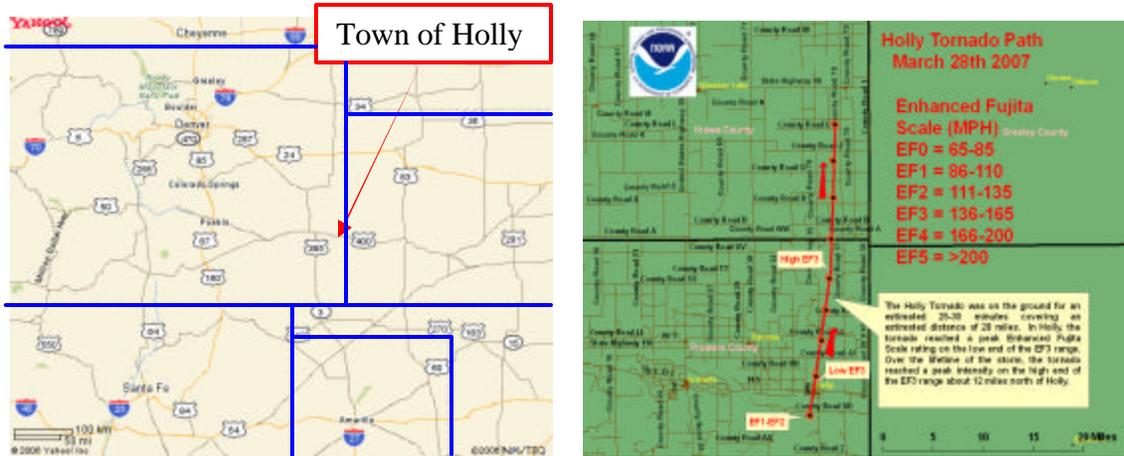


# After Action Report

**NAME/DATE OF INCIDENT:** Holly Tornado

**SITUATION:** On the evening of March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007, an F3 tornado (in excess of 157mph winds) struck the Town of Holly, Prowers County. The results of this tornado were two deaths, eight major injuries (requiring hospitalization), 48 destroyed or severely damaged structures, and 114 other structures receiving lesser damage. Disruption of electrical power and the water system occurred. Gas services also affected 108 homes; these services required capping of gas lines.



Unified Command was established between the Prowers County Sheriff, Colorado Division of Emergency Management (DEM), and Colorado State Patrol. The initial objectives were: life safety of the citizens and responders; restoration of the Town's infrastructure; evaluate environmental issues; and meet the immediate needs of displaced persons. Mutual aid was requested from surrounding jurisdictions, which was sufficient to deal with response and recovery operations.

Colorado Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (COVOAD) played a critical role in the early stages during this incident. They have brought in four groups of two managers each from Denver, Fort Collins, Vail / Eagle, and Boulder.

The Adventists led the effort in collecting and distributing physical donations. Adventist Community Services Disaster Response currently is managing three separate warehouses that supply the Holly Survivors; the local distribution center, a Lamar warehouse that supplies Holly, and a short term Denver warehouse that is collecting furniture to bring to Lamar then Holly. Food Bank of the Rockies (called Colorado Springs' Care and Share) brought six pallets of food and drinks.

The American Red Cross initial response involved the establishment of one shelter, the deployment of two Emergency Response Vehicles for mobile feeding and coordinated with local vendors to prepare and serve meals to community. The Red Cross provided individual assistance to 80 families through a Service Center (fix location for families to come to the Red Cross) and outreach teams (Red Cross teams that go to families in the community). Two Emergency

Response Vehicles supported mobile feeding through dinner on Tuesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007. The decision to end mobile feeding routes was made in conjunction with the Mayor, Mayor Pro-tem and Town Administrator based upon the continued reduction in meals served and feedback from community members. Three Red Cross vehicles and a fixed distribution point distributed over 7,000 bulk items to aid the community in the recover effort. Bulk Distribution items were the result of a partnership between the American Red Cross, Home Depot, King Soopers, and Wal-Mart which included work gloves, tarps, garbage bags, storage containers, build materials and other needed items. Five Red Cross Mental Health workers worked closely with Eastern Colorado Mental Health to support families deal with the disaster. Health Service workers worked with families on basic health needs and worked with individual and immediate families of those who were transported to hospitals in the Denver, Pueblo and Colorado Springs area.

The Salvation Army brought its mobile kitchen from Denver to Holly on Thursday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, along with a supervisor from Colorado Springs. From that date (dinner) through dinner on Wednesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, they have served nearly 5,000 meals. After first using the high school kitchen, they were then moved outside the senior center using the mobile kitchen. The American Red Cross vehicles were used to deliver meals to those who could not come to the meal site. As of Wednesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>, a Salvation Army vehicle from Denver was brought to Holly to do mobile feeding. The Salvation Army received a few calls from volunteers or those with in-kind donations. These were referred to the Metro Volunteers call center in Holly.

