

STATEMENT OF

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DIRECTOR, KANSAS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY

ON

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DISASTER RECOVERY ASSISTANCE IN THE WAKE
OF THE MAY 4, 2007 TORNADOS IN KANSAS

BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISASTER RECOVERY

JULY 17, 2008

On May 4, 2007, an EF-5 tornado estimated to be 2 miles wide with 205 mph winds struck the City of Greensburg and Kiowa County, Kansas. Twenty-two tornadoes were reported in Kansas on this night. The most extensive damage occurred in the city of Greensburg.

The storms resulted in 15 fatalities statewide, 12 of those occurring in Greensburg. 961 homes and 110 businesses were destroyed within the city of Greensburg. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the homes and businesses sustained major damage or were destroyed. With the exception of the Kiowa County Courthouse, all government owned facilities were destroyed including the city hall, the county hospital, police, fire and maintenance facilities and all three schools. In addition, 7 churches were destroyed. The near total destruction of government infrastructure would create major challenges for the recovery effort.

FEMA Region VII Administrator, Dick Hanjie, immediately recognized the catastrophic impacts of the tornado. Mr. Hanjie contacted me just minutes after being advised of the devastation to offer up the resources of the federal government. Mr. Hanjie continued his contact with me the following day and arrived in Greensburg with Federal Coordinating Officer, Mike Karl, less than 24 hours after the tornado leveled the town.

To augment on-station state recovery assets, two FEMA mobile disaster recovery vehicles along with an emergency response vehicle and several satellite communication vehicles arrived in Greensburg within 36 hours of the disaster.

A talented team of FEMA's logistics personnel quickly began creating temporary infrastructure, including communications systems and temporary facilities on behalf of the county and state. The state was advised of all cost-share expenditures upfront.

All federal partners worked in a unified command structure supporting the State. Resources needed were quickly identified by joint coordinated FEMA staff and State of Kansas staff.

The Small Business Administration (SBA), the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the National Weather Service Office (NWS) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) brought valuable expertise and resources to the

community. Special recognition should be given to the Ameri-Corps for managing the thousands of volunteers within the community.

All federal agencies exhibited a willingness to provide whatever equipment and technical assistance the local jurisdiction or state requested.

A Joint Field Office (JFO) was established in Wichita, Kansas, located approximately 1 ½ hours east of Greensburg. Because of the severity and need for a federal/state presence within Kiowa County, FEMA established an Area Field Office (AFO) in Greensburg. FEMA allowed the city, county, and state to use their facilities for meetings, briefings, and office space until such time as temporary modular facilities could be procured through normal purchasing channels.

A large Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) was established at Haviiland, eleven miles east of Greensburg. FEMA provided support in establishing phone service, internet service, and T-1 Internet capabilities. FEMA supported additional mobile disaster recovery centers in Greensburg and within the other 24 Kansas counties also included in the major declaration. Mr. Karl and his staff never lost sight of the recovery needs of the other counties included in the disaster declaration. Requests for amendments were quickly processed by Mr. Karl and his staff.

The US Forestry Service established a 300 person Base Camp in the city park to support disaster workers. The camp included lodging, meals, showers, toilet facilities, fueling, security, and laundry services. The Base Camp was fully operational May 8th.

FEMA Direct Housing Operations housed 84 families in travel trailers or mobile homes within 10 days from the declaration date thus eliminating the need for mass care.

Because rental housing was not available, and the majority of all housing had been destroyed, a FEMA group site was constructed just outside the city limits of Greensburg with 225 families occupying mobile homes. If Greensburg was to recover, it was critical to allow residents to remain close to home, instead of relocating to distant urban areas. Housing assistance allowed individuals and business owners to stay within their community, rebuild, attend school, and establish their businesses. To date, FEMA has provided over \$8.1 million in

housing assistance and the Small Business Administration (SBA) has approved over \$41 million in low-interest loans to businesses and residents. (Attachment 1)

Through the Public Assistance Program, a total of 430,000 cubic yards of debris were removed from the city of Greensburg. To date, FEMA has disbursed a total of \$62.9 million with \$31.1 million of this amount obligated to applicants in Kiowa County. These funds are for eligible debris removal, emergency protective measures, and damages to public buildings and utilities projects.

Area for improvement: Some inconsistencies exist within the Public Assistance Program. At times, inconsistencies in policies and cost estimating formulas have created confusion on the part of local applicants and the state. In some instances, disaster payments are being delayed until such matters are resolved. For example, the construction on the County Courthouse was delayed because the applicant was confused on how FEMA was applying insurance proceeds. The result is that construction just now being started on this facility. The inconsistencies appear to be a result of the continued turnover of FEMA field staff and personal interpretation of guidelines. I feel that an arbitration process needs to be incorporated into the Public Assistance Program to alleviate any concerns of bias on behalf of FEMA in the appeal process. Project worksheets over one million dollars require additional approvals and are often untimely.

