

CEDAR RAPIDS DERECHO RESPONSE

Presented by Incident Commander / Fire Chief Greg Smith | Tuesday, August 25, 2020, 4:00 p.m.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the sequence of events surrounding the response to the devastating derecho of August 10th. I will give an update of current status, a brief overview of the FEMA National Incident Management System process, followed by a review of the City's response to the disaster.

- ▶ **Current Status**
- ▶ **FEMA National Incident Management System Process**
- ▶ **Timeline of City Response**

CURRENT STATUS

- ▶ Yesterday, there were 228 **9-1-1 calls for service** (including 58 fire calls), the average is around 200; non-emergent calls to CECOM are back to an approximate average of 500 per day — so both emergency and non-emergent calls into CECOM are trending to average.
- ▶ Five **Neighborhood Resource Centers** remain open through at least August 30th and are staffed by both City employees and volunteers. Food, charging stations for medical equipment, information, and more are provided at these sites.
- ▶ We have **cooling stations** open through this week at the US Cellular center that also offers charging capabilities.
- ▶ **Shelter locations** are available for those in need of housing. To access these services, residents are asked to call the United Way at 2-1-1.
- ▶ As of 2 p.m., **119 Alliant customers** have not been connected to electrical power. Alliant's system is able to serve them but they have not been connected because of damage, the need for electrical work on their system, or they are on the list of customers who have called Alliant after making repairs. Alliant has advised us that they are checking in on each of these remaining customers to confirm their status.
- ▶ **Garbage and recycling pick up** are normal schedule this week, Yardy pickup will restart next week.
- ▶ City and DOT crews continue to work on **hauling debris**.
 - DOT resources began assisting the City shortly after the event; based on the requested needs of the City, some were scheduled through August 24th and some for longer durations.
 - A small contingent of DOT staff and equipment (about 25) have been released to assist other communities. A large contingent of DOT resources still remain and are assisting (about 80 pieces of equipment and staff).
 - The initial request for resources was to assist with emergency access and restoration of critical infrastructure (power)
 - As mentioned in yesterday's press conference, as we shift from the initial emergency response to longer term recovery, we have secured the assistance a new contractor who specializes in high-volume debris removal. This contractor mobilized Sunday and Monday and began hauling debris this morning.
- ▶ As of Monday, **23,508 truckloads of curbside tree debris** has been hauled, which is the equivalent of approximately 52,046 tons of debris.
 - The City and contractors have hauled 13,709 truckloads, the IDOT has hauled 8,612, and the National Guard hauled 1,097 loads of debris.
 - The City has completed a first pass for curbside pick up on about 22% of the City roadways.

FEMA NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PROCESS:

The FEMA National Incident Management System is part of a response framework that was adopted as an after action review of the response to 9-11. It was adapted from several incident management systems throughout the country into one comprehensive framework to guide Federal, State, Local and Tribal governments in partnership with non-governmental (non-profit) and private entities, responding to a diverse set of threats, hazards, and events; it is an all-hazards approach to incident management. The guiding principles of NIMS and ICS are flexibility, standardization, and unity of effort. The main components are resource management, command and coordination, and communication and information management.

The City of Cedar Rapids meets the command and coordination components through its city-wide incident management team (IMT), which is comprised of individuals from almost every department in the City. This coordination of effort ensures the command and general staff functions of the IMT can be fulfilled for the duration of the disaster response.

As stated, there is a system for resource management within the National Response Framework. Each political jurisdiction is responsible for emergency response to incidents within its jurisdiction. When the incident is too large for the local resources to mitigate, jurisdictions have mutual aid agreements with area agencies and utilize these agreements to provide resources to the incident. The CRFD does utilize these agreements a handful of times per year. If it overwhelms area resources, each County in Iowa has an Emergency Management Agency, who will activate their Emergency Operations Center, and start to locate resources for the local entity. The EMA is a resource management entity, they do not do any emergency response, their purpose is to locate and obtain resources needed by the local response agencies for use. When the resources are beyond the capabilities of the County EMA, the State Emergency Operations Center is activated to assign State and Federal resources to the local response entity. State and Federal declarations of emergency are the mediums used to activate the State and Federal responses to disasters. There are thresholds that need to be met in order for an emergency to warrant State or Federal designation.