The Mennonite and Baptist groups are assisting with house fix ups and rebuilds. The Church of Christ responded with a semi trailer full of disaster supplies and the local church has been delivering them. The local Nazarene church has been delivering disaster supplies in their church.

The Public Utilities Commission communicated directly with Holly Municipal Utility who in turn worked with Southeast Colorado Power, the Rural Electric Association that surrounds the Town, to assist in restoring power. It took approximately two days for electricity to be fully restored to those households which could be occupied.

The Colorado State Electrical Board of the Division of Registrations agreed to waive permit application fees for required electrical inspections in tornado-damaged areas for one year from the date of the event, up to March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

Because of the December 20-22<sup>nd</sup> and December 28 – Jan 5<sup>th</sup> Blizzards that hit the Southeast Region as well as this tornado, the Division of Mental Health actively worked with its network of mental health professionals to provide counseling assistance to the Towns residents starting on March 29<sup>th</sup>. Southeast Mental Health Center supported by the Division of Mental Health worked to coordinate the behavioral health disaster response in partnership with the Pikes Peak American Red Cross, Mile High American Red Cross and the Southeastern BOCES (public education).

Staff from the Department of Natural Resources assisted in plotting the actual ground track of the tornado.

The National Weather Service (NWS) conducted several visits to eastern Prowers and Kiowa Counties. A team of four meteorologists from the NWS Office in Pueblo visited the Town of Holly and surrounding areas, arriving early Thursday morning (March 29<sup>th</sup>), to access the strength of the tornado, and to answer media inquiries. On Friday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, a team of three meteorologists (one from NWS Pueblo, and two from NWS Dodge City, KS) continued the damage survey. On Tuesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Warning Coordination Meteorologist from NWS Pueblo revisited the area, and did a survey of the entire tornado track, which was approximately 28 miles long. During the evening of April 3<sup>rd</sup> the meteorologist in charge and a forecaster from the NWS Pueblo Office attended a town meeting in Holly.

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment had issued several public health – related advisories (asbestos, debris removal, food preservation, trash, and water) and reported that more than 600 tetanus shots had been given. The Colorado Environmental Professionals Association also supported the response effort and delivered approximately 2,500 dust masks.

**Statistics regarding SBA Loans  
(as of 8:00 am, April 18, 2007)**

Applications	Issued	Received	Approved	\$ Approved
Home	64	34	9	664,600
Business/EIDL	16	4	1	5,800
TOTAL	80	38	10	670,400

The following governmental / non-governmental agencies that were involved in response and recovery operations:

1. Adventist Community Services Disaster Response
2. American Red Cross
3. Army Corps of Engineers
4. Church of the Brethren (Child Care)
5. Colorado Department of Education
6. Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DEM, DoH, and DLG)
7. Colorado Department of Natural Resource,
8. Colorado Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
9. Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (Air Pollution Control, Disease Control and Environmental Epidemiology, Health Facilities and Emergency Medical Services, Consumer Protection, Hazardous Materials and Waste Management, Water Quality Control)
10. Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies
11. Colorado Department of Transportation
12. Colorado Division of Mental Health
13. Colorado State Patrol
14. FEMA Region VIII
15. Kansas Department of Transportation
16. National Weather Service
17. Prowers County Human Services
18. Prowers County Office of Emergency Management
19. Prowers County Sheriff's Office

20. Public Utilities Commission
21. Salvation Army
22. Small Business Administration
23. Southeast Colorado Mental Health Services (Crisis Counseling)
24. Southeast Region IMT – Type III
25. Southern Baptist Convention (Chain Saw Crew)

Agencies that volunteered personnel, equipment, services prior to the demobilization order:

1. AMR from Pueblo and Colorado Springs
2. City of Colorado Springs
3. Colorado Department of Corrections
4. Douglas County
5. Greeley County Emergency Management, Kansas

