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Hurricane or No, the IBC Show Must Go on Wheatstone Director of Sales keeps an eye on home from Amsterdam

Emily M. Reigart Sep 14, 2018

TV Technology Editor Tom Butts interviewed Wheatstone Director of Sales Jay Tyler on the floor at IBC2018 to find out how the manufacturer was preparing for Hurricane Florence back home in New Bern, N.C.

Tyler was on his way to Amsterdam when the storm began to head toward the Carolinas, so he has been anxiously waiting for word on how his home and his livelihood in New Bern, N.C. are faring.

Tyler's home is located about 14 feet above sea level — or river level, in this case. He explained that "New Bern sits on the confluence of the Trent and the Neuse Rivers." The Wheatstone facility is situated a bit more safely — approximately 20 to 25 feet above the floodplain, Tyler said.

As of Friday morning (Central European Summer Time), the factory had not lost power, Tyler reports; Wheatstone elected to preemptively close the facility ahead of Hurricane Florence's arrival. Tyler said pre-storm preparations involved bringing things indoors and wrapping gear in plastic to prevent water damage — "boxes and boxes of plastic draped over everything," Tyler said, "That's normal protocol for us."

About 100 employees work at the company's headquarters, and power depending, Tyler said the facility will reopen Monday if one or two of them can make it to work. In the mean time, he said, Wheatstone's toll free number and tech support will be primarily manned by employees in the California, Texas and Syracuse, N.Y., offices.

Tyler's own home lost power at 10 p.m. (EST). He also noted that local news reports indicated more than 150 people in New Bern were rescued by first responders in the early morning, and the town had experienced winds of about 90 mph and water levels reached about 10 feet above sea level. "Some of the photos that came back were pretty catastrophic," he said.

