

Disaster Lessons Learned - State Public Affairs Response



Agenda

- **Overview**
- **Timelines**
- **Challenges**
- **Lessons Learned**
- **Questions**

Kansas 2007 Disasters

- **Dec. 31, 2006-Jan 2007 Winter Ice/Snow Storm - 44 counties**
- **May 4, 2007 Greensburg 95% Destroyed by Tornado/Flooding in NE KS - 32 counties**
- **June 30, 2007 Record setting floods in SE Kansas - 23 counties**
- **Dec. 2007 – Winter Ice/Snow Storm – 60 counties**
- **2007 Disasters in Kansas typically fell on Friday nights before a holiday**
- **\$400 million = cost of Dec. 31, 2006 and May 4, 2007 storms in KS (not including SE KS flooding)**

Public Information Goals in Disaster

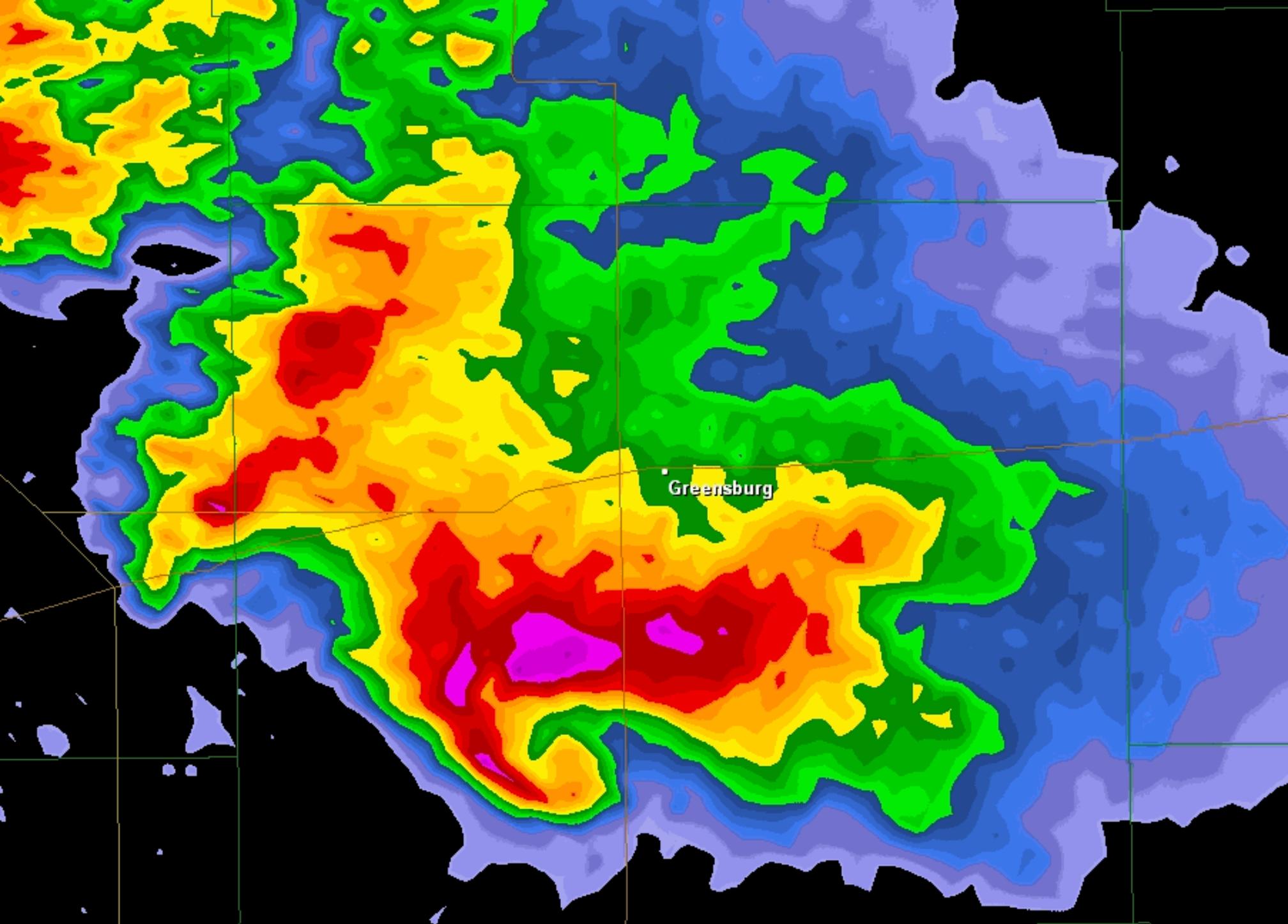
- **Provide life-saving information quickly.**
 - What happened, what the public needs to do/go
- **Be accurate and timely.**
 - Ensures public confidence
(Be first, be right, be credible – CDC)
- **Sustain getting information out when most media leave and move on to another story.**
 - Use of local media, local radio transmitter signal, and flyers.
 - Elected officials can also assist in getting media attention.

