

R. J. Corman Storm Team Responded To A 500 Year Flood That Submerged The Midwest.



R. J. Corman Derailment Services divisions have worked rain washouts in the Midwest since April, but the devastating rains were yet to come. By mid June, record breaking rain hit the Midwest and levees along the Mississippi River started to fail with Iowa and Missouri hit the hardest. U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley Iowa, reported on June 16th, 2008, “Nearly a third of Iowa is already under water and water levels continue to rise”.

This area of the Mississippi corridor contains three major railroads - Union Pacific (UP), Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and Canadian National (CN), which were all affected by the flooding. Morgan Stanley analyst, William Green, reported that UP was hit the hardest by the flooding followed by BNSF and CN.

By June 17th, R. J. Corman Storm Team Response Crews had moved into Burlington, Iowa and set up a staging area near a BNSF railyard. Crews prepped to stabilize and possibly rebuild track beds where ever needed. According to Steve Forsberg, a BNSF spokesman, “Until the water receded to the point we could see the right-of-way, all we could do is get material and equipment ready. You can’t always assume every section of track that was under water was damaged.” While waiting for the water to recede we had subcontractors using airboats to wrangle hundreds of floating stray railroad ties, and our crews began unloading and moving thousands of tons ballast.

Our crews along with thirteen subcontractors worked 42 days straight to get the railroads back on track (first project began June 7th in Indiana). During that time, R. J. Corman crews manned 195 pieces of heavy equipment, either our own or rented. There were six different jobs in this response that required 145 R. J. Corman employees from Aviation Services, Construction, Derailment Services, Group and Material Sales.

Like all Storm Team Responses, this flood had it’s own unique challenges. According to Derailment Services’ Operation Manager, Nathan Paris, “It occupied a vast area with limited road access. Some of our crews had to take airboats just to get to work areas. Immersible track hoes were brought in, as well as three rock trains. Our crews dealt with extreme heat, a variety of biting insects, snakes and of course an immense amount of standing debris filled river water. Of course housing became an issue, because we were working in areas with thousands of displaced residents, so our crews were having to move from hotel to hotel. Our crews and subcontractors did a great job and need to be commended for their hard work.”

By July 18th, our work was done, the railroads were rolling again and our crews had returned to their respected divisions. However, for some the work continued. Our administrative and accounting departments will be doing paperwork for awhile after a project of this magnitude. It’s important to remember and thank all the folks working behind the scenes, because no matter which department or division you work for at R. J. Corman anyone can be affected by a Storm Team Response.



What is a 500 year flood?

A 500 year flood has nothing to do with calendar years. It represents the quantity of water that has a 1 in 500 chance of happening in any one year. It’s like .2% chance of a flood of this magnitude occurring in any one year.

Source: USGS National Flood Coordinator, Mr. Bob Holmes

