

# HURRICANE HELENE REFLECTIONS



Commemorating  
Our Shared  
Resilience &  
Commitment  
to Community

# Helene Impact: Facts & Figures

## Notable SC Hurricanes

1893

**Sea Islands Hurricane**  
Category 3 at SC Landfall

1916

**1916 Charleston Hurricane**  
Category 2 at SC Landfall

1940

**1940 SC Hurricane**  
Category 2 at SC Landfall

1954

**Hurricane Hazel**  
Category 4 at SC Landfall

1959

**Hurricane Gracie**  
Category 4 at SC Landfall

1989

**Hurricane Hugo**  
Category 4 at SC Landfall

2024

**Hurricane Helene**  
Category 2 at SC Landfall

## Overall Impact

- Maximum sustained **winds of 140 mph** when it made landfall in Florida as a **Category 4** hurricane.
- Record-breaking rainfall, severe **flooding**, and hurricane-force **winds**.
- Ranked among the **most powerful** storms in United States history.
- The **strongest storm** to ever strike the “Big Bend” region of Florida.
- Over **1.3 million electric customers** across the state of South Carolina lost power.
- Damage estimates of at least **\$79.6 billion**.
- Claimed at least **227 lives**, **50** of whom were in South Carolina - making Helene likely the deadliest tropical cyclone since the 1893 Sea Islands Hurricane.

## Helene Here at Home

- Over **90% of our customers** lost electric service.
- **8 crews** from **5 states** joined the ECU team.
- **83 poles** and **80 transformers** were replaced.
- Approximately **\$1.8 million** was spent on restoration efforts in Easley.
- **Dozens** of local restaurants provided meals for our workers.
- Our elementary students flooded us with **hundreds** of thank you notes.
- We successfully energized our entire network within **one week**.



# To The Easley Community

It's been one year since Hurricane Helene struck, a moment that shaped our community's collective memory. The impact was unprecedented: by noon on September 27, over 90% of our customers were without power. Restoring 90% of an electric system is a monumental task that, prior to this hurricane, was difficult to comprehend. While I am most proud that nearly our entire system was energized within one week, I wanted to share a few other reflections on our commitment and teamwork.

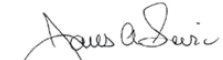
- Eight crews from five states joined us to assist in electrical restoration. As a comparison, we maintain four electric crews at ECU on an ongoing basis.
- 83 poles and 80 transformers needed to be replaced; it takes a minimum of four hours to replace a single utility pole.
- Approximately \$1.8 million was spent on restoration efforts in Easley. (Our team is currently working with FEMA to secure reimbursement).
- The September 28 Clemson football game posed many additional challenges for ECU and our supporting crews. The most notable difficulty was restoring power to the traffic lights on Highway 123 to facilitate gameday traffic.
- Our phone and internet systems were down for an extended time, exacerbating communication difficulties.
- We talked with local legislators daily; their assistance and communication were invaluable.
- Communicating with our customers was a huge priority and in lieu of other channels, we had to lean on Facebook!
- Many individuals, organizations, and churches donated and prepared food, snacks, and drinks for our workers.
- The City of Easley gave us tremendous support. They answered every call for road closures, police presence, and any other assistance that was needed.
- Despite supply issues, many restaurants provided meals for all our workers.
- Two amazing ladies volunteered to do the laundry of all the traveling line workers for every day of their time with us.
- Following the hurricane, the ECU team was inundated with thank-you notes, cards, pictures, and posters from elementary schools across the area.

As with any challenge, we have had the opportunity to grow and improve. We've had several internal discussions about "lessons learned" and how to be better prepared in the event of another storm or major event, and even in our day-to-day responsibilities. We remain committed to the reliability and resiliency of your utility system, so planning for the next event is at the forefront of our minds.

