



Publix Powers Up When the Power Goes Down

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

State-wide, Florida



Punta Gorda, FL - When a disaster causes essential businesses such as gas stations, banks and grocery stores to shut down, even for a short time, the resulting problems can be dramatic for hard-hit communities. Publix Super Markets, Inc., resolved to take steps to keep its grocery stores open by installing super-sized generators at nearly half of its stores.

“We have over 880 store locations, with the majority located in hurricane-prone areas,” said Maria Brous, director of media and public relations. “In 2004 and 2005, at least 600 stores were closed at one time or another because of the storms and resulting power loss.”

Before the 2004 storms, Brous said every store was equipped with a 65-kilowatt backup generator that could power emergency lighting, limited refrigeration and security systems. But during power interruptions, affected stores often lost most, if not all, of their perishable stock.

“We were out of power for nine days after Hurricane Charley,” said Mark Royer, a store manager in Punta Gorda. “Even though we were able to sell non-perishable items, we felt helpless that we couldn’t provide families with produce or necessities, such as milk for the babies or insulin for diabetics.”

Publix decided to install 500-kilowatt generators at 360 store locations. Each generator has a 1,000-gallon diesel fuel tank, and the majority includes a bi-fuel option using natural gas. With full tanks and the bi-fuel connection, the generators have the capacity to power an entire store, including all needed refrigeration and air conditioning. The generators were designed to operate for a minimum of 72 hours, far exceeding the 23-hour average of the current 65-kilowatt backup generators. The supermarket chain’s plan also included an additional 40 portable 500-kilowatt generators to cover the stores that would not receive the permanent equipment.

“Our goal was to make the 400 generators serve 575 different communities,” said Brous. “Not every store in every community would have one of these big generators, but a mile or two down the road another Publix might have the 500-kilowatt system.”

The two-phase project was conceived following the tumultuous 2004 hurricane season that forced many grocery stores to close. Announced in May 2006, the plan became a reality with the initial installation of 34 super-sized generators. Publix expected all 400 generators to be in place by July 2007.

Brous said Publix includes community recovery as part of its corporate mission and has invested more than \$100 million in the generator program.

“We’re not seeking any financial assistance for this project. We simply want to be there for the communities we serve,” she said.

To assure the best possible community awareness, the company also strives to alert its customers to the realities of hurricane season. In the weeks before a season starts, Publix stores are filled with displays and signs reminding the public that the time has come to prepare.

Scott Collins, a grocery clerk at the Punta Gorda store, said he knows that the new generators will give the stores the best chance to stay open following a disaster, and understands what that means to the community.

“We opened the doors the day after Charley, and the people started coming in right away,” Collins said. “Two people turned into twenty as soon as they heard we were open. Even though we weren’t able to provide them with everything they needed, it was really great to be there for them ... whether it was to give them their groceries or for them to have someone to talk to.”

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **State-wide**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Florida**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**

Hazard Type: **Hurricane/Tropical Storm**

Activity/Project Type: **Utility Protective Measures**

Structure Type: **Steel Frame; Concrete, Reinforced**

Activity/Project Start Date: **12/2004**

Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**

Funding Source: **Business Owner**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Non FEMA Cost: **0**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **No**

Value Tested By Disaster? **No**

Repetitive Loss Property? **No**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.publix.com/>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.fema.gov/>

Main Points

- Publix Super Markets, Inc., resolved to take steps to keep its grocery stores open by installing super-sized generators at nearly half of its stores.
- Previously, during power interruptions, affected stores often lost most, if not all, of their perishable stock.
- Publix includes community recovery as part of its corporate mission and has invested more than \$100 million in the generator program.



A 6-foot high, 22-foot long super-sized generator



New Generators