### **TIMELINE OF EVENTS:**

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Mar 28, 2007 7:57pm | - Report of Tornado touching down 1 mile south of Holly  |
| Mar 28, 2007 8:00pm | - National Weather Service warning issued  |
| Mar 28, 2007 9:41pm | - Colorado Information Analysis Center activated   |
| Mar 29, 2007        | - Unified Command established  |
|                     | - Town of Holly issues a Disaster Declaration  |
|                     | - DEM first Situation Report released  |
|                     | - CDPHE issues Bottle Water Order and asbestos advisory  |
|                     | - Governor visits area   |
|                     | - Mental Health counselors arrive in Holly   |
|                     | - DOLA Press Release issued  |
| Mar 30, 2007        | - FEMA Region VIII representative arrives at DEM   |
|                     | - State-FEMA-SBA Preliminary Damage Assessment Teams visit the area.   |
| Apr 1, 2007         | - Local demobilization of assets completed   |
|                     | - Daily meetings held between the Town and COVOAD  |
| Apr 2, 2007         | - Town Hall meeting conducted. The general public had an opportunity to express their individual needs <sup>1</sup> . Voluntary, local and state agencies made presentations describing some of the assistance that they might be able to make available to the community. |
| Apr 3, 2007         | - Governor signs Executive Order D 009 07 declaring a disaster emergency   |
|                     | - Governor requests Small Business Administration assistance <sup>2</sup> .  |
| Apr 5, 2007         | - Small Business Administration assistance is approved. (declaration #10843)   |
|                     | - Schools are reopened.  |

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<sup>1</sup> Insurance: If federal disaster assistance is made available it will not be provided for damages covered by insurance. Disaster assistance provided by FEMA is intended to supplement assistance from other sources; therefore, insurance proceeds should be an applicant's first alternative for disaster assistance. *Section 312 (a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, P.L. 93-288 as amended*

<sup>2</sup> The criteria for such a declaration is 25 primary homes or businesses in a given county or contiguous county which are uninsured or under insured (40% or more).

- Apr 19, 2007 - First set of FEMA trailers arrive in Holly
- Apr 24, 2007 - 50 of the temporary housing units (30 travel trailers, 20 mobile homes) from Hope, AR arrived
- Apr 26, 2007 - Second victim dies from injuries received
- Apr 28, 2007 - Governor signs Executive Order D 014 07 extending disaster funding

**LESSONS LEARNED:**

1. **ITEM:** Activation of the State Emergency Operations Center

**DISCUSSION:** The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) was not activated for this incident, even though the Centennial-based staff of the Division of Emergency Management continually monitored the situation. This activation did not occur for the following reasons: (1) Local capabilities were not overwhelmed in their response to the tornado; and (2) State assets (such as those needed during the two blizzards in the Southeast Region) were not requested. During the Southeast Region blizzards, State assistance was requested, however, the same blizzard conditions have occurred in the Northwest Region (where they are more experienced at dealing with such incidents) no State assistance was requested and no activation of the SEOC occurred. Throughout the incident, inquiries were made to various State agencies and voluntary organizations for information or the availability of equipment. These were conducted primarily through telephonic contact.

Other agencies, for example, CDPHE, did increase their own monitoring operations during this time because their operations were more critically focused on a particular aspect of the recovery phase.

**RECOMMENDATION:** None.

2. **ITEM:** Press Releases

**DISCUSSION:** During the incident, only one press release was issued (March 29<sup>th</sup>, 7:14pm). The release contained information regarding a synopsis of the situation, the Governor’s visit to Holly, and some information concerning how donations can be made. Even though this event did not rise to the same level of State-based activity as the holiday blizzards, the desire of the public to help during disasters (either through donations or volunteering) will always be high.

The Southeast Region Incident Management Team – Type III had a public information officer on scene coordinating public information releases to the media for response and recovery issues with the Holly Tornado. The PIO also coordinated with the various COVOAD agencies to push out time sensitive information for volunteers and donations.

This needs to be tied into the SEOC – however due to communication limitations of no cell phones or internet connections this was not feasible at the initial response. There was no WebEOC connection to the SEOC.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Besides a recapping of the incident and what response / recovery actions are currently underway, recommend a separate press release always be issued solely addressing donation and volunteer issues.

**3. ITEM:** Contact with Incident Commander

**DISCUSSION:** Initially, Unified Command was established to direct response operations. As the situation progressed, this was transformed into Incident Command based upon the recommendation of the Prowers County Sheriff. The DEM Regional Field Manager eventually became the Incident Commander (IC). Traditionally, the role of a DEM Regional Field Manager is to be a liaison between the local EOC and DEM. However, when this individual is filling two roles simultaneously, it does create some challenges. What must be their first priority?

**RECOMMENDATION:** When this occurs, the Centennial-based staff of DEM needs to recognize that the first responsibility of this individual must be as the IC. Contacts should be limited to allow this individual to focus on response issues. At one point, four different DEM individuals were calling the IC. Recommend this number be downsized to at most two.



Source: Denver Channel 9



Source Denver Channel 9



Source: Pueblo Chieftain



Source: National Weather Service