



## **International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section**

For immediate release  
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### **USIBWC MOVES INTO 24-HOUR OPERATIONS IN RESPONSE TO HURRICANE ALEX**

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has initiated 24-hour operations at its Emergency Operations Centers at its Headquarters Office in El Paso, Texas and its Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project Office in Mercedes, Texas in preparation for Hurricane Alex. The USIBWC operates a system of Rio Grande flood control levees, dams, and floodways in Hidalgo, Cameron, and Willacy Counties and is prepared to respond to any flooding that could occur on the Rio Grande.

USIBWC staff have been preparing for the storm since early in the week by testing emergency generators, communications systems, and hydrographic equipment; filling sandbags; and coordinating with other agencies. The USIBWC has deployed additional equipment and personnel from its other offices to supplement the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project staff in Mercedes. Sandbags have been filled and are ready for transport to affected areas if needed. Round-the-clock levee patrols will begin at daybreak on Thursday, July 1.

Contractors that have been constructing levee improvements for the USIBWC have executed their flood protection plans, which require them to ensure that any levee segments under construction be restored to their pre-construction state in advance of a flood. The USIBWC has also coordinated with local entities to ensure proper operation of drainage and irrigation structures that pass through the Commission's flood control levees.

Should the Rio Grande experience flood conditions, USIBWC staff will move into Flood Fight Operations. During this phase of response, crews work 24 hours per day to patrol flood control levees to

identify and respond to any problems that could arise such as erosion along the levees, freeboard encroachment, or seepage on the land side of the levees. Sand bagging operations will be established if needed. Crews also take more frequent flow measurements to track and document the flood. During Hurricane Dolly in 2008, flood conditions were not experienced in the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project although flooding occurred due to local drainage problems on the land side of the USIBWC levees.

As part of its flood operations, the USIBWC also exchanges information with the Mexican Section of the Commission regarding flood conditions. The USIBWC provides data about Mexico's Rio Grande tributaries to the National Weather Service, which uses this and U.S. data to formulate flood forecasts. If necessary, the two Sections of the Commission jointly operate the Retamal and Anzalduas Diversion Dams according to established criteria to ensure the equitable diversion of Rio Grande floodwaters into each country's floodway or to make flood releases from Amistad and Falcon International Storage Reservoirs located upstream on the Rio Grande. In May, the U.S. and Mexican Sections of the Commission conducted their annual flood workshop in preparation for the hurricane season.

Residents in the affected region should monitor National Weather Service warnings and forecasts for information about Hurricane Alex and any flood watches, warnings, and advisories that could be issued for the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Current information about Rio Grande flow as well as storage and release data from U.S. and Mexican reservoirs in the Rio Grande basin is available on the USIBWC web page at:

[http://www.ibwc.gov/Water\\_Data/Reports/RG\\_Flow\\_data.html](http://www.ibwc.gov/Water_Data/Reports/RG_Flow_data.html)

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