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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER SUPPORT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FT. LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI



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Sinkhole filling complete, street reopens

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Traffic is once again flowing the entire length of Iowa Avenue after the filling of a sinkhole that could have, theoretically, housed several rows of mid-sized vehicles, stacked five deep.

Measuring about 35 feet long, 25 feet wide and 30 feet deep, the sinkhole was filled with more than 600 tons of rock by Directorate of Public Works contractors.

Iowa Avenue reopened without detours Oct. 28, five months after traffic was rerouted with the sinkhole discovery May 24.

“The situation was difficult to remedy, not only due to the size of the sinkhole, but also because of the large number of utilities (overhead electric lines, cable TV, underground communication lines, and storm water lines) that were either in the sinkhole or adjacent to it,” said Mariola Bush, civil engineer and project manager.

Closing portions of Iowa Avenue was part of the process to make sure vibrations from the traffic didn’t make the sinkhole walls collapse and cause further damage, according to Gary Roberts, DPW Design Branch chief.

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Once the area was fenced off to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, communication and storm sewer lines were relocated. Filling the hole was a process that involved packing with rock/gravel and capping with topsoil and seeding.

The final steps were repairing the sidewalk and force protection walls and reinstalling an electrical pole.

“The entire process went just as we projected,” said Bobby Rakes, Public Works director. “We knew the complexity of moving fiber optic communications cables would take up the bulk of time. Once that was completed, the entire filling and repair process took less than seven days.”

“It was truly a team effort by all involved. Amy Crews, Percy Williams and Greg Nelson, DPW inspection team, worked very hard to speed up the process,” Rakes added.

Sinkholes are a common feature in Missouri, which has “karst terrain.” Karst terrain is a region where the bedrock can be dissolved by ground water, according to the U.S. Department of the Interior’s U.S. Geological Survey.

Between 1970 and 2007, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources examined more than 160 collapses reported by the public. Most of these collapses were small — less than 10 feet in diameter and 10 feet deep; some, however, are quite large and spectacular.

Collapses are more frequent after intense rainstorms, and there is some evidence that droughts play a role as well. Areas where the water table fluctuates or has lowered suddenly are more prone to collapse formation.

Collapses are not limited to karst areas, as they can form above old mines and even from leaky pipes — though they are much more frequent in areas that have significant karst development, according to the USGS.

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For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

(Mike Bowers is the Guidon managing editor.)

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains more than 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, one of only five reception stations in the Army, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.
