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Wheatstone Weathers Hurricane Florence “Unscathed” Factory reopened Wednesday, many employees have returned to work

Emily M. Reigart Sep 19, 2018

NEW BERN, N.C. — The Wheatstone factory in New Bern, N.C., officially reopened Wednesday, a few days after Hurricane Florence tore through the region.

“The factory is open, and our building and its contents weathered the storm completely unscathed,” Wheatstone Systems Engineer/Webmaster Scott Johnson reported via email. “As far as we can tell, the building never even lost power.”

He explained, “Our building is a high, reinforced concrete structure with a relatively new, well-maintained roof. It sits on a reinforced concrete foundation. Our power comes via an underground, redundant ‘loop feed’ to a padmount transformer, and that feed has been pretty rugged. Our Internet connectivity, which is via dark fiber to a communications nexus nearby, is also fully operational.”

Johnson estimates that 60% of the manufacturer’s staff also returned to work, with more expected to return Thursday. Some of the areas surrounding the factory are still experiencing flooding, and the rivers near New Bern are predicted to actually crest in the coming days, so some closed roads may continue to present problems. Additionally, some employees evacuated ahead of the storm but have been unable to return due to the closures.

Although the factory fared well, many in New Bern were not so lucky. The city and surrounding Craven County are still operating under emergency declarations, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Red Cross are on site helping those affected by the storm and its aftermath.

Several Wheatstone employees have reported damage to their property — at least one house and one roof were lost to Hurricane Florence. Many others, including Johnson, were without power for days.

Johnson wrote Wednesday, “Most of the folks here have ridden out at least one hurricane since they’ve been here, and the message I’ve gotten from each of them is the same: They have never seen anything like this.”

In an earlier email to RW Editor in Chief Paul McLane, Johnson wrote, “We’re reeling here, but it’s a strong, resilient town, and we’ve got a great, can-do group of Wheaties. We’ll bounce back.”