

Prime Power School Opens at Fort Leonard Wood

By Ms. Amy Phillips and Ms. Diana McCoy

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Kansas City District, recently completed a \$30 million state-of-the-art school and handed it over to the 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power) in a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, on 22 November 2010. The facility will house the United States Army Prime Power School, which moved from Fort Belvoir, Virginia, under the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure program. The building is a unique school for a unique unit. The 249th is the only prime power production unit in the Army and the only active duty unit assigned to USACE. The battalion generates commercial-grade electricity from 600 volts to 69,000 volts at up to 3.2 megawatts and provides this electricity to military installations and federal relief organizations during operations ranging from training to disasters to war.

The battalion's Soldiers hold the military occupation specialty (MOS) 12P, prime power production specialist, and the Prime Power School is the only school that trains this MOS.

The 77,000-square-foot facility replaces three World War II-era warehouses at Fort Belvoir that had been converted for the Prime Power School. The new school houses administrative offices, conference rooms, classrooms, instruction laboratories, an auditorium, equipment training areas, and outdoor equipment testing for the 12P Soldiers.

Administrative staff had already begun to occupy the building when the first class of Soldiers in the new

facility began in January. According to the USACE command sergeant major, since the Engineer School is already at Fort Leonard Wood, it only makes sense—and is part of the natural progression—to bring the Prime Power School here.

The USACE District used the early contractor involvement (ECI) delivery method with this project due to tight budget constraints. The District has been a champion of the ECI method, because it provides flexibility and allows incorporation of lessons learned throughout the duration of the project.

Even though initially there wasn't money to fund the project, ECI enabled the District to make changes in the design to get the project under budget.

Construction on the project began in February 2009 with the contractor performing under tight constrictions, keeping the project on schedule, and maintaining high-quality work. The United States Green Building Council (USGBC) gave the Prime Power School a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver certification, and ninety-two percent of the construction waste was recycled. The facility uses a number of high-tech systems to conserve energy. For example, it has highly reflective roofing material that minimizes heat infiltration. Sensors in the rooms detect both motion and natural light and conserve energy by automatically adjusting the amount of artificial light—depending on whether the room is occupied and how much natural light is present.

Major General David Quantock, commanding general of the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence and Fort Leonard Wood, officially accepted the new Prime Power School as he cut the ribbon on “a state-of-the-art prime power facility.” Even though it is certified LEED Silver, initial feedback from the USGBC indicates that the facility should be LEED Gold, since the training facility has set a new standard for environmental stewardship. According to the deputy commander of USACE, it is on track to be the first certified LEED Gold facility ever built at Fort Leonard Wood. 

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Photo by Robert "Brandon" Tobias

The new 77,000-square-foot United States Army Prime Power School, constructed by the USACE Kansas City District at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, is on track for LEED Gold certification.