Green Bay Packer Coach Vince Lombardi once said, "It's not whether you get knocked down, it's whether you get up!". On September 27, 2024, when our system was knocked down, the Easley Combined Utilities team quickly got back up. There are not enough words to express how impressed I was with the entire team: from linemen working virtually around the clock, to shop technicians, water crews, and sewer crews clearing roadways and trees; from IT personnel scouting and documenting damages, to office personnel organizing, prepping, and delivering meals to all the field workers; from water plant operators helping field customer calls, to warehouse workers operating around the clock to provide necessary equipment; to our office and wastewater staff who maintained normal business operations while supporting each other and our fielded teams. Our employees displayed servants' hearts, and I am forever thankful for and to them. I hope our community takes pride in their heroic efforts.

Hurricane Helene was a historic storm. I hope we never encounter such an experience again. However, I take solace in knowing that our workers are second to none, and we have a supportive and resilient community.

Humbly yours,



Andy Sevic  
General Manager



# From the ECU Team

“What is something that you learned during Hurricane Helene and the aftermath?”

Even with multiple redundancies in place, no one can predict the extent of damage a natural disaster can produce.

*James M., IT Manager*

When the rubber meets the road, ECU as a whole had each other's back. It didn't matter if you worked for electric, water, sewer, office, or any other department, when the community needed us we buckled down and got to work.

*Joshua M., Crewman 3*

Titles and department lines don't matter when help is needed. EVERYONE jumps in and does whatever is needed.

*Jonathan L., Electric Superintendent*

Work with what you got and keep moving forward.

*Beth B., Billing Clerk*

ECU works well with other companies and also works well between water/sewer and electric side.

*Jake D., Operator*

Something I learned is the quality of our staff. Not just the quality of their trade skills, but in their quality of character as well. One word that comes to mind is grit. I learned that I am part of a top notch company, a team, a work family that I can be proud of.

*Harley D., Water Plant Operator*

ECU will go above and beyond to ensure their customers are back up and running as fast as possible. There were no special pleas to any employee to help during their off time. They just automatically stepped up to the plate.

*Talita P., Lab Tech*

I learned that when you have good people that work hard and support and care about each other we can accomplish anything.

*Alice T., Customer Service Manager*

ECU's team really stepped up its game and worked tirelessly to restore every customer's service. It took every set of ECU's "boots on the ground" to physically identify the cause for each service outage, determine the fix, and make it happen in an astonishingly expedient manner. Helene humbled us that week, but Easley picked itself up and jumped to the challenge to get back on its feet!

*Alex D., Operations Manager*

I was not surprised, but more proud, by how the ECU family came together supporting and helping one another. One would say you cannot prepare for an event of this magnitude, however the organizing, planning and determination of the ECU staff and employees was very evident.

*Nick C., Commissioner*

I learned that the community was willing to help each other in a time of need.

*Josh H., Wastewater Treatment Plant Mechanic/Operator*

That we, ECU, can do anything if we all work together! The customer service team received so much support.

*Lisa Hinton, Customer Service*

That it takes team work and everyone's help to get through those times!

*Tanya E., Payroll/AP*

I learned that I work for a great company that cares deeply about this community. Everyone had a part in getting our community back up and running.

*Tripp M., Finance Manager*



# From the ECU Team

## “What is something that you wish customers knew about ECU’s response to Hurricane Helene?”

One key message we wish our customers understood is the immense scale of the damage our utility system sustained, which significantly disrupted normal operations. Our dedicated team mobilized swiftly and worked tirelessly. The restoration process was a coordinated and exhaustive effort, reflecting our unwavering commitment to resilience, reliability, and the communities we serve.

*Greg G., GIS*

Even though a lot of our employees were equally affected by damaged homes, roads blocked, power outages, they all found a way to get in and do their job.

*DJ U., Wastewater Operator*

I wish customers really could comprehend the scale of the damage and the effort it takes to safely identify issues, coordinate materials, and repair damage. Sometimes people believe that the power is generated on the pole in front of their house and if it is fine, they should be fine, not understanding that 10 poles are down upstream of their home.

