Supporting Customer Missions and Each Other

A Tale of Comradery, Dedication and Selflessness

PAE teams provide critical support during recent hurricanes.

The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season affected millions and left a path of destruction. With a 20,000+ global workforce, it was inevitable that Hurricanes Harvey, Irma or Maria impacted PAE employees personally and professionally. The stories from these employees share a theme of comradery, determination and selflessness.

Hurricane Harvey Creates Severe Conditions in Texas

Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Texas as a category four on a Friday in late August. At the onset of the storm, PAE Johnson Space Center (JSC) leaders activated additional maintenance personnel to support PAE operations staff. “We asked people to come into work outside of their normal work schedules,” said PAE JSC Program Manager Stephen Brettel. “They knew they would be working long-hard hours and leaving their families during a difficult and dangerous time, but did so willingly.” By Saturday evening, the conditions were so severe that PAE employees could not leave JSC.

Committed to the NASA Mission

Six maintenance and eight operations employees worked around the clock to ensure operations at JSC ran as smoothly as possible. “The person who probably got the least amount of sleep that weekend was our boiler operator,” said Stephen. “He was a one-man show monitoring the pressure, temperature and control center of the boiler for three days straight. Water completely surrounded the site and no other technician could reach JSC to relieve him or assist.”

“Many of our employees are specially licensed to perform their job, which made relieving employees of their duties during this time extremely difficult,” said Stephen. One employee forded floodwaters to support a liquid nitrogen transfer on the James Webb Space Telescope, saving NASA’s $4B telescope. Mission control, where NASA maintains communication and provides 24/7 support to U.S. astronauts at the International Space Station, also required PAE’s ongoing support.

“It was amazing to see our employees step up during such a time,” said PAE JSC Human Resources and Labor Relations Manager Janis Roderman. “People’s homes were flooding and their families evacuating, and our employees still made the commitment to work around the clock to support NASA’s mission.”

“After the storm cleared, each day brought more and more employees eager to get back to work,” said PAE JSC Deputy Manager Chris Provenzano. “They weren’t sad or mad, they were determined to get to work.” In the three days after Hurricane Harvey, the PAE team completed 638 work orders, which is typically what the team accomplishes in one month. This allowed JSC to re-open in record-breaking time.

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–Chris Provenzano, PAE JSC

Opposite Page: PAE JSC employees helped each other remove debris and repair each others’ homes after Hurricane Harvey hit Houston, Texas.

This page: PAE employees conducting clean up operations after Hurricane Harvey severely damaged parts of JSC.

Program Summary

PAE provides maintenance, operations, engineering and construction services to NASA at Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, in support of human spaceflight training, research and flight control missions.
PAE provides maintenance and logistics support for 217 rotary and fixed wing aircraft for Customs and Border Protection at 34 permanent locations.

Clean Clothes, Food and Cash in a Crisis

Hurricane Maria barreled through Puerto Rico in mid-September as a category four, causing catastrophic damage and a major humanitarian crisis. “The entire island was without power, making relief efforts and our day-to-day operations difficult,” said Maintenance Controls Specialist Jeff Federman.

Early on, PAE CBP leadership bought a washer and a dryer for the generator powered hangar CBP is operating out of so employees could have clean clothes for work. In addition to ensuring a steady flow of bottled water and meal, ready-to-eat kits (or MREs), leadership leveraged the very aircraft they maintain to shuttle groceries from Florida to Puerto Rico for break rooms. “That food run might only last a week, but at least we are providing employees nutritious food to get them through the day,” said PAE CBP Senior Business Manager Brian Schock.

Since the power is out, people cannot go to the bank and take out money, making it extremely difficult for people to secure cash to purchase basic supplies. “We worked with PAE payroll to set up weekly payroll advances,” said Brian. “We wired money through Western Union, cashed it in Florida and flew people’s payroll advances to Puerto Rico.”

“We are taking everything day-by-day,” said Brian. “We are proud to support CBP as first responders during this crisis and cannot thank our employees enough for their dedication to the mission.”

Overcoming Obstacles Through Teamwork

There are countless stories of selflessness across both programs. “Employees helped each other clean up their homes after long workdays. Employees with trade skills offered to check in on damaged homes. Employees offered others shelter and organized rides to work.” These are just a few examples of the PAE spirit in a crisis,” said Janis. “Everyone really came together to support one another.”

“Our employees stepped up to support CBP operations, overcoming substantial obstacles,” said PAE Maintenance Supervisor Kurt Collier. “They have the drive and aptitude to assist CBP. These are hardworking individuals making a difference.”

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–Kurt Collier, PAE CBP

PAE employees load a UH-60 Blackhawk into a C-5 Galaxy for transportation to support CBP operations during the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season.