When the local response entity cannot secure the necessary resources, the team requests them from the County EOC. When this does not happen, or if resources are self-deployed or sent at the request of someone outside the IMT, it diminishes the IMT's effectiveness of response and capabilities to protect the safety and health of the community.

In Iowa, Linn County EMA is overseen by the Linn County Emergency Management Commission. The Linn County Emergency Management Commission is comprised of 20 members consisting of a member of the Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff, and the Mayor from each of the incorporated municipalities of the county.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS:

Monday, August 10

As you know, the derecho storm hit at approximately 12:30 p.m. on Monday, August 10. It was apparent that the impact of the storm was larger than what we thought the storm was going to be. Ten minutes into the storm the dispatch center communications went down, Assistant Chief Andy Oleson drove to dispatch to prioritize incidents and assist in the dispatch of CRFD units to the volume of calls we were receiving.

On his way to dispatch, Chief Oleson called me and asked for the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team to be activated as the level of damage quickly showed that the response required was going to be substantial. I immediately called Linn County Emergency Management Director Steve O'Konek to request that the state activate the USAR team per the protocol. That activation was granted by the State.

At 1:20 p.m., Police Captain Jeff Hembera contacted me to discuss establishing the City of Cedar Rapids' Incident Management Team. We established the team, sent an alert, and the team activated at about 3:00 p.m. at the City Incident Command Post (ICP) at Central Fire. All incident management positions were staffed and began formulating the incident action plan for an operational period starting at 1900 hours on August 10.

Contact from the City with Linn County EMA began immediately to discuss the magnitude and impact of the storm. Fire, Police, Public Works, and other City staff were carrying out emergency functions during this time and into the overnight hours. My understanding is that Linn County EMA first requested assistance from outside the area Monday afternoon and evening as a result of these and other contacts throughout the county. The City's Incident Command Post requested end loaders and portable lighting systems to assist with debris removal from critical roadways. The Red Cross opened a shelter at Thomas Park in Marion on Monday to serve all Linn County residents.

On August 10, while all telecommunications were severely compromised and unavailable, the Fire Department responded to 547 calls for service, including 6 structural collapses, 39 structure fires, 243 gas leaks, 92 electrical hazards/live wires down, and 6 traumatic injuries. From 12:30 p.m. to midnight, Cedar Rapids police officers responded to 492 calls for service, including 109 welfare checks, 45 traffic accidents, 18 traumatic injuries, and 32 disturbances. To offer perspective, firefighters typically have 37 calls per day and police have 354 calls for service.

All media stations, internet, and cell service were unavailable and unreliable; therefore, it was decided to use the City's text messaging system and social media to try to get information in the hands of people quickly. Following the initial public safety message released reporting the severe thunderstorm warning for Cedar Rapids, the first public safety release, via social media and formal media releases, was at 1:23 pm, reporting widespread damage throughout the City and asking people to stay home to allow first responders to respond to calls for service and begin to assess damage. Six additional alerts were communicated that afternoon, including continued Police and Fire calls for service and implementation of the curfew.

Tuesday, August 11

On Tuesday morning, the Cedar Rapids Incident Command Post requested these items verbally from Linn County EMA to source from other jurisdictions:

- Shelter
- Food
- MRE (meals ready-to-eat)
- Reunification Points
- Charging centers for medical equipment

Tuesday, I contacted Linn County EMA to request the National Guard to provide local support. As has been described several times since the event, jurisdictions are not permitted to request a specific resource, such as the National Guard. Rather, the need the community has is specifically presented, and EMA, the state, or the federal government determine what resource they have to best meet that need. As stated earlier,

Tuesday, August 11, continued

we requested debris removal equipment (end loaders) to ensure public safety passage on streets in the immediate aftermath, and the State assigned the Department of Transportation for this mission. The DOT remains here working with us today to remove debris that blocks roads and neighborhoods.

Tuesday continued to be extremely busy for public safety personnel responding to calls for service. Firefighters responded to 180 calls, including 5 structure fires, 14 traumatic injuries and hemorrhages, and 43 gas leaks. Police officers responded to 487 calls for service, including 57 welfare checks, 8 traumatic injury calls, 21 traffic accidents, and 29 disturbances. This was in addition to providing traffic control at major intersections throughout the city.

