

Prattville, Alabama
Sunday, February 17, 2008
Tornado

Sunday Afternoon

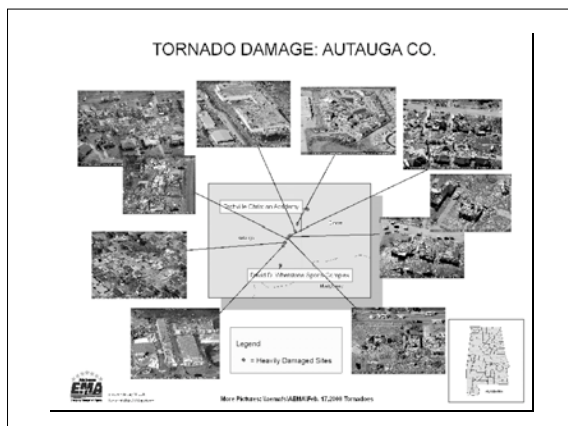
- The Storm Track approached from a southwesterly direction
- National Weather Service (NWS) issued Tornado Warnings with 70 mile per hour (mph) winds
- Severe thunderstorms packing tornadoes swept from Mobile, AL to Huntsville, AL

Strike

- Warning sirens sounded for an hour
- The normal busy restaurant and shopping areas became less crowded
- Just after 3:00 p.m. a tornado with winds of 140-150 mph strikes

Anatomy of the Tornado

- EF-3 on the Enhanced Fujita Scale
- 140-155 mph estimated winds
- Surveillance video captures image
- Path a quarter mile wide



Initial Damage

- A town of about 35,000 individuals
- About 11,000 without power
- 864 homes suffer damage
- 80 homes are totally destroyed
- 2 households without homeowners insurance
- 2 serious injuries
- No Deaths



“God Was Watching Our City Last Night”

- **Severe Weather Awareness Week** began the next day
- **Governor and other officials toured** damage
- **No overnight reports of looting**

“God Was Watching Our City Last Night”

- **Resources were secured to bring a sense of security to residential neighborhoods**
- **Dusk to dawn curfew for Sunday and Monday**



Rapid Response

- **Sunday**
 - **Initial door to door search for injured and trapped completed by fire and law enforcement**
- **Monday**
 - **Second door to door search for anyone needing assistance**
- **Within 3 Weeks**
 - **All debris removed from city streets**



Immediate Aftermath

- About 11,000 without power
- One fire station is damaged
- Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT)
 - self mobilized searching for injured
- Local law enforcement officers went immediately went to work



Command Center

- Damaged fire station used as Emergency Operation Center (EOC) for the town
- All agencies and responders coordinated from the EOC
- EOC still an active fire station as well as a help center for the town
- Some 200 response personnel were working out of the EOC



Assistance of all Types

- Alabama Department of Insurance (ADOI) Response Vehicle assists citizens with insurance claims
- American Red Cross
 - Missing persons
- United Way
 - Food, water or shelter

Assistance of all Types

- “One Stop Shop” at Church of the Living Waters
 - Information, questions answered, tetanus shots, even day care
- Restaurants fed volunteers, first responders, residents and others for weeks
- Small Business Association
 - Low interest loans

Security

- Police at all entrances to affected neighborhoods
- No one in or out without identification to prove local residency and “seeing” an officer “eye to eye”
- Police on bicycle patrol in affected neighborhoods

Security

- Police on ATVs to reach areas cut off by debris
- State Troopers at entrances to the city
- “No Pilfering” signs posted



A Visible Presence

- Police, sheriffs and state troopers self deployed
- Seeing law enforcement vehicles in the neighborhoods provided an added sense of security
- Prattville Police Mobile Command vehicle was parked at a prominent intersection



Proceed with Caution

- City issues “Storm Work Permit” placard for all contractors to display in construction vehicles
- Citizens knew to look for the placard
- City issues debris removal policy requiring contractors to haul off anything collected

Proceed with Caution

- Provides curbside service to residents who clean up themselves
- Public asked to handle cleanup cautiously

Volunteer Response Center

- Located away from the impact zone
- Located at Pratt Court Baptist Church
- Donations of cash were preferred
- Eliminated need to store and distribute goods

Volunteers

- **Volunteers Organized Against Disaster (VOAD)**
 - Coordinated 2,000 people
 - VOAD newly formed; had met twice
 - Daily work Assignments
 - Daily color coded identification bracelets
 - Bus volunteers to work sites
 - No individual vehicles

Volunteers

- **Mental Health**
 - brief and de-brief volunteers daily by trained chaplains with CISM training
- “Unmet Needs” Committee for citizens
- Habitat for Humanity to rebuild two homes



Emergency Management Agency (EMA)

- **Communications – biggest need and biggest problem**
 - Lost power and all internet connectivity
 - Resorted to paper and calling state EMA for assistance
 - Need redundant systems and equipment
 - Need interoperable systems and equipment

Emergency Management Agency (EMA)

- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - Joined South Alabama Mutual Aid Compact
 - Revising Emergency Operations Plan
 - Identification of a larger EOC site
 - Identified new staging areas
 - Develop debris removal policies

9-1-1 Dispatch

- Lost link to dispatch server – routed calls to fire station
- Dispatch will consider co-locating with local EMA in future events
- Need uninterruptable power source
- Need redundant systems
- Need alternate location
- Need continuity of operations plan (COOP)
- VHF radios to talk with police and fire

Resiliency

- July – Charity golf event to raise funds to assist Habitat for Humanity build two homes for uninsured residents
- City has put additional resources to issuing building permits

Resiliency

- Garden Club will plant 1,000 trees in the yards of all affected residents next February for the one year anniversary
- Commercial merchants – Kmart, WalMart and others are rebuilding
- Camp Noah – National Lutheran Church camp for children directly affected

Lessons Learned/Best Practices

- City EOC needs to be a location devoted only to EOC operations
- CERT teams invaluable
- Pilfering signage critical to citizens “sense of security” and “set the tone”

Lessons Learned/Best Practices

- Morning briefings by Mayor with all response agencies
- A Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is needed and will be formed in the near future

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