



## Hurricane Ian

On September 28, Hurricane Ian made landfall with wind speeds of up to 155 MPH and with reports of storm surges of 12-15 feet along Florida's Gulf Coast. More than 100 deaths were reported with significant property damage caused by flood waters and high winds. The Edison Electric Institute (EII) reports more than 3 million customers had experienced outages during the event and that more than 44,000 line workers from 33 states responded. NECA's members had



been engaged through Mutual Assistance agreements or through stand-alone agreements with local co-ops and municipalities. Odds are that crews were pre-mobilized, heading down in advance of the storm and pre-staged. Initial predictions suggested Tampa was the area to watch but the size of the storm, its slow-moving rain bands, and enormous storm surge would result in significant problems for the coastal areas between Tampa and Naples.

Since much of Florida was spared, utilities that had experienced minor outage counts started to release their crews to work in the hardest hit areas. This sounds like good news, but we know that too many workers in one area can create safety issues. It requires close attention to basic protections like good communication between utility reps and other crews, work area isolation, and effective grounding methods. One major issue faced by NECA contractors was dealing with the traffic. These suburban areas filled with shopping centers, residential neighborhoods, and beach town attractions created tremendous traffic issues. Signals were not working, debris clogged the roadways, and the public was becoming frustrated. This was a recipe for transportation related events such as vehicle collisions and work zone encroachments. Without a doubt, contractor safety personnel had their hands full.

As part of NECA's response to crisis events, I visited the area to understand the scope of the event and offer support where needed. Most importantly, I wanted to thank the hard-working men and women who were tasked with the monumental challenge of getting the area back on their feet. It was during my site visits that I was reminded of the professionalism of NECA contractors and IBEW workers. I witnessed real time management of safety concerns, good communication among crew members, and exceptional customer engagement. With 30 years in the business, I've learned this is when we shine the brightest, during the most challenging of times. When everyone else is looking for direction, our Nation's line workers step up to lead the way to better times.

We are not finished until the last truck returns home safely. Be mindful of the cumulative affect of fatigue, the distraction of being away from home for so long, and the high volume of resources closing in a small geographic area. As they say in boxing, protect yourself at all times. Don't let your guard down. Continue to work the storm in a methodical way. Continue to

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communicate with each other and others. Take the time to review each job, no matter how small or routine for traps.

Most importantly, protect yourself and your team!

Thank you,  
Mike Starner