*Tyler M., Operations Engineer*

It wasn't just the ECU employees who were part of the response. The response included spouses and children who helped provide meals and toiletries or washed laundry for the mutual aid workers. We also had assistance from local businesses and churches.

*Eric G., Commissioner*

We worked as fast and safely as we could to restore power to all customers.

*Robert S., Crewman*

That we care and will work around the clock to take care of the outages.

*Gary D., Water Operator*

There were employees and some spouses of employees that worked tirelessly to get the utilities back to normal.

*Scott B., Wastewater Treatment Superintendent*

Our leadership was second to none. The managers kept things calm while at the same time working around the clock with little to no sleep. In the midst of disaster, the mood was always uplifting. I think this speaks to the culture of our company.

*Brentley E., Water/Sewer Assistant Superintendent*

I wish customers knew more about in ECU's response to the hurricane is the actual skill and aspects of infrastructure involved.

*Harley D., Water Plant Operator*

The long hours that everyone was working and that we understood their frustrations as we were working long days and nights and then going home to no power and taking cold showers just as they were. Everyone at ECU kept showing up to do the job day in and out.

*Taylor E., Water/Sewer Crewman 3*

Without phone and internet customers were still updated by our GM. Our crews and employees were working diligently to get power restored in a timely manner even when our lineman and employees didn't have power themselves.

*Melissa H., Field Service Supervisor*

Four days into the event I asked a lineman how things were at his home. He said, "I'm not sure, I haven't been there in the daylight to see." Know that the employees of ECU worked tirelessly to put you and your family ahead of their own personal needs, and restored "normalcy" efficiently and safely.

*Nick C., Commissioner*

# From the ECU Team

## “What kept you going during the work efforts following Hurricane Helene?”

The community support and local businesses helped my spirit with the messages and food. ECU helped my heart knowing that we all worked together and pulled through. My family helped my soul knowing that they were safe and sending me love and support. Then there was caffeine to help fight off my exhaustion!

*Josh M., Crewman 3*

Knowing that our work made a real difference in people's lives. We weren't just fixing power lines but helping families, hospitals, and businesses.

*Lance S., Engineering Technician*

Being able to help serve food to the linemen that worked long hours and the customers that showed appreciation for the hard work and dedication of employees!

*Connie B., Billing Clerk*

The way we were taken care of during the restoration process. I have been on several storms, and ECU took care of us as good as, if not better, than any company I have helped. The way the families and commissioners came out and served us dinner. It was just good to see other faces throughout the day. When we couldn't be with our families, it was good to know we had people here at work supporting and caring for us.

*Nathan E., Overhead Foreman*

Having the local businesses support us during this time was a great encouragement. Knowing so many people depended on us was motivation to keep going during long exhausting hours with little sleep.

*Sam H., Groundman*

What we are trained to do is just keep going until it is fixed. The community was amazing with people just being so thankful for the job we were doing.

*Tate D., Water Superintendent*

My family first and foremost, but also my co-workers. I have their backs and they have mine.

*DJ U., Wastewater Operator*

Seeing the work ethic of the guys on the "front line" made me want to do more to help them and our company.

*Tripp M., Finance Manager*

ECU coming together to take care of the community. No one said, "that's not my job."

*Lisa H., Customer Service*

It was cool to see the churches and local businesses help feed us. It made everyone want to keep going because we all felt appreciated and wanted to keep pushing through those 16-hour days. Also I would say the people I worked with kept me going; we were all just trying to help get power back on and also help each other.

*Adam B., Water/Sewer Crewman*

What sustained me was a profound sense of duty to the community and the unwavering support from those around us. Knowing that our work was essential to restoring stability and comfort to so many lives instilled a deep sense of purpose that carried us through even the most challenging moments.

*Greg G., GIS*

All of the friendly people in the community bringing the guys snacks and drinks - and just happy that we are there to help!

