made significant progress in the last two years," Sharp said.

To achieve their goal, USACE Environmental Districts and the EM CX FUDS team worked together to complete eligibility determinations for 584 FUDS properties by the end of Fiscal 2025.

"An early finding in the audit was that there was too much uncertainty in the completeness of the FUDS E&DL population as 584 properties did not have any eligibility determination documentation in our database of record (FUDSMIS)," Sharp said.

"This was a big effort by HQ USACE, EM CX, and the Districts to conduct the eligibility determinations." In addition to the 584 properties, the FUDS program must pass completeness testing to ensure there is adequate documentation to support the existence and closeout of projects.

The EM CX completeness team had been proactively working on preparing for audit testing in 2025. Sharp said FUDS passed all baseline completeness testing in 2025 which was a significant milestone since this is the first time FUDS was tested.

The completeness testing is labor intensive and the ability of the EM CX to handle all sample requests freed the field up for execution. There will be additional testing in 2026, but the auditors had no findings around the completeness of the inventory in 2025.

"A position paper explaining the outcome of the eligibility determination of the 584 was accepted by KPMG, so the eligible properties needing additional assessment will not be a material weakness," Sharp said.

The next step, Sharp said, is to ensure FUDS follows the new Go-Forward process which will ensure the completeness of the inventory going forward. The EM CX completeness team will be spearheading that effort by assisting HQ USACE with inventory tracking and completing backcheck

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Johnson said Pitts is heavily focused on the building controls, and is the central point for Army Reserves units to reach out to for insurance that their building controls are operating correctly. Pitts also works to troubleshoot issues and makes sure everyone's building controls are up to date with new versions when necessary.

"She is the Army Reserve go-to person to assist within Enterprise Building Control Systems (EBCS), Facility Related Control Systems (FRCS) and the Army Reserve Metering Program," Johnson said.

Johnson said what is so unique about this particular position is that it has been tailored for Army Reserve locations to have expertise in this specific area, and Pitts keeps the Army Reserves Headquarters involved and updated with how their multiple locations and installation's building controls are working and reporting.

"She came onboard with Huntsville Center in 2024 and is exactly what the Army Reserves was looking for this REM position."

Pitts currently supports the Army Reserve's EBCS program by helping simplify and improve how facilities manage their energy use across widely scattered locations.

Coordinating software updates, installing new system components, and making sure the equipment in each building operates correctly, meets program standards, and sends accurate information into the EBCS platform, her work ensures secure remote monitoring and gives Army Reserve leadership clearer insight into how their facilities are performing.

"I serve as a technical liaison between USARC Headquarters and the Readiness Division REMs, helping ensure consistent EBCS implementation across all divisions," Pitts said.

As part of her fieldwork, Pitts often conducts site visits to Army Reserve centers across multiple Readiness Divisions depending on project needs or field-level troubleshooting requests related to the JACEs.

Travel is a regular part of Pitts' role as an REM. Under normal circumstances, Pitts said site visits are typically planned every couple of months as needed, depending on system conditions, project activity, and facility support requirements.

"Army Reserve Centers are located across a wide geographic footprint, and some sites are located in more remote or out-of-the-way locations," Pitts said.

"While my travel to date has been within the continental United States, the dispersed nature of Reserve facilities requires coordination across regions and locations."

Visits involve general facility walkthrough to assess the presence, status, and connectivity of JACE devices and utility meters, including water, gas, and electric, within the EBCS framework.

Pitts said coordinating travel to Reserve Centers isn't nearly as difficult as the coordination required managing the complexity that comes with supporting buildings when there are many moving parts involved.

She said working with multiple stakeholders, including different contractors, technical teams, and local site personnel, is often quite complex.

"Ensuring everyone is aligned and informed before work is performed is critical."

FUDS

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checklists.

In 2025, FUDS closed two of the eight Notice of Finding and Determinations (NFRs) issued in 2024 and prevented issuance of an NFR on baseline completeness.

"In 2026, we are well positioned to close three of the six remaining FUDS NFRs reissued at the end of 2025 with a heavy focus on remediation of Cost-To-Complete estimates (1,755 CTCs in 2025)," Sharp said.

The types of support the EM CX provides will work toward clean audit determination. EM CX typically provides KPMG with audit data packages as requested and answers follow up questions; provides support to USACE District estimators on how to conduct walk throughs with the IPA of their estimates and quality control and supervisory reviews; provide quality assurance reviews annually and perform testing of any new process to ensure it works as intended.

"FUDS has had good processes in place for a long time, now we are focusing on describing our existing processes using financial audit terminology, identifying where we don't have adequate controls in our process, and helping with corrective actions to address the problems," she said.

"We make adjustments to our guidance documents (FUDS Cost to Complete Handbook) and provide annual training to cost estimators and reviewers."

Michelle Lordemann, EM CX director, said the FUDS audit is another example of how EM CX supports the needs of the nation.

