



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

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Contractors learn the USACE way to assure quality

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan — Building strong, building quality and building safely — three mandates forming the foundation of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers training program targeted toward contractors who build the facilities in Afghanistan that make it possible for the Afghan government to improve services for its people.

Every month, more than 20 Afghans, Turks, Indians and others attend the Afghanistan Engineer District-South's two-day construction quality management training seminars, which are designed to teach contractors about USACE processes and quality expectations.

“This training gives contractors the knowledge they need to adhere to Corps’ processes on quality control,” said Frank Scopa, chief of the quality assurance branch at Forward Operating Base Lindsey near Kandahar Airfield. “For the process to work and to deliver quality products, everyone needs to understand their role within the team and must be active supporters of USACE processes,” Scopa continued. “The need for quality and safety cannot be understated.”

District instructors deliver a series of briefings that cover:

- schedules and milestone completion;
- definable features of work;
- the purpose of daily quality control reports;
- how to track deficiencies;
- quality control plans;
- testing;
- the three phases of inspection requests for information (RFIs);
- the submittal process;
- pay activities and progress payments; and
- project closeout.



Darrell Gay (third from the left) explains how to conduct quality assurance inspections to Corps of Engineers standards during a construction quality management training seminar held Sept. 21 at Forward Operating Base Lindsey, near Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan. Gay is an engineering technician with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-South. He is instructing (from left to right) Willie Fouche, a safety manager with Highland al-Hujaz Company, Stephen Baxer, group construction manager with Jetspark Specialist Support Services, and Erigh Els, an electrical engineer with Highland al-Hujaz. (USACE Photo/Karla Marshall)

After all that instruction, attendees are tested on what they have learned and become certified. They then evaluate the day's instruction and provide feedback to the instructors.

"I've been in Afghanistan for three months and needed to learn USACE methodology," said Stephen Baxter, a group construction manager at Jetspark Specialist Support Services. "It is similar to how we do things in the U.K., but getting certified by USACE will make me more effective."

A second day of instruction includes an introduction to database management tools used by the Corps of Engineers. "We cover the Quality Control System program, which is used by contractors to input required contract information into the Resident Management System program," said Scopa deployed from USACE's Walla Walla District.

The RMS program is used by USACE to administer construction contracts and can generate status reports instantly. "We use RMS to keep track of where we are at any given time on a project," Scopa continued. "It's a great tool because everyone involved in a project can see the projects' historical progress."

The final training module is devoted to safety. "Safety is the number one priority to the Corps of Engineers," said Darrell Gay, an engineer technician and master electrician from Michigan. "Our instruction covers electrical safety, fall protection, personal protective equipment, scaffolding, stair and ladder safety."

For the most part, it is the small, sub-contractors who need this type of training," said Lt. Col. Michael Brothers, the Kandahar Area Office officer in charge and deployed from Boone, Iowa. "The large, multinational contractors working with USACE send representatives as well. We have found that keeping everyone up-to-date on USACE processes enables the team to safely provide quality construction."

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USACE's Afghanistan Engineer District-South provides design and construction services throughout southern Afghanistan to support the International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces-Afghanistan. The work is carried out in Regional Commands South, Southwest and West with the goal of achieving counterinsurgency effects and bolstering the Afghan Government's services to its people.

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