Arriving in Greensburg - May 5, 2007



Greensburg Overview

- **May 4, 2007 - Greensburg received 20 minute warning of advancing storm system and tornado.**
- **At 9:45 p.m., the south central Kansas town was hit by an EF-5 tornado (Enhanced Fujita scale).**
- **1.7 miles wide - traveled for 22 miles**
- **Greensburg had 95% destruction, remaining 5% heavily damaged.**
- **During first three days of the response, ongoing tornado watches/warnings in state**



Greensburg

Kansas Weather Radar Map – Greensburg - May 4, 2007

Before



After



Friday Timeline

- **Friday, May 4 - Tornado hits Greensburg 9:45 p.m.**
- **Calls from State Emergency Operations Center in Topeka with information 10 p.m. - 11 p.m.**
- **Media calls begin coming to PAO Sharon Watson's cell # - local /national**
- **Phone interviews, live and recorded through Sat. 3 a.m.**

Greensburg - Saturday, May 5



Greensburg Devastation



Landmarks Destroyed – Largest Hand-Dug Well and Catholic Church



Main Highway through Greensburg



Early Challenges

- **No power**
- **No water**
- **No buildings in which to conduct operations**
- **During the first three days of the response, continued storm warnings in the area.**
- **Few tornado shelters - Court house and a few other basements were used for emergency workers, rest of town was evacuated.**

Saturday Timeline

- Arrived 8:30 a.m. and assessed overall situation, public info
- On site media briefings with local officials Sat. morning
- Kansas Highway Patrol Trooper assisting with media logistics and media schedule from Saturday a.m./p.m. to Sunday p.m.
- Media briefings also include Adj. Gen. & legislators ---
Messages focus on loss of life, search & rescue, infrastructure, what's next

First Incident Command Post/Briefings



Media Interviews



Early Interviews/Public Affairs Support

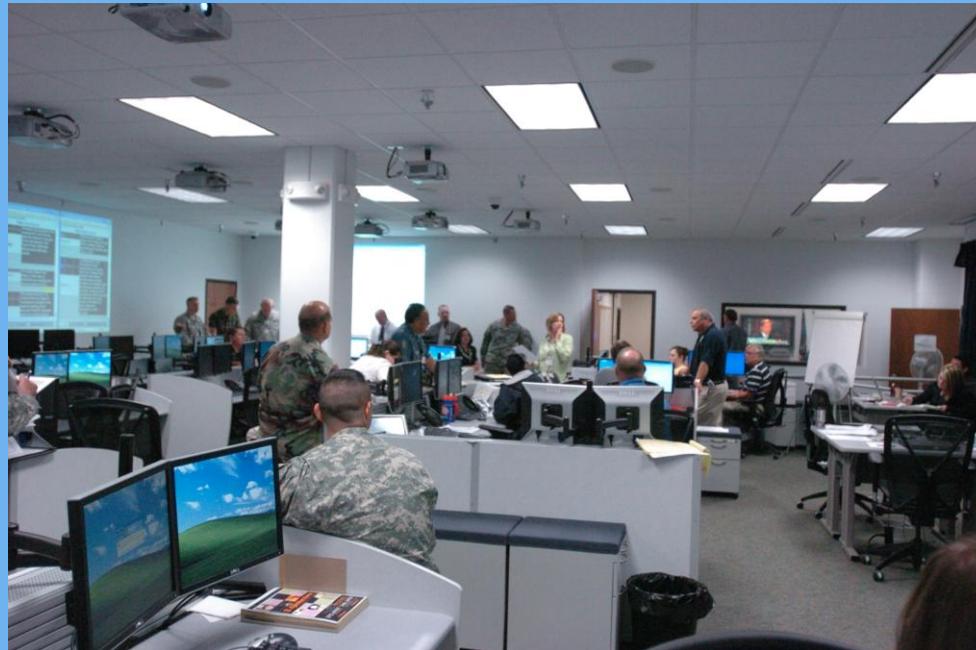


Saturday Timeline

- **Media are positioned on edge of town across street from Incident Command Post**
- **No access into town for media or anyone not specifically working on response (search/rescue)**
- **National media begin arriving early afternoon**
- **State PAO leaves Saturday night for Topeka, continuing interviews by phone, and returns Sunday to stay all week**