"FUDS are a priority because they pose long-term risks to human health, safety, and the environment from hazardous materials, munitions, and explosives left behind from past Department of War activities and USACE prioritizes these cleanups based on risk to the public—particularly in areas where people live, work, or attend school."

Holiday Townhall festive, introspective

Huntsville Center's workforce gathered at Bob Jones Auditorium at the Sparkman Center Dec. 11 for the Huntsville Center Holiday Townhall. During the event, employees sang festive holiday songs (above) before leadership began recognizing employees for their outstanding work throughout the year (left). Huntsville Center leadership also spoke on topics to include hiring efforts, training, travel and federal shutdown impacts (below). Col. Robert Hilliard, Huntsville Center commander, concluded the event with remarks of encouragement and requested employees provide ideas for innovative ways Huntsville Center can efficiently continue accomplishing its mission (below left).

Photos by Lillian Putnam

Ethics Corner

A reminder about the Hatch Act

By Melanie Braddock
Huntsville Center Office of Counsel

With this being an election year, it is important for all federal employees to refresh their knowledge regarding activities under the Hatch Act.

The Hatch Act limits certain political activities of civilian federal employees. All civilian employees in the executive branch except the President and Vice President are covered by the Hatch Act. Note that the political activity of military personnel is governed by DoD Directive 1344.10 and are more restrictive than the rules for civilian employees.

Under the Hatch Act, political activity is defined as "any activity directed toward the success or failure of a political party, partisan political group, or candidate for partisan political office."

Employees may:

- Register and vote.
- Place a campaign sign in a yard of personal residence.
- Display a political bumper sticker on a personal vehicle.
- Campaign for or against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, or municipal ordinances.
- Contribute their own personal funds to political parties, campaigns, or partisan groups.
- Attend political rallies, meetings, or fundraisers.
- Sign nominating petitions.
- Follow, like, or comment on social media pages of a candidate for partisan office.
- Be candidates for public office in nonpartisan elections.

It is not considered "political activity" to discuss issues, legislation or policies or to attending a march or rally, as long as it is on the employees own time using their own resources and they are not using their official position.

Specifically, federal employees may not engage in political activity while on duty (including during telework and remote work), in the workplace, when wearing a government uniform or badge, or using a government vehicle. However, all civilian employees are prohibited from soliciting contributions.

This means a civilian employee cannot do any of the following for a partisan political candidate:

- Host a fundraiser
- Serve as the POC for a fundraiser
- Ask for donations by phone, mail, email, or social media
- Invite others to a fundraising event
- Ask for donations through a phone bank
- Share or" like" a fundraising post on social media

Note that this prohibition applies 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. It also does not matter if it is on your personal device or personal time as it is a prohibited activity. These rules apply even when you are teleworking.

Many often ask me what happens when someone violates the Hatch Act. The Encyclopedia of Ethical Failure added two new cases from 2024. The first was a federal civilian employee of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) who used her personal Facebook account while on duty or while at USCG headquarters to support candidates.

In addition, the posts in her Facebook account included requests for donations to partisan political candidates or groups. The employee previously hosted a fundraising event at her home for a partisan political candidate and personally solicited another for organizing a campaign event for a candidate for partisan political office. The penalty was a 90-day unpaid suspension.

The second case was a Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) employee who solicited political contributions for partisan political candidates and engaged in political activity while on duty. The FDIC employee also held a fundraising event at his home for candidates for partisan political office. The employee received a 130-day suspension without pay.

In a recent Standards of Conduct Office presentation on this topic, the Office provided two additional examples. The first example was an Army civilian employee who on three separate days prior to the 2024 election made on-duty social media posts directed toward the success of a partisan political candidate.

The employee also made a social media post soliciting contributions to that candidate's campaign.

The second example was an employee of the Veterans Administration who admitted to violating the Hatch Act by making at least 13 Facebook posts while on duty that expressed support or opposition to a political party and candidates for partisan political office.

As we approach this year's election cycle, please be sure you familiarize yourself with the activities and make wise ethical decisions.

If you have any questions, please reach out to one of the ethics counselors in the office of counsel.

About Huntsville Center

HNC

Unique to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,

Huntsville Center provides innovative engineering solutions to complex, global missions. Our team of professionals engineer adaptive, specialized solutions across a broad spectrum of global enterprise covering five main lines of effort: Energy, Operational Technology, Environmental, Medical, and Base Operations and Facilities. Our portfolios comprise 43 program areas, as well as nine mandatory and six technical centers of expertise, and 17 centers of standardization. Through partnership with Department of Defense agencies, private industry and global stakeholders, we deliver leading edge engineering solutions in support of national interests around the globe.

FY2025 **40+ Programs**

$2.9B

"HNC Delivers Innovation"

In fiscal 2025, Huntsville Center awarded contract actions totaling more than $2.9 billion in obligations for its stakeholders.

The U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville, engineers adaptive, specialized solutions across a broad spectrum of global enterprise covering five main lines of effort: Energy, Operational Technology, Environmental, Medical, and Base Operations and Facilities