

Federal Disaster Declaration granted for Greensburg, KS

Contributed by 1st Lt. Jeff Roberson
Monday, 07 May 2007

Greensburg, KS — A widespread line of severe thunderstorms that hit the state Saturday and continued into Sunday morning hampered search and rescue efforts in Greensburg, KS, which was almost totally destroyed by a tornado that ripped through the community at approximately 10 p.m. on May 4. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius visited the community Sunday, accompanied by Major General Tod Bunting, the adjutant general and director of Kansas Emergency Management, and Dick Hainje, director of FEMA Region 7. Earlier, Sebelius issued a Declaration of State of Disaster Emergency for Kiowa County and requested a federal Disaster Declaration from President George W. Bush. The federal declaration was granted Sunday.

Story by Kansas Adjutant General's Public Affairs Office

7:26 p.m. Sunday, May 6, 2007

(Source: http://www.49abcnews.com/news/2007/may/06/federal_disaster_declaration_granted_greensburg_ks/)

The governor's request for a federal declaration sought individual assistance (assistance to individuals and households), public assistance (assistance to state and local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations for emergency work and the repair or replacement of disaster-damaged facilities) and the hazard mitigation grant program (assistance to state and local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations for actions taken to prevent or reduce long term risk to life and property from natural hazards).

Eight storm-related deaths were reported in Kiowa County. One person was killed in Pratt County. Earlier reports incorrectly indicated a Stafford County Sheriff's Deputy was killed, however, the information should have stated the deputy was seriously injured and the death was actually in Pratt County.

State and local first responders and volunteer organizations are continuing search and rescue operations in Greensburg, coordinated by the Kansas Division of Emergency Management.

The Kansas National Guard has 40 soldiers and 12 airmen on duty providing security. Approximately 64 soldiers of the 891st Engineer Battalion, headquartered in Iola, will arrive in Greensburg Monday morning, May 7, along with chainsaws and light engineering equipment to assist with debris removal.

The Civil Air Patrol has been conducting reconnaissance flights along the tornado's path to search for possible tornado victims, stranded motorists and residents.

The Kansas Highway Patrol has 16 troopers on duty in the Greensburg area manning checkpoints, security patrols and search and rescue operations. The KHP communications van and three personnel are also in Greensburg assisting with communications.

The Kansas Department of Transportation is assisting with debris removal, search and rescue operations, communications and traffic control through barricades and message boards.

The Department of Revenue, Division of Motor Vehicles will open the Pratt drivers license office on Monday, May 7 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. so storm victims can get replacement drivers license and identification cards. Car titles for residents of Kiowa County will also be available from the County Treasurer's office in Pratt after Tuesday. Normally the driver's license station is open Tuesday-Friday, but these Monday hours will accommodate persons in the shelters and other victims who need identification immediately.

A mobile station in Haviland will be operational by Tuesday, May 8. For further details, contact Freda Warfield at the Department of Revenue, Topeka, 785-296-3042.

The American Red Cross opened a shelter in Haviland High School and one at Barclay College for the residents of Greensburg displaced by the tornado. Three hundred stayed in the shelters Friday evening and approximately 200 were sheltered Saturday. An additional 55 people were sheltered at the Haviland Friends, supported by the Red Cross, on Friday night and 32 were sheltered Saturday night. The Red Cross plans to close the Barclay College shelter and merge the evacuees into the high school shelter today. The Haviland Friends shelter will close today.

Approximately 110 Red Cross volunteers and staff are assigned to the relief operations for Greensburg and an additional 30 are in the process of assignment. Three Red Cross emergency response vehicles are supporting relief efforts and a communications van is stationed at the Haviland High School shelter to facilitate emergency communications and logging

into the Red Cross “Safe and Well” website. A second communications vehicle is enroute.