State EOC - Topeka

- **Joint Information Center activated Saturday**
 - **Other state agencies contacted for Public Information support**
 - **Overnight flooding in Topeka resulted in staffing issues for Public Affairs Office and State EOC**



Challenges

- **Saturday**
 - **Determining best point to take control of public affairs because disasters are locally controlled**
 - **Determining need for additional public affairs support**
 - **Determining best location for media to tell the story**
 - **Getting public affairs staff support in Topeka when flooding was affecting this staff and had own agency duties**

Timeline - Sunday, May 6

- Media were moved to location in town near operations.
- General Bunting was busy conducting media interviews with national and local media in early morning hours.
- Governor traveled to Greensburg Sunday afternoon by car (weather prohibited flight).
- **Media focused on loss of life, search/rescue, and damage/response**

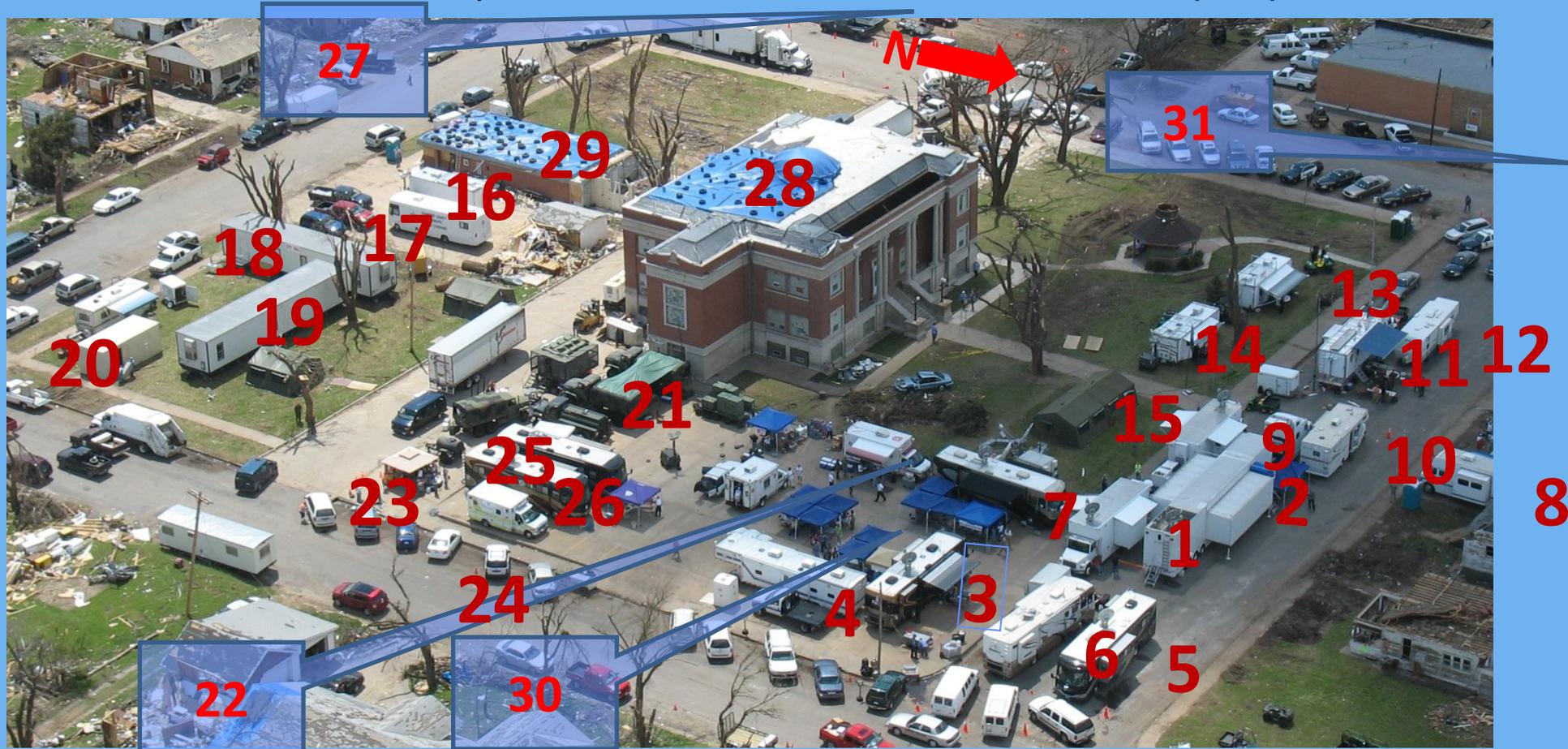


Challenges on Sunday, May 6

- Planned for Media Escorts (National Guard and Highway Patrol) to accompany news media to location in center of town for live morning television.
- Families returned to their homes – Media Escorts accompanied media to talk to families.
- Looting – misinformation about National Guard soldiers rather than Active Duty soldiers.



GREENSBURG, KANSAS INCIDENT BASE MAP 5/12/2007



- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Incident Command | 8. Public Health | 17. Kiowa County Sheriff | 27. EPA |
| 2. FEMA (Red Oct.) | 9. FEMA OPS & Logistics | 18. City Hall | 28. Courthouse (Shelters on west side) |
| 3. Logistics, EOC | 10. FEMA IT Support | 19. City Hall | 29. Sheriff's Dept. |
| 4. FIRE Operations, Credentialing, Public Information (JIC) | 11. National Guard Operations | 20. Storage | 30. Small Business Association |
| 5. FEMA State Housing | 12. Army, Air Force (JOC) | 21. National Guard | 31. Heart to Hearth (First Aid) Two blocks west on Florida & Main |
| 6. FEMA Planning | 13. Law Enforcement Staging | 22. Salvation Army | |
| 7. FEMA Individual Assistance | 14. Law Enforcement OPS | 23. Mental Health | |
| | 15. Copy/Meeting Tent | 24. EMS (staging) | |
| | 16. Communications | 25. FEMA Public Assistance for city | |
| | | 26. FEMA PA for city | |

Greensburg Media Monday



Ongoing News Briefings



Greensburg Media Background Shots



Greensburg Media



Media Interview Returning Residents – Monday, May 7



Challenges on Monday

- **Media escorts - Families allowed to return**
- **Ammonia tank leak**
- **Communication gaps between Incident Command, Law Enforcement Command, Operations – resulted in misinformation in number of dead and rescues**
- **Governor comments on National Guard equipment shortages (national issue) and it increases focus on Guard response**
- **Still misinformation by media regarding looting**
 - Media focus on residents returning to homes and later in day focus shifts to Guard equipment**

