The Works Program

WPA Forces Reach New Peak in Flood Zone

Emergency forces of the Works Progress Administration in the flood zone were estimated today at more than 40,000 on the basis of incomplete reports from the devastated area.

Three new field offices were set up in Midwestern States to deal with the emergency as representatives of WPA were dispatched from the regional office in Chicago to direct activities at Cincinnati, Louisville and Southern Illinois. Howard S. Drew, Assistant Field Representative, will be in charge of the Cincinnati area; George Field, Chief Regional Engineer, at Louisville, and Bruce Uthius, Assistant Field Representative, in Southern Illinois.

More than 25,000 WPA workers were on duty this morning in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois and Missouri, reports indicated. WPA officials were given full authority to mobilize men and materials to aid other Federal agencies and the American Red Cross in meeting the emergency in their districts. More than 50,000 WPA employees may be on the job in these five States within 24 hours, the regional headquarters reported to WPA Administrator Harry L. Hopkins.

Approximately 10,000 WPA workers were on the job in 12 northeastern Arkansas counties, along the St. Francis floodway, Floyd Sharp, State WPA Administrator reported. To facilitate cooperation with other agencies a central headquarters for flood relief has been established in State WPA offices.

All residents of Dyess colony, some 600 farm families receiving Federal aid, were moved to Little Rock when the weakened Big Lake levee in Mississippi county threatened their homes.

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While the majority of WPA workers were engaged in rescue work and in strengthening levees, many were employed on sanitation projects under supervision of health authorities and women workers were busy making mattresses and other supplies for refugees.

At Harrisburg, Ill., headquarters of Southern Illinois flood relief, WPA labor was employed today in constructing a sandbag levee to protect Highway 13, the only highway remaining open to this city of 12,000. Since Saturday, 500 WPA workmen have been moving families from the outskirts of Harrisburg. Others are patrolling levees, piling sandbags at weakened points and repairing bridges. Fifteen hundred women employees of WPA were on 24-hour duty in Southern Illinois making clothing, bandages, bedding and sandbags. Similar activities were under way at Keensburg, Maunie, Elizabethtown, Rosiclare, Golconda, Brookport, Metropolis, Mound City, Mounds, Cairo, McClure and other cities along the Wabash and Ohio rivers.

West Virginia today reported 1,800 WPA workers employed in evacuating residents of the flooded area at Huntington, Point Pleasant, Kenova, from which 870 families, of 3,600 persons, had been moved to safety by noon today.

Tennessee was employing approximately 400 WPA employees today, although no alarm was reported. In Lake county, 225 WPA men were reinforcing levees and 1,000 families had been evacuated to the State armory in Jackson. One hundred were on the job at Memphis, 50 at Nashville and 20 at Clarksville.

Pennsylvania WPA headquarters reported few calls for aid, though 40 of its employees were working on control projects at Pittsburgh.