

MANAGING STORM IMPACTS AT PORT HOUSTON SHIP BERTHS

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Introduction

Port Houston operates nine public facilities along the Houston Ship Channel. These nine facilities handle around 15% of all waterborne cargo in the Houston area. When a large storm impacts the Houston area, these public facilities are affected. The presence of shoaled sediment and storm related debris causes local, state and national economic impacts due to the loss of use of public docks by arriving and departing ships.

Objectives

This presentation will familiarize the audience with basic information about Port Houston and the Houston Ship Channel. Additionally, there will be information presented regarding how large storms affect the public facilities along the ship channel and how storm impacts are managed by the Port Houston team.

Storm Events

Port Houston manages 9 public facilities along the Houston Ship Channel. The Houston area experiences a major storm event every few years. To maintain the maximum economic benefits of the public facilities, the Port Houston team must react quickly to remediate any impacts to public docks caused by large storms.

Often, large storms are declared emergencies and will require coordination between FEMA and Port Houston to seek reimbursement for storm related impacts. There are practices that are implemented to help in recovering the maximum amount of reimbursement for any storm related work done. These practices include regular hydrographic surveys, extensive documentation and regular communication with FEMA.

Port Houston uses a combination of contracting methods to accomplish and post storm recovery efforts. Most of the time, Port Houston will leverage its ability to be incorporated into a nearby U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' dredging contract. When that option is not available, Port Houston will release a contract through its own internal procurement options. Port Houston is the owner of all submerged lands within the waters of Harris county. Working with FEMA, it has been preliminarily determined that that private facilities with berthing areas that are located in Harris county are eligible for reimbursement of the cost of removing storm related shoaled material and debris. Port Houston has initiated a program that allows private terminals to request reimbursement for such expenses through the existing Port Houston FEMA claim for Harvey related damage