



FEMA

## Lessons Learned Information Sharing

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### PRACTICE NOTE

## Emergency Public Information: Greensburg, Kansas, Tornado Responders' Use of the Travelers' