

STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINES  
HURRICANE IKE RECOVERY 2008

FROM BUDDY BANKHEAD AT RUSK COUNTY:

It takes quite an effort to keep the troops in the field, in this case, the crews who have come in from all over Texas and the nation to help restore our system in the wake of Hurricane Ike.

We want to keep them working so we try and provide all of their other needs for them. Today we gathered up two pick up truckloads of dirty laundry and took it to the laundry to get fresh clothes for all the workers. Many of these workers came straight from working in another area to repair damage from Hurricane Gustav, so they had quite a backload of laundry to do.

At mealtime we try and serve a quality, hearty meal for these hard working folks. At breakfast, we cook over 600 eggs, sausage and bacon, barrels of orange juice, and literally, bushels of biscuits. We have served pancakes and sausage as well, in huge quantities. Our in house food service manager cooks a great steak, so we have served steak at suppertime to our crews...and that is well received. Last night we had some wonderful fried fish for supper.

Each day before the crew goes out, after breakfast, we have our safety meeting where we review safety procedures and focus on any particular areas of concern to make sure everyone is being careful as they work through our repairs. Our safety supervisor commended our ROW crews for the great job they are doing in taking care of the linemen as they conduct their operations...he was impressed with the teamwork and cooperation involved.

We have had a good working relationship throughout this time with our elected officials. In working with Rep. Chuck Hopson's office, we have been able to help them with particular needs that they have had. Our thanks to Rep. Hopson's office for their kind comments during our conference call with legislative and congressional offices on Friday.

All in all, we feel that it has been a real team effort and a very "cooperative" effort...cooperation is our middle name!

Our thanks to our wonderful members who have been so appreciative and patient throughout this ordeal...our crews have reported many times that as they have brought the power back on in a neighborhood, that the residents will come outside and applaud as they drive by. We have received so many nice emails, cards and phone calls from our members, it has been truly gratifying for all of us at Rusk.

Our thanks to our visiting crews and our elected officials for all their help and support...they have been incredible. Also, our local law enforcement officers and DPS troopers have helped move our trucks through congested traffic to expedite their work and to access fuel.

Also, we want to express our thanks to the Whispering Pines Encampment of the Freewill Baptist Church in Henderson. They opened up their camp for us to house over 100 workers...and with motel rooms all full, this was critical to allowing us to accommodate these visiting crews.

It is truly amazing to see what can be accomplished when all of us work together as we have done throughout this past week since Hurricane Ike swept through our area.