FEMA activated the Long-term Community recovery program, which integrated assistance from the State of Kansas and federal agencies focusing on the community's long-range goals.

FEMA's Long-term community recovery program helped establish a community process and jump-start redevelopment. Together citizens, civic groups, businesses owners, local, state, and federal officials and the long-term recovery planning team developed a Sustainable Comprehensive Plan that serves as the vision for redevelopment and future development in Greensburg and Kiowa County. The plan is applicable to every project in Greensburg.

Area for improvement: In some recovery areas, progress was slowed because of lack of visibility of various federal programs. It is recommended that federal agencies having a role in recovery, such as US Departments of Commerce, Labor, and Agriculture be co-located in the Joint Field Office (JFO) or Area Field Office

(AFO) to provide guidance to state and local leaders. For instance, the state located a temporary facility to be used as a business incubator site but was unable to locate a mechanism or program to share the fiscal responsibility.

As another example, USDA has been a strong partner in the recovery effort funding portions of the city's water tower, courthouse and single family homes and eventually the business incubator building. As recovery efforts proceeded, these USDA partnerships were unknown to the State and we were not aware of the various programs available to the community and its residents. Perhaps if they were co-located in the JFO or AFO and attended the briefings information could have been more readily shared and coordination of benefits would have been more seamless.

In the last 18 months, Kansas has had five major disaster declarations, and our close relationship with Mr. Hanjie and his staff at FEMA Region VII has proven invaluable and they have served the citizens of Kansas well.

The devastation in Greensburg is one of the worst in Kansas history -- leveling an entire community. Extraordinary efforts were required not only to respond and save lives but also to rebuild ensuring that Greensburg survives.

I am pleased to report that FEMA and our federal partners responded quickly and with a positive "can-do" attitude. Certainly there remains much work to be done to rebuild an entire city. But the resiliency of the people of Greensburg coupled with the strong support of the State of Kansas and our federal partners has them well on their way to being a model—and in fact one of the nation's first 'Green' cities.

STATE OF KANSAS
MAY 2007
GREENSBURG/KIOWA COUNTY TORNADO*
FACT SHEET
DR-1699

Total Kansas Counties Declared

- Individual Assistance Programs: 24
- Public Assistance Programs: 45

Fatalities: 15 total

- Greensburg/Kiowa County: 12
- Stafford County : 1
- Pratt County: 1
- Ottawa County: 1

Greensburg/Kiowa County Statistics:

- Homes
 - Destroyed: 961
 - Major Damage: 105
 - Minor Damage: 67
 - Affected: 11
- Businesses
 - Major/Destroyed: 110
 - Minor Damage: 24
- Farmsteads
 - Destroyed: 30
- Churches
 - Destroyed: 7
- Debris
 - 430,000 cubic yards

Direct Federal Support

- Mission Assignments
 - \$12.6 million
 - US Forest Service/US Army Corps of Engineers/General Services Administration/Environmental Protection Agency/Ameri-Corps

***see attached map for county information**

Individual Assistance

- FEMA Housing Assistance
 - Total: \$8.1 million
 - Kiowa County: \$2.8 million
- FEMA Direct Housing Program
 - 225 mobile homes group site in Greensburg
 - 9 private sites

- State of Kansas Other Needs Assistance
 - Total all counties: \$1.6 million
 - 825 households approved
 - Total Kiowa County: \$972,250
 - 187 households approved

- Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loans
 - \$42 million to residents and businesses
 - 585 approved

- Crisis Counseling program funds
 - \$888,784

- Disaster Unemployment Assistance benefits
 - \$111,931

Public Assistance

FEMA approved project worksheets: 45*

- Greensburg: 17
- Kiowa County: 16
- Greensburg Schools: 6
- Kiowa County Memorial Hospital : 6

*Buildings only--does not include towers, parks, ball fields, water tower, etc.

FEMA dispersed more than \$31.1M to pay for debris removal, emergency protective measures and damage to public buildings and utilities in Kiowa County.

View of Post-Tornado Destruction
Greensburg, Kansas



DR-1699-KS

Incident Period: May 4 (11:59 PM) - June 1, 2007



Source: Kansas Adjutant General's Department; US Census Bureau

Kansas Adjutant General's Department
Geospatial Information Systems
24 August 2007