*Blake P., Lineman*

Knowing the community depends on us.

*Adam H., Wastewater Treatment Plant Maintenance*

# Preparing for the Future

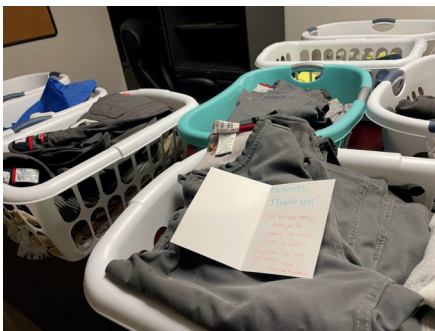
## Key ECU Improvements



**Our team has identified ways to serve you better on a daily basis, including:**

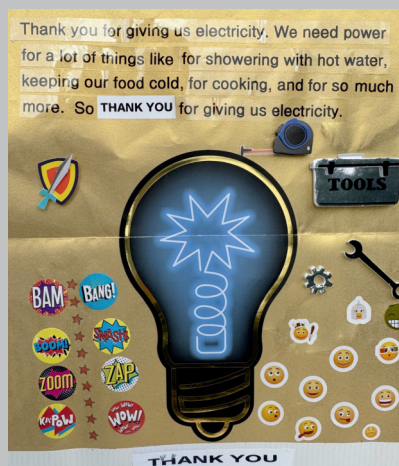
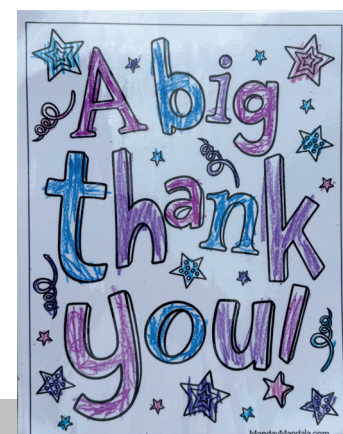
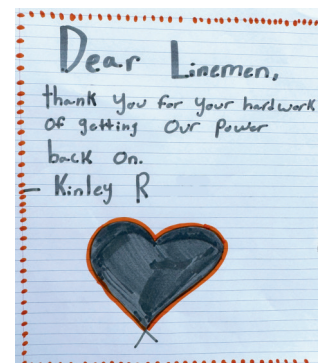
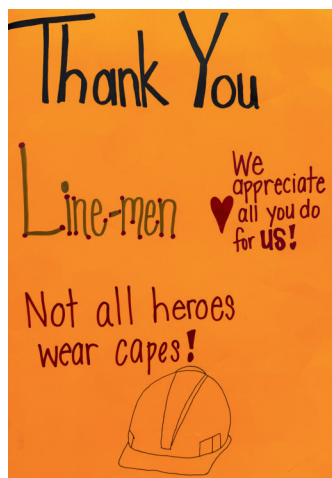
- Improve communication plan with Pickens County - including technology and personnel.
- Migrate to more reliable internet provider.
- Implement backup phone system.
- Standardize social media communications.
- Direct contact with Duke Energy to address substation issues.
- Identify vulnerable populations.
- Install voltage control (VC) devices in more strategic areas.
- Install more remote terminal units (RTUs) for improved monitoring and control.

## How You Can Help



- Take pictures and share with ECU to help with identifying damage and locations.
- Recognize that larger circuits and vulnerable populations will be prioritized.
- Understand that if your communication systems are failing, ours may be also: social media proved to be our most effective form of communication during Helene.
- Offer words of encouragement to our staff.
- Be confident that we are working to restore systems as quickly - and safely - as possible.





## Big Thanks to Our Smallest Supporters

Our team received hundreds of drawings and thank you cards from local elementary school students. We shared these across the Easley Combined Utilities organization and every note was read - and treasured. Knowing that we have the support of our community is the greatest gift we could hope to receive - during emergencies and also every day.

