

Port of Beaumont looks to the future

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AUSTIN, Texas — When Hurricane Harvey flooded Beaumont in August 2017, it didn't only affect local people and businesses — it shut down one of the most important ports for the U.S. economy. FEMA and Port of Beaumont leadership knew they needed to work together to get the international shipping hub back online as quickly as possible.

“We began working with the FEMA team probably within a month of the storm,” said Brandon Bergeron, the port's director of engineering. “It's been a relationship of helping each other understand what the damages were and get past them.”

In the storm's aftermath, FEMA provided funding to clear debris Harvey had deposited throughout the port and its waterways. Since Harvey had eroded the shorelines of the Neches River, this involved not only picking up debris from the grounds but dredging sediment out of the river to enable access for large ships.

With dredging complete, the port reopened its docks and operations in November, but there was still much more work to be done.

Harvey had eroded three shorelines, leaving their banks steep and unstable. One of the shorelines was home to a railroad line and drainage and pump systems, and another shoreline was the site of a grain elevator whose electrical substation was in danger of sliding into the river.



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With FEMA assistance, the port has completed stabilization work on the grain-elevator site and is preparing to rehabilitate the other two.

“FEMA’s also been helpful in the sense that they’ve encouraged us to look for ways to mitigate this damage,” Bergeron said. “We were able to not only put back what we lost but make it a bit more resilient than it originally was.”

FEMA has also contributed funding toward security cameras, lighting and lift-station utilities for the port, which handles about 3.8 million tons of cargo annually.

“We are the third-fastest-growing port in the country, and we have the fifth-largest amount of tonnage of all ports in the country, so there’s no small significance to having the Port of Beaumont back in operation,” Bergeron said. “It’s been an exciting time to see not only these projects restoring what we lost but also the future growth that the port is planning on.”

To view a video on the Port of Beaumont’s recovery, visit <https://youtu.be/1mJfhoQ4BBo> or www.facebook.com/FEMAHarvey.

For additional information on Hurricane Harvey and Texas recovery, visit the Hurricane Harvey disaster web page at www.fema.gov/disaster/4332, Facebook at www.facebook.com/FEMAHarvey, the FEMA Region 6 Twitter account at www.twitter.com/FEMARegion6 or the Texas Division of Emergency Management website at www.dps.texas.gov/dem.

