



**4117DR Oklahoma Tornadoes
Oklahoma, June 2013
ESF 11 After Action Report**



Incident Summary

On May 18th and 20th 2013, tornadoes cut devastating paths thru the cities of Shawnee and Moore, Oklahoma leaving numerous fatalities and casualties while separating and displacing families and their animals. USDA ESF11 worked collaboratively with the Oklahoma State partner agencies to provide support for animal search & rescue, triage, sheltering, animal carcass management and USDA disaster food assistance. While State and local staff and volunteers accomplished most of the tactical operations, ESF11 agencies focused on supporting those efforts with response coordination, planning and technical assistance within an Incident Command structure.

Two ESF11 Coordinators were deployed to the Joint Field Office in Oklahoma City and to coordinate ESF11 support between Oklahoma State agencies, FEMA and partner agencies. A few of the critical response actions that ESF-11 accomplished were:

- Supporting the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Food and Forestry's (ODAFF) Incident Management Team in Command, General Staff and Units with APHIS ICS trained personnel. This included the planning and production of Incident Action Plans (IAP) for each operational period
- Assisting ODAFF with integrating local, State and Federal and NGO personnel into a cohesive ICS organization.
- Facilitating the Operational Briefings at the beginning of each operational period in order to relay the IAP's to group supervisors and managers.
- Assisting with scheduling volunteer Veterinarians and Technicians to staff the pet triage center.
- Coordinating the animal carcass management group to locate, remove and dispose of animals killed by the tornadoes.
- Completion of a site physical safety analysis at all three pet shelters and provided mitigation recommendations to address any noted physical concerns (e.g. heat, humidity, etc.)
- Assisted ODAFF with coordinating an identification project for animals being sheltered where subsequent, identifiable photos of each pet were uploaded to electronic media to help with the pet/family reunification process.
- Coordinating the review, approval and implementation of several USDA emergency feeding programs by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, including the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, several program waivers and also release of household-sized food commodities for disaster victims.

- Participated in the Mass Feeding Task Force with Red Cross and several other non-governmental organizations.

Lessons Learned

Things that worked well:

- 1) Infusing the USDA APHIS ICS and animal health/care into the ODAFF Incident Command Organization was a huge help to the State and provided efficient, fast assistance that directly benefited the disaster victims. The Coordination between APHIS Veterinary Services staff assisting ODAFF and the ESF11 Coordinator worked extremely well and facilitated planning and real-time situational awareness.
- 2) The USDA Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) support and coordination to their State counterparts to implement the USDA disaster feeding programs. FNS's coordination with the FEMA Mass Care Coordinator also provided critical information for situational awareness.
- 3) Deploying two ESF11 Coordinators was a huge benefit with the Administrative tasks including the daily reports, cost monitoring, meeting attendance et al with these types of fast paced, no-notice incidents.
- 4) Several Equine farms sustained a direct hit from the tornadoes resulting in several hundred animal carcasses scattered among the debris. ODAFF, in cooperation with Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management, coordinated removal and disposal of animal carcasses thru the ODAFF IMT. This was extremely efficient and effective as the majority of animal carcasses were removed within the first two days of the operation.

Things that could use improvement:

- 1) This was an extremely fast-moving response that required quick decisions. Experienced USDA APHIS staff were asked, and agreed, to serve in Command and General Staff positions on the ODAFF IMT. In future responses to Stafford Act Incidents like this, USDA technical experts may be more appropriately integrated under a State IMT's Operations Section in a group or division and have State ICS trained personnel (possibly from the State's Forest Service agency) to serve in the lead Command and General staff positions. This would allow for the same infusion of USDA expertise while the State retains command and control.
- 2) While the current ESF11 Federal Operations Support mission assignment statement of work in FEMA Region VI provides for USDA staff to support State IMT's (in coordination with FEMA), an official request from the State agency, thru the State Emergency Management Agency (State EMA), to FEMA is the official process and should be followed if at all possible. This ensures that State EMA and FEMA are aware of the federal support for situational awareness and resource determinations. This should be reiterated to ESF11 State partner agency points-of-contact.
- 3) ESF11 and APHIS Animal Care need to clarify the role of national NGO liaisons in various kinds of incidents. Focal incidents like a tornado should emphasize coordination close to the incident (JFO, State EOC) and APHIS/ESF 11 should identify efficient mechanisms for integrating such NGO partners at that level.