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James Island, Orangeburg thank Greenwood for storm assistance

By Adam Benson

Nearly two months after Hurricane Matthew tore through South Carolina, officials in coastal towns who found safe haven in inland communities such as Greenwood are still expressing thanks. On Monday, Greenwood Mayor Welborn Adams said he received letters of appreciation from Orangeburg Mayor Michael Butler and James Island Mayor Bill Woolsey for the city's aid in dealing with the storm. It happened in two ways. A contingent of 20 people from James Island, a Charleston County town, came to Greenwood to escape the storm surge after being unable to find hotel rooms in Augusta, Georgia. Town Administrator Ashley Kellahan, who is originally from Abbeville, said Woolsey reached out to Adams with a request to use Greenwood's emergency operations center. "It was very instrumental in helping us manage our emergency operations away from home. We had access to a lot of laptops, a conference line. We were able to participate on our daily conference calls and really get filled in on what was happening back there on the ground," Kellahan said. "In this day and age, access to the technology was crucial, because we just so busy doing social media updates." Meanwhile, four linemen from Commissioners of Public Works were dispatched to Orangeburg to help the city of 13,964 restore power in the wake of Matthew. CPW General Manager Steve Reeves said the crew spent two weeks alongside local utility workers to bring Orangeburg's electrical system back online. "It went exceptionally well. It was very well organized. We've have them up here before to help us as well," Reeves said. "If they were looking at one or two days (of outages), they probably wouldn't have asked for help but when you're looking at two or three weeks, you definitely need assistance." Butler said in his Oct. 20 letter to Adams that his community was grateful for Greenwood's assistance. "The tireless determination and effort exhibited by your employees was exemplary. Although I cannot thank you for all of your assistance, I want to let you know that the Department of Public Utilities and, most importantly, our citizens and our customers were most appreciative of all you did to help them," he wrote. Woolsey echoed that. "It was comforting to see that your staff availed themselves to us by providing us the use of Greenwood's Emergency Operations Center. Because we were able to utilize the EOC, we were able to continue the day-today operations for the residents," he wrote on Oct. 17. "Thank you for providing a great experience in our time of need."