

Pets get fast heat relief at New Jersey shelter

Cooperative agreement helps speed installation of needed air conditioners

Michael Keating

When the air conditioning broke down at an Ocean City, N.J., animal shelter this past July, a U.S. Communities cooperative agreement helped expedite installation of rented A/C units so a variety of stray pets stayed comfortable. As many as 30 dogs and 40 cats are housed at the Humane Society of Ocean City's shelter; those pets kept their cool thanks to Herc Rentals' speedy installation of two 5-ton industrial air conditioning temporary units under a U.S. Communities cooperative contract.

"Shelter management called, and the company responded within about three hours to the site. We assessed what was needed to complete the job, and Herc started installation as soon as we got approval. The temporary equipment was installed in a matter of days," says Wade Miller, a Herc Rentals Pro Solutions branch manager.

When the shelter's air conditioning broke down, Ocean City officials sought a temporary solution, says Joseph Clark, Ocean City's purchasing manager. "After discussing the situation with Herc, they offered to deliver onsite a self-contained power generation system as well as a unit that could supply both heat and cool air to the required building."

The rental from Herc enabled the city to map out a permanent solution, Clark says. "This temporary fix permitted the city to take the necessary time to properly address the issues at hand and to also put the required funds in place in our Capital Plan."

The rental gear that the firm supplied to the shelter included a 20-kilowatt generator that was fitted with a 500-gallon fuel tank, so that it will run for almost two weeks before refueling. Putting the Tier 4 rental generator into operation enabled shelter administrators to keep utility fees and charges to a minimum.

Without the rental unit, the shelter would have needed the local power company to come out to the shelter and run a new temporary power service/emergency hookup that would have been an expensive



In the photo: Industrial air conditioners and a generator that Herc Rentals installed at an Ocean City, N.J. animal shelter on a temporary basis this past July after an equipment breakdown.

additional charge, Miller tells GPN. The generator features a low-emission design and operation that helps preserve the environment, Miller adds.

The temporary chiller units quickly convert from generating cool air to heated air in cold weather. "All we had to do was switch the ductwork out to a heater duct for cold-weather operation," Miller says. The units have already been converted over to heat for the winter.

At this point, the rental units are still onsite and

will probably stay there into the middle of next year, Clark tells GPN. "We subsequently hired an engineer to assess the building's needs and to redesign a new system which will go out for public bid." He believes the city made a prudent decision in a challenging situation. "Overall, this scenario made the most sense dollar-wise for the taxpayer and permitted us to literally take the heat off of the building and to properly go through the procurement process to make the required upgrades to the building."

Having an available cooperative agreement was key, Clark adds. "Being able to tap into this U.S. Communities contract on a moment's notice allowed us to elevate a very unfortunate situation that existed in one of our buildings, while at the same time afforded us the needed time to make the long-term fix."

Using cooperative agreements makes sense for urgent and emergency purchases, Miller says. "With capital spending being reduced in many organizations' budgets, a rental opportunity is more attainable and doable in most cases because organizations can use their free cash flow to do whatever is needed to pay the expenses of an emergency." He adds, "Whenever there's an emergency need, an equipment rental may be able to provide an immediate solution."

The cooperative contract, Miller adds, provides clear pricing and rental rate information, and is suitable for urgent buys. "It [the cooperative agreement] is a much quicker solution for governments' emergency issues at hand."

Herc Rentals has a network of 260 locations covering the U.S. and Canada. The firm's robust service

organization and infrastructure can play a key role in an emergency, Miller says. "It [the network] gives us a very large selection of equipment plus the expertise of different technicians and different mindsets when looking at solving the problem and finding a solution that is needed at that crucial time."

Prepare well in advance of an emergency is what Miller advises executives at every organization. "It's good for governments and other organizations to try to get ahead of emergencies. Getting an account set up in advance with firms that carry equipment and supplies needed in an emergency is key. Some of these firms have an abundance of equipment, and planning ahead ensures they'll be able to meet your requirements when needed."

Miller says he frequently talks to government buyers about planning in advance for potential hurricanes, blizzards and other catastrophes, as well as general snow removal. "As we try to plan ahead, it's really not preventive maintenance for these governments — it's predictive maintenance. That way we can have a strategy already in play to help governments recover quickly after an emergency."

Advance planning can involve consultations with firms like Herc Rentals, Miller says. "Governments can get ahead of those emergency events and do a forecast that'll help their budgeting and spending for future years. It can be a great way to help the agency spend tax dollars wisely."

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