National Guard Equipment and Response is Focus of Media Attention



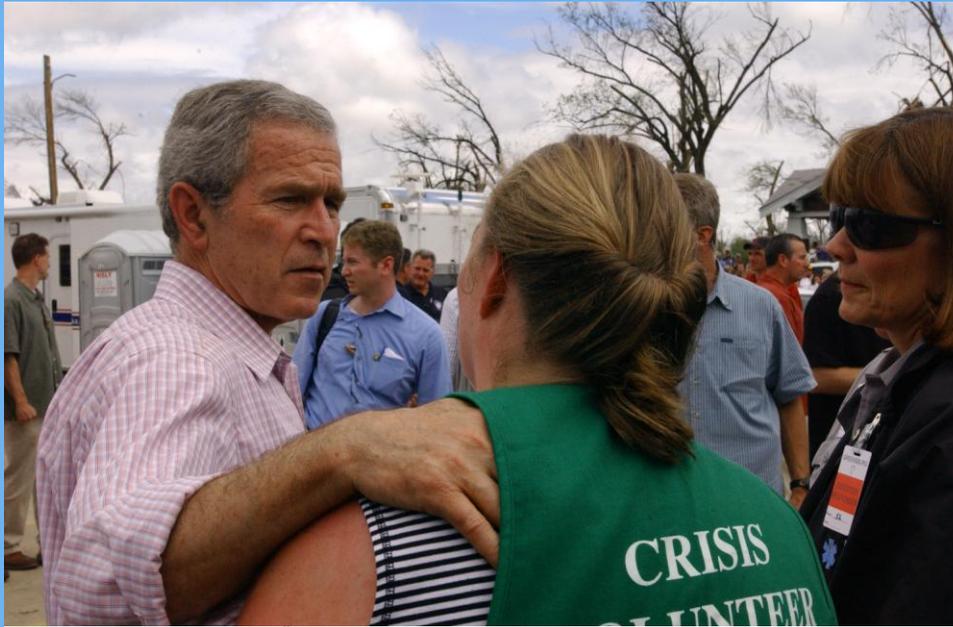
Heroes and Signs of Hope



Tuesday

- **Interview requests from national media/local media on National Guard response and equipment shortage**
- **Two new faces on media interviews: Mayor and school superintendent - both brought hope to the scene**
- **Stories continued on # of dead and extent of damage**
- **Questions continued on rumors of rescues**

President Visits Wednesday, May 9



Most Media Left Town After President's Visit - Residents Left in Need of Information



Greensburg Community Outreach: 1610 AM Radio & Flyers



Disaster/Media Challenges: Locating & returning guns to residents, and housing the animals



