



**Wisconsin
Electric
Cooperative
Association**

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Wisconsin electric co-ops helping Florida rebuild ***Relief convoy headed south***

Janesville, Wis. (September 11, 2017)— Volunteer line crews from 18 Wisconsin electric cooperatives are joining in Florida's massive recovery effort, helping rebuild shattered electric systems in the wake of Hurricane Irma's devastation.

The Florida Electric Cooperatives Association, a statewide trade group, put out a call for help last Thursday, anticipating Irma's Sunday morning landfall and the huge storm's potential to simultaneously batter the entire state.

Line superintendents from Wisconsin cooperatives got word of the request at a previously scheduled meeting in Stevens Point and immediately began planning their response, assessing availability of workers and equipment.

Those preparations were completed during a busy weekend. Early Monday morning, co-op vehicles began departing from local headquarters across the state for assembly points at Eau Claire, Oakdale, Portage, and Janesville. At least three multi-co-op convoys planned to reach Ste. Genevieve, Missouri by Monday night, and Hattiesburg, Mississippi by Tuesday night, arriving in Florida by late Wednesday afternoon.

All the Wisconsin volunteers are assigned to assist rebuilding at Clay Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Keystone Heights, Florida, northeast of Gainesville. As of Monday morning, Clay Electric had approximately 130,000 members—representing about 75 percent of its system—without power.

More than 50 Wisconsin co-op employees were traveling southward Monday. Participating co-ops include Adams-Columbia, Barron, Bayfield, Central Wisconsin, and Clark Electric Cooperatives, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Dunn and Eau Claire Energy Cooperatives, Oakdale and Oconto Electric Cooperatives, Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services, Price and Richland Electric Cooperatives, Riverland, Rock, and Scenic Rivers Energy Cooperatives, and Taylor and Vernon Electric Cooperatives.

Anticipating a lengthy rebuilding project, a second round of 24 co-op volunteers had been recruited for later rotation into the damaged area.

More than 40 vehicles were dispatched, including bucket trucks, pole-hauling trailers, and digging equipment.

The relief mission is similar to assistance rendered by Wisconsin co-ops 12 years ago following Hurricane Katrina. Personnel from 14 Wisconsin electric cooperatives were dispatched over a four-week period to Louisiana on a rotating basis, helping to rebuild a local co-op distribution system that had been almost totally destroyed.

It's also similar—on a larger scale—to the ROPE (restoration of power in an emergency) program in which Wisconsin co-ops help each other shorten recovery times when severe weather damages local electric systems.

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On three previous occasions since this past spring, ten Wisconsin co-ops have loaned out line crews in ROPE deployments to help others speed up rebuilding of storm-damaged systems.

The Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association (WECA) is a statewide trade association providing a variety of services including government relations, education and training, and communications for its membership of 24 electric distribution cooperatives and one generation and transmission cooperative, whose co-op member-owners reside in Wisconsin, Illinois, upper Michigan, Iowa, and Minnesota.

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