



The editorial cartoon in the Jackson (Miss.) Clarion-Ledger paid tribute to the electric company workers.

More than 400 employees take part in Camp Hope

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Power employees who lost their cars in the storm.

Gina Naar was in charge, hence, "Naar's Cars."

While Camp Hope offered good comforts, it still wasn't home.

"The first thing I'm going to get when I get back is an omelet at Waffle House," said Georgia Power's Tim Freeman, who was helping out with Family Services. "Then I'm going to get a full body massage and some sushi ... not necessarily in that order."



Gulf Power bucket trucks are lined up to head out to restore the power in Mississippi. Trucks were staged in the shopping center parking lot near supplies and the fuel truck. Two storm restoration crews worked -- one from Pensacola and a combined group from Fort Walton Beach and Panama City.

Gulf Power getting too good at logistics

The good news is Gulf Power is improving storm restoration logistics. The bad news is, as Ellis Oswald said, because of the recent hurricanes, "I'm afraid that we're getting too good at it."

Oswald was in charge of material logistics during Hurricane Katrina storm restoration, both in Gulf Power's restoration and the company's help with all 21 staging sites in Mississippi Power.

The massive staging site at Ocean Springs showed the improvements made in setting up storm sites to house and feed hundreds of employees.

"We staged trucks and prepared them to come in with tents loaded ahead of time," Oswald said. "It took 1 1/2 days to set up. Normally, our goal is to have a large housing site and set up for sleeping people by the second night."

The mobile sleepers proved to be the best way for storm sites for Power Delivery.

After Camp Hope began to break camp, line crews began work in downtown Gulfport. The mobile sleepers were moved from Ocean Springs to Edgewater Mall in Gulfport and were ready in four hours.

"You could not do that with a tent," Oswald said. "You just drive them up and start sleeping people. That's the wave of the future."

Discussions with manufacturers and major vendors have begun to develop a supply of the mobile sleepers for future restoration efforts.

Gulf Power crew helps in 'Sunbeam City'

While most Gulf Power employees in storm duty in Mississippi were staged on the Coast, a half dozen of them were at "Sunbeam City."

Six employees helped Georgia Power set up a tent city for about 1,000 contract workers at the old Sunbeam Plant facility in Hattiesburg, Miss.

Ronnie Yaden, Rebecca Garcia, Herchel Williams, Shane Boyett, Scott Bender and Jim Snider worked for six days, while Dean Givens handled safety in the area.

Hattiesburg, in the Pine Belt District of Mississippi Power, had a different kind of damage -- mainly from pine trees.

"There was an awful lot of pine trees down everywhere," Yaden said. "Lots of buildings had roofs gone. I saw some houses with trees that fell through the center of the house almost to the slab."

While they were there, Yaden was surprised with his birthday celebration. When they finished work, the rest of the crew presented him with a cake about 11:30 p.m.

"That was very special to me for them to go to the trouble of finding a cake," Yaden said.



The sun rises over Camp Hope to start a new day of power restoration in the Ocean Springs, Miss., area. (Photo by Gordon Paulus)

Gulf Power staging center an oasis during storm restoration

Gordon Paulus, Corporate Communications, spent several days at the Gulf Power staging area and filed these observations. He found that Camp Hope was more than just a tent city -- it was Gulf Power's home away from home during storm restoration.

Just outside the dining area, a hairstylist was giving Danny Davis of Plant Smith a haircut. He was perched in the barber's chair with a long line of others waiting to get a trim.

Camp Hope was no ordinary camp.

Gulf Power set up the camp as a self-contained staging area at the high school football stadium in Ocean Springs, Miss., to help Mississippi Power restore power following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

It is the evolution of staging areas designed to keep employees as comfortable as possible. It allowed Gulf Power to do its job without interfering with Mississippi Power, so that Mississippi employees could concentrate on other issues.

A command center, known as "Camp Hope City Hall," was set up near the entrance to the camp. That's where the "mayor," Christie Miree, ran the area as Site Manager. It included Internet hookups by satellite and phones.

Miree said she was pleased with how things worked out.

"To me the neatest thing was everybody working together to do something we'd never really tried before and making it successful," she said. "Plus, you were able to talk with a lot of people that you don't normally get to spend a lot of time with day to day, so there was just a lot of camaraderie. It was a lot like camping in some respects."

The camp housed more than 400 workers. Two storm crews -- one from Pensacola and the other a combined Fort Walton Beach-Panama City team -- came with support personnel to rebuild the power infrastructure.

Other workers included support personnel to run the camp, contract workers, including



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A day in the life at **CAMP HOPE**

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tree trimmers and Georgia Power, Savannah Electric and Southern Company Service employees who came to work Family Services.

Three large tents were erected – "Camp Hope Diner" and two "Camp Hope Motels." Three mobile sleeper units were trucked in, as well as two shower units, a laundry service and handwash trailers.



Christie Miree was the Site Manager, or, more affectionately called, "Mayor" of Camp Hope, Gulf Power's staging area in Ocean Springs, Miss.

Trucks of ice and food were set up. Pallets of water and drinks were everywhere.

Across the street in a shopping area parking lot was the staging area for the bucket trucks.

