

News from the Savannah River Site

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For Immediate Release

Savannah River Site personnel respond to Hurricane Helene impacts

AIKEN, S.C. (October 22, 2024) – In the wake of Hurricane Helene’s devastating impact in the Southeast, the Savannah River Site (SRS) mobilized teams from Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) Site Services, SRS Emergency Response Organization (ERO), the Savannah River Site Fire Department (SRSFD), Centerra-SRS, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service–Savannah River, to address extensive damage, repairs, and recovery efforts across the Site.

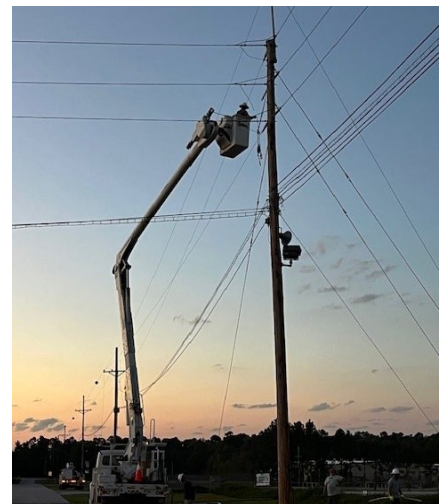
“The impacts of Hurricane Helene to the Site and our neighboring communities was unprecedented and remains challenging for many,” said Mike Budney, Manager, Department of Energy (DOE) Savannah River Operations Office. “Team SRS stepped up response efforts immediately to ensure the safety of personnel, the environment and our nuclear facilities. I’m extremely proud of the outstanding work of our emergency preparedness and essential personnel—all of our workforce—in coming together to serve and lend support in this difficult time.”



Savannah River Nuclear Solutions Site Services and the SRS Fire Department cleared thousands of downed trees and power lines.



Aerial view of downed trees on Savannah River Site roadways.



Over three miles of powerline was repaired to restore normal configuration of the Site’s electrical grid.

With thousands of trees uprooted and utility lines down, essential employees worked around the clock to restore SRS to normal operations.

“Nearly all major roadways at SRS were impacted by fallen trees or downed power lines. The majority of this was cleared and restored in two days,” said Donny Barfield, SRNS Director of Site Services. “We plan for these extreme weather events, so our team was prepared to begin work on recovery efforts immediately.”

In preparation for the storm, SRNS Site Services and the Savannah River National Laboratory Atmospheric Technologies Group implemented the Severe Weather Procedure. Activities included staging equipment in three response zones, filling 2,500 sandbags, and adjusting shift schedules. The storm made landfall as a Category 4 late in the evening of September 26, bringing wind gusts up to 82 mph.



Savannah River Nuclear Solutions Site Services personnel filled over 2,500 sandbags in preparation for Hurricane Helene.

“Nearly 80 Site Services employees consisting of heavy equipment operators, road crews, and six linemen reported to the Site during initial recovery efforts. The team collaborated with the SRSFD and the U.S. Forest Service to clear roadways and rescue several motorists trapped inside their vehicles,” continued Barfield.

SRSFD Fire Chief Travis Scott, added, “The fire department mobilized all available personnel in the immediate aftermath of the storm, with over 50 employees actively engaged in tree removal, rescuing trapped civilians, and responding to various emergencies caused by the storm. I am incredibly proud of the unified effort demonstrated by all.”

During recovery efforts, the Site was in an operational emergency status, or a state of heightened alertness and operational flexibility to manage unforeseen challenges.

“In the face of Hurricane Helene, the ERO turned a potential crisis into a showcase of our strength and collaboration,” said Neal Gilmore, SRNS Director of Safeguards, Security and Emergency Services. “I witnessed firsthand how our proactive emergency protocols, and the

swift decision-making of all Site tenants enabled us to manage water intrusion and process interruptions with no significant impact to Site operations. This experience has underscored the strength of our response teams and the power of coming together in times of crisis.”

SRS coordinated with off-site fuel shipments of gasoline, ethanol, and diesel fuel to ensure SRS critical loads were supplied. Over 14,000 gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel was provided to essential employees to combat off-site gas shortages. In addition, SRNS subcontractor, Russell’s Pizza, provided nearly 7,500 meals to responding employees. Weather and Safety Leave was made available to all full-service employees unable to work.



Nearly 7,500 box lunches were provided to on-duty essential personnel by Savannah River Nuclear Solutions subcontractor, Russell’s Pizza.

Recovery teams were able to clear thousands of trees and powerlines from SRS roadways, repair approximately three miles of powerline, and replace over 30 power poles and 60 cross arms. In addition, SRS assisted the South Carolina Department of Transportation with clearing debris on South Carolina Highway 125 and U.S. Route 278 and collaborated with Dominion Energy to restore the Site’s electrical grid.

Dennis Carr, SRNS President and Chief Executive Officer, believes responding personnel demonstrated remarkable resilience in the wake of Hurricane Helene.

“Our employees’ commitment to safety and their tireless efforts around the clock have been instrumental in restoring the Site to normal operations,” said Carr. “In the face of adversity, they have not only demonstrated exceptional work ethic but have reaffirmed our dedication to each other and the community. Together, we can rebuild and emerge stronger than ever before.”

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor and HII partnership company, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.

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