

As Ernesto skirts U.S. East Coast, DDC rallies support

By Polly Charbonneau, DDC Command Affairs

The East Coast of the United States was on a roller coaster ride with Ernesto, a storm that was everything from a hurricane to little more than heavy rain. Throughout this saga, professionals at the Defense Distribution Center (DDC) monitored Ernesto's movement and provided assistance.

In real time, DDC provided tracking for transportation of shipments in support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). More than 170 truckloads of Meals-Ready-to-Eat (MREs) were positioned to support communities affected by the storm.

DDC's responses changed as the storm changed severity and direction.

Two DDC distribution centers, Defense Distribution Depots Albany, Ga. (DDAG), and Norfolk, Va. (DDNV), shipped more than 1.5 million MRE's to FEMA Logistics Centers for pre-positioning in support of Ernesto or future emergency relief efforts. This is despite the fact that DDNV has been affected by flooding from the storm.

At the request of the Air Mobility Command, DDC's largest distribution center, the Defense Distribution Depot Susquehanna, Pa. (DDSP), shipped 280 empty 463L air pallets to Dover Air Force Base to support potential airlift for Ernesto relief.

DDC Transportation coordinated more than 150 truckloads of MREs while DDC Customer Support used Defense Transportation Tracking System, or DTTS, to prepare detailed tracking and visibility reports two times each day, which was used by the DLA Logistics Operations Center and FEMA. DDC's Command Control Center, or CCC, led these efforts, acting as the focal point for all information on Ernesto.

DDNV answers call to stock-up FEMA warehouses with MREs

When Tropical Storm Ernesto was still brewing in the Caribbean, it wasn't known at the time how strong the storm might become, or how it might affect U.S. citizens.

When Defense Distribution Depot Norfolk, Va. (DDNV), Commander CAPT John Qua, SC, USN, received a request to prepare a large shipment of Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) for delivery to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) warehouses, DDNV personnel immediately went to work to fill the request.

"We received the initial request on Sunday," explained Acting Chief of Production Division Ron Rickman. "Within hours, we had eight people at work picking cases." The work continued through the day Monday (in addition to their regular workload) and by Tuesday morning, 40 53-foot trucks, each loaded with 36 pallets of MREs, were on their way to a FEMA warehouse in Atlanta. The MREs will be stored there for issue by FEMA as required.

According to Rickman, DDNV is one of the largest repositories on the East Coast for emergency supplies like MREs. They can store

more than 500,000 cases of MREs in chilled storage.

While the FEMA request was being picked and packed, DDNV received another request for an additional 29 truckloads of MREs to be sent to FEMA's Atlanta warehouse.

DDNV workers rotated between

their regular workload and supporting the FEMA requirements until those 29 trucks were packed and sent on their way.

While the additional trucks were being packed, yet another request arrived. That request was for 22 sea vans (with a capacity of 34 pallets each) filled with MREs to be trucked to Jacksonville, Fla., for transfer to a barge with an ultimate destination of Puerto Rico.

DDNV was still able to fill this request without impacting their regular workload.

"Our people really responded to these requests," said Rickman. "They remember how their hard work last year supporting Katrina relief efforts made a difference in the lives of so many people. That was all of the motivation they needed. They knew that these MREs will go to help people just like them whose lives were affected by a storm."

Last year, DDNV loaded 275 trucks with Katrina relief supplies.

Rickman explained that coordinating an effort like this without having it affect the regular workload was a challenge for DDNV, but one they met head-on. "Diane Hobbs, DDNV Lead Traffic Management Specialist, and Donald Doman, DDNV Materials Handler Supervisor, had their hands full with this," said Rickman. "They had to coordinate the loading of all of those trucks from three trucking companies and manage all of the associated paperwork. That was a huge job, and I was glad they were there to help get it done."

When the final truck had left, a grand total of 155,136 cases of MREs had been picked, packed and shipped away.



A DDNV worker counts pallets before they are picked up by a forklift and loaded into a truck for transfer to FEMA.



Earl Fuller, DDNV Materials Handler Leader, loads cases of MREs in a truck for transfer to a FEMA warehouse in Atlanta. DDNV workers loaded more than 155,000 cases of MREs in support of FEMA requirements prior to Tropical Storm Ernesto.