



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: News Media
From: Bamberg County Administration
Date: January 17, 2024
Re: Bamberg County and City Officials Offer Assistance to Local Barrel Manufacturing Company After Tornado Destruction

Bamberg, South Carolina (January 2024) – And that's where the miracle comes in.

Despite the total destruction of his whiskey barrel manufacturing facility just outside Bamberg City limits and the frightening entrapment of General Manager David Hutto, South Carolina Oak to Barrel CEO and Owner Eddie Hill said he hopes they can rebuild and remain in Bamberg, stating, “We like Bamberg. Y'all have been good to us.” Hill was on site Thursday to assess the damage to SC Oak to Barrel, which just opened in Bamberg less than two years ago and has approximately 40 employees.

Mr. Hill was joined by City and County officials, including Mayor Nancy Foster, County Council Chairman Evert Comer, Jr. and County Council members Spencer Donaldson and Jonathan Goodman, County Administrator Joey Preston, Sheriff Kenneth Bamberg, and Police Chief James Smoak. Both City and County leaders assured Mr. Hill they will do everything in their power to help with the rebuilding process.

County Administrator Joey Preston offered to assist in securing storage and office space for the whiskey barrel manufacturing company, with Preston noting, “You guys helped put Bamberg on the map; there has been so much excitement around this company, and we want to keep you here.” Mayor Nancy Foster was visibly relieved when Hill declared his intention to keep the facility in Bamberg if possible, stating, “Thank you so much...we need you, and our citizens need these jobs.” She also shared her intentions of meeting with the South Carolina Alliance of Economic Development to seek assistance on Oak to Barrel’s behalf.

County Council Chairman Evert Comer, Jr. stated that despite the devastating property loss, “Thankfully, we are still here and must face the reality of rebuilding and move forward. We are grateful SC Oak to Barrel invested in the Bamberg community almost two years ago, and we will support them in every way we can and also seek assistance from our regional, state, and federal partners.”

While the damage to the facility was astounding, the fact that no loss of life or injuries occurred is miraculous, to say the least. SC Oak to Barrel General Manager David Hutto had a frighteningly close call, however. He explained that minutes after dismissing his employees, the EF2 tornado shattered windows and ripped the roof off the building. Hutto had no choice but to hunker down in a corner and, once it was safe to do so, climb out of what had once been a window.

Oak to Barrel CEO Eddie Hill said they have insurance on the building, but the most important thing is that everyone is safe. "The buildings and stuff can be replaced. That just costs money. But the loss of life cannot be replaced. And that's where the miracle comes in."

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For more information on this press release, email info@bambergcounty.sc.gov.