That's where restoration materials were located, and where Fleet Services and the fuel tankers were based to operate the "Camp Hope Fillin' Station."

Six security guards were working at all times in different locations at the camp.

Camp Hope was a bustle of activity during the morning as crews headed out and in the afternoon and evening when they returned. It was quiet during the day with most out working and camp personnel setting up for that evening's meal and activities.

Mary Emmons was on a first-name basis with a Wal-Mart greeter since she made so many trips there.

"He even pulled off items for me from a truck that came in the middle of the night," she said.

Each night offered a different menu at Camp Hope's "Diner." On this particular night, employees were treated to prime rib and barbecue shrimp.

■■■■ Catering Cajun handled all of the meals.

The dinner menu ranged from baked ham to prime rib. Salad, vegetables, bread, fruit and desserts were daily staples.

Manager Del Moon said they planned for 650 meals a day. Each morning, it took 500 pounds of eggs, 1,300 biscuits and 2,400 pieces of bacon.

For every soda, each person probably had three bottles of water and a bottle of Gatorade.

Moon said the chatter on the radio was that crews from other staging areas would drop by to eat if they were in the area because of the reports of the good food coming out of Camp Hope.

■■■■ The mess tent served as a social area when meals weren't being served.

A big-screen TV was set up in one corner with a satellite dish. When Braves baseball or football wasn't on, news channels showed the horrors in New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

A couple of nights were "movie nights," complete with Cajun kettle popcorn.



Gordon Paulus



Large sleeping tents, "Camp Hope Motel," provided cots, sheets, blankets and pillows for tired employees after a hard day's work of helping restore power or helping with Family Services.

Gordon Paulus

Others read newspapers, chatted or played cards.

"Camp Hope Barbershop" was in operation three nights. Emmons contacted Misty Johnson of Ocean Springs to cut hair since her business was temporarily closed. The service was free to workers.

Deborah Dicken of Baptist Hospital, manned "Camp Hope Hospital" in the mess tent. Her duties included handing out aspirin and taking blood pressure readings.

One night, Jessica Collins, the accountant

the Pensacola storm crew, brought in a birthday cake for two of the linemen. She found that a landmark bakery in Biloxi, Elektrik Maid, had just reopened after receiving power. The owner told her that after Hurricane Camille hit, he learned to keep his own water supply so he could open quickly after a storm.

He gladly baked a birthday cake, complete with the Gulf Power logo in icing.

■■■■ The two large sleeping tents were filled with cots and each camper was given sheets, a blanket and a pillow. One tent was divided for men and women. Each had power plugs so cell phone batteries could be recharged.

Large portable air conditioning units were outside providing cool – very cold, some say – air. And the drone of the units actually helped to muffle much of the snoring. (For those who snored, you know who you are.)

The cots were stiff, but some resorted to more comfortable measures.

Charles Dawson, a Pensacola Field Service representative, who was helping Family Services with Steve Bailey, used an air mattress on his cot after the first night.

"It was quite comfortable. The air mattress made quit a bit of difference," Dawson said. "That first night was a little rough and it was cold, too."

"Lights out" was usually between 10 and 11 p.m. Although some folks – worn out by work – were asleep by 8:30, oblivious to the lights and sounds.



A big-screen television with satellite dish was installed in the mess tent so employees could watch sports or the news.

Gordon Paulus

One night after the lights were out, Greg Young was still sitting up talking to Ed Grayson about Family Services. Or maybe Greg just fell asleep while he was sitting.

Others spent the evening scattered throughout the camp, talking on their cell phones to loved ones. Some sat in the grandstands of the nearby football stadium, others walked on the track that circled the field.

■■■■ Two trucks that held portable showers were brought in. Hot and cold water was provided, as were towels.

Outside sinks and mirrors were set up for shaving or brushing your teeth.

Another truck was filled with washing machines and dryers. Each night you could drop off your laundry and pick it up the next morning, even ironed if you wanted.

And there were plenty of port-a-potties – 62 in all.

■■■■ A new addition was mobile sleepers – three tractor-trailer rigs with 42 sleeping units each. Each was equipped with a privacy curtain, a reading light and an AC vent. The line crews were awarded these berths.

For Tommy Aaron, who was part of the Pensacola crew, they had everything: AC, hot showers and hot meals.

"I thought it was real good as far as the conditions I had to deal with," he said. "I put in my own sheets and blanket. It was like sleeping at home. It's



Misty Johnson, a hairstylist from Ocean Springs, gives Danny Davis of Plant Smith a trim. She cut hair several nights at Camp Hope.

Gordon Paulus

better than sleeping in a truck or a motel that's been wet."

■■■■ One evening, dignitaries from Ocean Springs and the high school were invited to tour the staging area and have dinner. Guests included Ocean Springs Mayor Connie Moran, the Ocean Springs High School's superintendent and athletic director.

■■■■ On the other side of the football field was the Family Services command center. It was surrounded by stacks of supplies used to help secure homes of Mississippi Power employees, whose homes suffered damage in the storm.

Near that was a lot where about 50 Georgia Power cars were parked. They were available for temporary use for Mississippi

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Some employees working storm duty found a game of spades as a way to pass the time before going to bed each night.

Steve Esser