Disaster/Media Challenges: Debris Removal/Safety Concerns

- **Landfill/burn pit - hazardous materials, asbestos, U.S. 54**

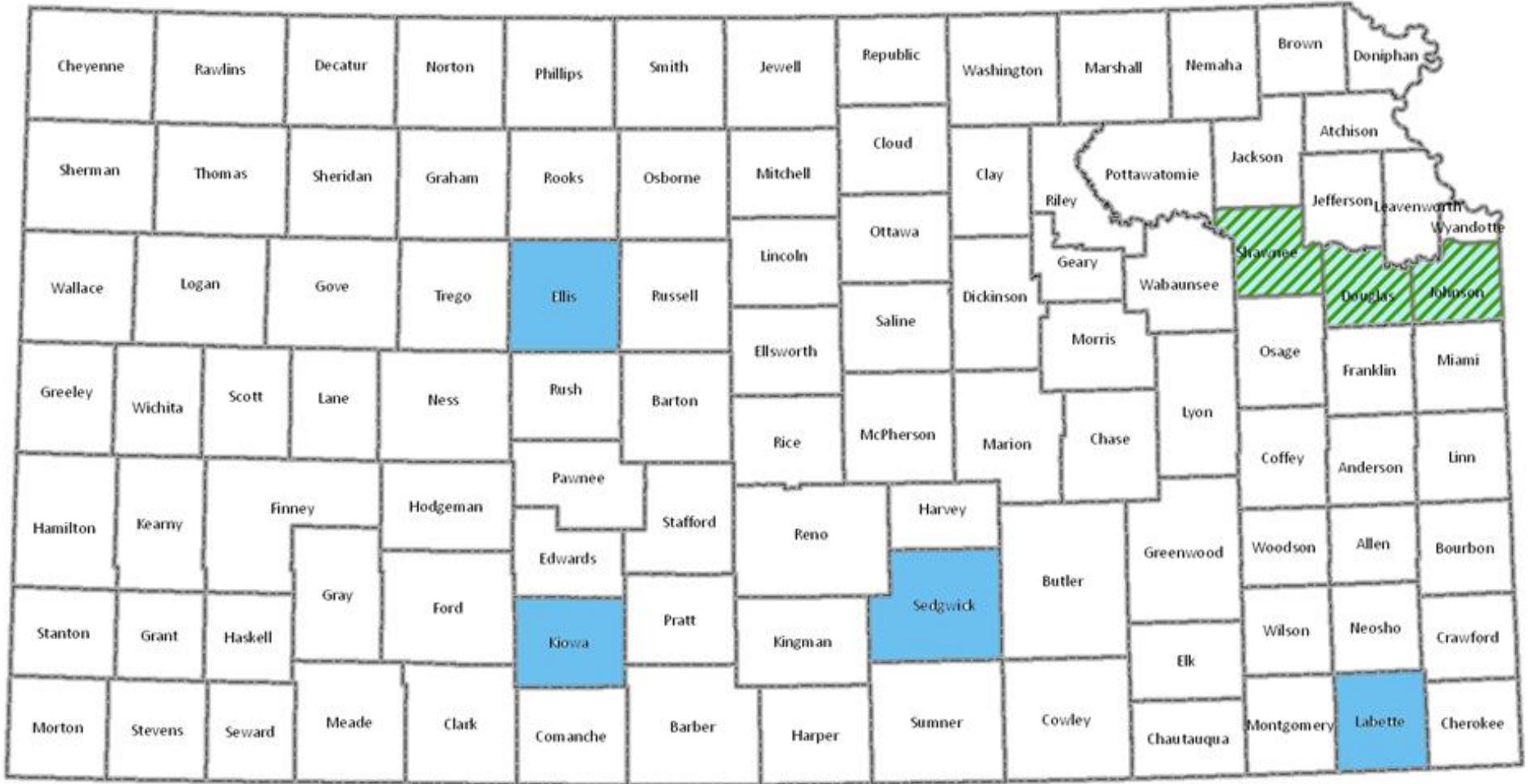


Disaster/Media Challenges: Too Many Donations Arrived



Transition of State Public Information Staff Begins Thursday, May 10

Public Information Support for Greensburg and Flooding



0 12.5 25 50 75 100 Miles

May/June June/July

Kansas Adjutant General's Department
Geospatial Information Systems
13 August 07

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

Public Information Support from State, KS National Guard, County, and City

- **State Public Affairs Officer – stayed 1st week with support in from Adjutant General’s Department public affairs staff in Topeka at Emergency Operations Center.**
- **Several State Agency Public Information Officers served in Greensburg, SE Kansas flooding disaster and State Emergency Operations Center in Topeka.**
- **184th Air Refueling Wing – Wichita (KS National Guard)**
- **105th Military Public Affairs Detachment – Topeka (KS National Guard)**
- **County Public Information Officers**
- **City Public Information Officers**

Public Information Team Transitions/Responsibilities

- **Previous public information team spent approximately four hours, sometimes more, to train the replacement public information teams or individuals arriving in Greensburg.**
- **Teams were responsible for providing daily updates regarding the disaster response to Topeka for inclusion in a news release to media.**
- **Teams responded to local media questions on site.**
- **Teams continued updating local radio transmitter (1610 AM) and producing flyers for distribution around town.**
- **Teams assisted with public meeting planning and general coordination of information for disaster response.**

Lessons Learned: Communications

- **Ensure communication flow between command operations and public affairs on site early in response: reduces misinformation**
- **Ensure communication flow between on site Public Affairs staff and State EOC (Topeka) Public Affairs staff.**
- **Use of Public Information Officers from state, counties, cities and military worked well (sent in first replacement team on fifth day). However, need to continue to build these teams.**
- **Equipment needs are vast when there are no building, no power, no printers/copiers.**

Lessons Learned: PAO Vehicle

