

# RESTORING POWER GENERATED THANKS

by Jeff Griffin, Senior Editor

Most of us take electricity for granted and don't appreciate how critical electrical service is until we lose it. So, when disaster strikes, restoration of power is a top priority as it is needed to conduct rescue operations, for treatment of the injured and later to clear debris so recovery and rebuilding can begin.

Until the power infrastructure is operational, power is supplied by generators, ranging from compact rentals to large backup equipment of hospitals, government agencies and other organizations providing critical services.

Providers of power services along the U.S. Gulf Coast and New Orleans areas were overwhelmed last year by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and flooding that engulfed New Orleans when levees failed. With many of their own employees and their families themselves victims of the storm and vital equipment lost or damaged, other electrical utility companies and contractors from across the country quickly mobilized crews and equipment to help.

Contractor Henkels & McCoy, Blue Bell, PA, is heavily involved in telecommunications construction throughout the U.S., but its crews assisting in recovery work after Katrina and Rita were primarily involved in restoring electrical power, another specialty of the engineering, network development and construction company.

Henkels & McCoy sent 786 employees and approximately 445 pieces of equipment to Mississippi and Louisiana following the storms.

Immediately after the first storm struck, Henkels & McCoy's Tannersville Service Center in Monroe County, PA, mobilized its entire crew.

"It took three days just to get there, said General Foreman George Gross. "Once there, we worked 17- to 19-hour days for three weeks, came home for a little over a week, and then went back after Rita struck."

## Adverse conditions

Responding to Katrina, crews took water and tents in case there was no place to sleep. For most of the time during Katrina operations, crews slept in their trucks. Portable showers were set up and later tents and cots were provided. For Rita workers, a tent city was established in Sulphur, LA, and Henkels & McCoy personnel found a damaged motel closed for business, but the property owner



allowed workers to stay there and Entergy (the electrical service provider) brought in a generator for temporary power.

"The utility companies also hired people with outside cookers to come in and prepare food which was trucked in and kept in refrigerated semi-trailers," said Gross.

Ryan Crull, area manager of Henkels & McCoy's office in Salem, IL, said goodwill gestures from local residents made things a little easier for crews.

"The people were very generous," said Crull. "The destruction was devastating, and most residents had lost their homes, personal belongings, basically everything they owned. They didn't have much, just food and water for themselves. Yet they were willing to give up their own supplies if they thought we needed them."

That the residents appreciated the assistance of their out-of-state rescuers is apparent from the letters and e-mails received by Henkels & McCoy.

From a man and wife in Lucedale, MS:

"We had the great experience of meeting some of your workers during the recent hur-

ricane that devastated the Gulf Coast. They were extremely efficient, understanding and kind to the people of our area. We realize that they were working under extreme and overwhelming conditions: being away from their families and working extremely long hours. The aid they gave our area is greatly appreciated. Sincere thanks."

And from Richton, MS:

"It has been exactly one month today that 'Katrina' stormed through our beloved little town of Richton and left us in the dark and with devastation. We continue to thank your fine organization for the prompt and efficient service you rendered. We feel that we made many new friends. Our town was scheduled to celebrate its 100th birthday on Oct. 14, 2005; however, we have had to reschedule it. We have placed a brick honoring Henkels & McCoy in our town square legacy walk. Thanks again."

For more info:

**Contractor:**

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