Wednesday, August 12

On Wednesday, August 12, at the request of the City Manager, the Deputy City Manager and I went to Linn County EMA to discuss having the National Guard activate in Cedar Rapids.

The Cedar Rapids City Council and City Manager again expressed a desire to see the National Guard activate in Cedar Rapids and this message was strongly conveyed to Linn County EMA. Damage assessments were being conducted across the entire city by firefighters and building officials. These damage assessments trigger resources to the community from State and Federal officials. On this day several formal technical requests were made of Linn County EMA, including additional generators and traffic signs.

Humanitarian aid was requested — Cedar Rapids provided Linn County EMA with areas of the City that were requesting food, the need for charging stations for medical equipment, and that shelters located in Cedar Rapids were desperately needed. By this time, Red Cross was actively working on standing up shelters in small towns surrounding Cedar Rapids, where damage to buildings had been assessed and in most cases generators were in place or could quickly be deployed.

By Wednesday we established regularly scheduled daily interviews with WMT and KZIA radio stations to relay more information to citizens. These have continued daily since, also adding KCJJ. Also Wednesday, a press release was sent, information was shared on the City's website, social media, and text alerts, and City officials conducted one-on-one interviews with the Gazette, KGAN, KCRG and the Associated Press, along with multiple radio stations throughout the day. A printed flyer was developed and distributed at local grocery stores and home improvement stores to attempt to address the widespread loss of technology.

Thursday, August 13

The National Guard was formally deployed and began working with Cedar Rapids and surrounding communities to identify the best use of their assistance. In Cedar Rapids, the most critical mission suitable for the Guard was identified as aiding in the restoration of electrical power across the community (consistent with their critical infrastructure restoration mission allowance). Most of their resources were deployed with Alliant Energy and their partners to clear downed lines that blocked roads and prevented public safety transportation.

Additionally, in an effort to support humanitarian efforts that are traditionally provided by regional and national non-profits such as Red Cross and Salvation Army, Cedar Rapids officials went to Linn County EMA on Thursday afternoon to bolster the efforts of Linn Area Partners Active in Disaster (LAP-AID). LAP-AID is a coalition of organizations who seek to increase resilience and minimize the impact of emergencies and disasters. More than 30 organizations and 14 teams contribute to LAP-AID. Each team brings a new perspective and skill to make the collaboration more effective. United Way of East Central Iowa provides leadership to several teams that make up LAP-AID, this service is activated through Linn County Emergency Management Agency during a disaster. Teams represented under the LAP-AID umbrella include disaster

Thursday, August 13, continued

volunteer coordination, medical services, and older adult services. We were more than disappointed that LAP-AID had not been activated and working earlier.

Daily news conferences began Thursday, August 13. This was in addition to other communications channels that had been established.

Friday - Sunday, August 14-16

Operational priorities for the weekend were life safety, as PD and Fire continued to respond to higher than normal call volumes, continued street clearing and debris removal, and traffic signal and sign repair and replacement. Debris removal focused on prioritizing clearing areas for access for power restoration crews.

Because of challenges in finding a suitable shelter, the City secured the Veteran's Memorial Coliseum for the Red Cross, which was opened and operated by them beginning Friday night, August 14. This resource provided a safe place for residents displaced by the storm, and especially vulnerable populations that have medical needs.

Thousands of emergency meals were served by various non-profits throughout the community over the weekend and continuing into the following several days.

Monday, August 17

The City of Cedar Rapids opened five Neighborhood Resource Centers across the community on Monday morning, August 17, and continue operating today. These centers created hubs of resources – ice, food, water, and connections with all the non-profits who had galvanized to provide a response to the storm's damage. The US Cellular Arena was opened to all citizens to charge their phones and use Internet services provided there, and switched to become a cooling center as needed. These centers will continue operations through Sunday, August 30 to provide walk-up assistance throughout Cedar Rapids.

CURRENT PRIORITIES:

- Emergency calls for service continue, both PD and Fire are trending toward average call volumes
- Public Works continues to repair traffic signals and signs as well as manage debris management.
- The City and its partners are working on re-housing families to intermediate solutions until long-term housing needs are met, focusing on uninsured and insurance gap needs.
- The City is moving from the emergency response portion of the incident to the recovery phase. Priorities for early stages of the recovery phase are intermediate housing, debris removal from neighborhoods, and continuing to identify and seek resources to meet unmet needs in the community.