- **On site Joint Information Center Vehicle needed:**



- **print news releases, post news conference times, have location where media know to come for answers**
- **need ability to take the vehicle back and forth from incident command to media location**

Lessons Learned:

Staffing/Training/Community Info

- **Ongoing disaster in NE/NC Kansas (flooding) at same time as Greensburg tornado: Plan for multiple simultaneous disasters**
- **Public Affairs Staffing in Emergency Operations Center/Greensburg: Plan for EOC and on site PA support, possible policy to ensure staff support**
- **Tasks for Emergency Operations Center Public Affairs Relief: Train other Public Affairs staff to work in EOC**
- **Be ready to support both media info and community info flow**

Lessons Learned: Rumors/Talking Points/Elected Officials

- **Need staff for rumor control and for monitoring media reports**
 - **Staff currently in Topeka Public Affairs Office unable to assist in this role during significant crisis, due to other demands.**
- **One message with clear agency talking points**
- **Be prepared to be interviewed anytime –one voice/face helps media**
- **Elected Officials – will also be interviewed. Share disaster response information with them regularly to keep them up to date.**

Overall Results

Sustain:

- **Regular, frequent news briefings from first day.**
- **Single Point of Contact in first week**
- **Address rumors early**
- **Use media escorts, enforce media control (KHP, Guard)**
- **Sustain getting information out in weeks to follow**
- **Transition Public Information Teams carefully**

Change:

- **Improve staffing, training in Incident Command, JIC**
- **Ensure communication channels early**
- **Anticipate elected officials needs as much as possible**

Overall Public Affairs Result

- **Positive media coverage of emergency response, both local, state and federal**
- **Positive media coverage of state emergency management and National Guard role**
- **Positive feedback from media on media escorts and other media information process**
- **Ongoing efforts to provide residents with daily updates on local radio signal (state communications equipment)**
- **Ongoing efforts to provide informational flyers to residents throughout town on daily basis**
- **Smooth transition of PIO teams through June, returned to locals**

Questions?

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