

Emergency Catch Basin Cleaning Project Performance Audit

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Purpose of This Report

On August 5, 2017, the City of New Orleans (City) experienced a storm that resulted in extreme flooding throughout the City and loss of power to major Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans facilities. The Department of Public Works (DPW) initiated the Emergency Catch Basin Project (Project) to clean 15,000 catch basins and to repair as many as possible with the available funding.

In 2017, DPW awarded contracts to Royal Engineering (Royal), RamJ Construction (RamJ), Compliance EnviroSystems (CES), and Hard Rock Construction (Hard Rock) to perform inspections, cleanings, and/or repairs to catch basins located in the City. The objective of the audit was to determine if the contractors (1) inspected, cleaned, and/or repaired the catch basins in accordance with the contractual terms and (2) billed for services in accordance with the contractual rates.

What the OIG Found

DPW began the Project on August 24, 2017 and completed it on June 29, 2018 at a cost of \$16.6 million.¹ Royal inspected 26,095 catch basins. RamJ and CES cleaned 15,643 catch basins, and Hard Rock repaired 3,408 catch basins. From the population of inspected catch basins, auditors selected a statistical sample of 400 catch basins.

All contractors completed the inspections, cleanings, and/or repairs in accordance with the scope of work required by their respective contracts. Through interviews of individuals, review of documents, and physical inspection of the work performed, auditors confirmed that Royal inspected all 400 catch basins and laterals in accordance with the contractual terms.² Auditors also noted Royal developed a scope of work consistent with the type of cleaning and/or repairs needed. Royal monitored, tracked, and observed the construction progress. For the sampled 223 cleaned catch basins and 52 repaired catch basins, auditors determined that each contractor assessed, cleaned and/or repaired each catch basin and lateral in accordance with the contractual terms.

DPW and Royal approved all invoices prior to payment. All contractors billed for services performed and in accordance with the contractual rates. Through inspection of records and recalculation of invoices, auditors verified the work performed on the sampled catch basins was billed to DPW in accordance with the contractual amounts.

Contractors met the time requirements established in the contracts. The Project began on August 24, 2017, and it ended on June 29, 2018. CES completed all catch basin cleanings within the 120-day deadline established in the contract. Hard Rock completed all catch basin repairs within the 266-day deadline established in the contract and extension.

OIG Observation

The underlying drainage infrastructure may be clogged and/or broken. The impaired drainage infrastructure could contribute to localized flooding. To recognize the full benefits of the catch basin cleaning and repairs, the drainage collection lines also need to be cleaned and/or repaired.

DPW Response

“DPW agrees with [the] positive findings.... These improvements are correlated to the implementation of new technology, which allows DPW to have an accurate accounting of our infrastructure repairs. Currently, DPW is using the same technology to track our daily maintenance work orders in real time and simultaneously document what assets have been maintained. DPW intends to implement this technology across all DPW divisions.”

¹ DPW initially budgeted \$22.0 million for the Project, but it reduced the budget during the course of the Project by \$3.8 million to fund a separate drain-point repair project. As a result, DPW’s final budget for the Project totaled \$18.2 million.

² Of the 400 sampled inspected catch basins, 223 catch basins were also cleaned, and 52 catch basins were repaired.