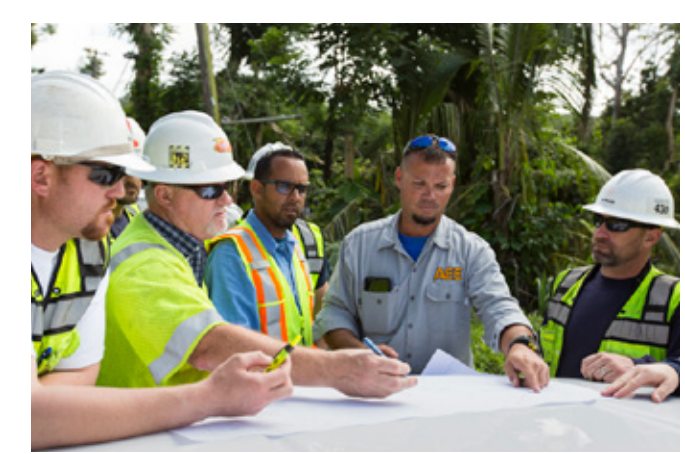




## Going the extra mile (3,500, in fact)



With the new year approaching and hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans still without electricity four months after Hurricane Maria, SMUD reached across the continent to extend a helping hand.

Dozens of SMUD employees worked quickly to organize our portion of the mutual assistance effort. Two weeks into 2018, two SMUD line crews and 15 trucks were in the Carolina region of Puerto Rico, working to rebuild the Caribbean island's electrical infrastructure damaged by the Category 5 hurricane.

For 60 days, a total of four six-man SMUD crews, assisted by two supervisors, a vehicle mechanic and support staff, battled narrow roads, mountainous terrain, thick vegetation and the occasional tarantula to restore power to approximately 2,000 Puerto Rican residents.

"We had to chop our way into a lot of areas," said Mike Bazil, a SMUD line supervisor who spent more than a month on the ground in Puerto Rico. "Poles and wires were down everywhere. A lot of poles had to be hand set. It was so gratifying to be able to help them out."



One resident expressed his gratitude in a letter to the SMUD workers:

*Over 5 months my family and I didn't have power in our house. Now, thanks to you guys, I can see light ... God bless all of you in a huge way. You guys deserve the best. We are so happy!!!*

*Your sacrifice to my island doesn't have a name. Puerto Rico needed you and you were there. I admire all of you.*

For the SMUD workers, the experience was unlike any other in their careers.

"It's something that every lineman will have in his memory bank forever," SMUD line manager Todd Prangley said.

Mike McGee, a journey lineworker, said the experience made the weeks away from his family worthwhile.

"The people had really been put through the ringer," McGee said. "I would go again in a heartbeat. We gave them their life back, in a way."

The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) sent the initial request for mutual aid to the American Public Power Association and the Edison

Electric Institute, an industry group for investor owned utilities. SMUD signed a memorandum of understanding with PREPA. The labor and material costs of SMUD's effort will be reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA. Our support for the Puerto Rican restoration did not compromise service to SMUD's customers.

When utilities are overwhelmed by natural disasters such as wildfires and winter storms, it's not unusual for SMUD and other utilities to provide mutual assistance. For instance, around the same time Hurricane Maria ravaged Puerto Rico, SMUD crews assisted PG&E in restoring power lost due to the wine country fires. But traveling more than 3,500 miles to assist in a two-month restoration effort represented a first for SMUD.

McGee recalled an incident that capsulized the experience for him and his co-workers. As they were setting up one morning on top of a remote hillside, McGee noticed two Puerto Rican women arguing in the street. He thought they were arguing about who should get their power restored first.

"They were arguing about who was going to serve us lunch," McGee said. "It's hard not to get choked up, thinking about how grateful they were to us for doing something we do every day."

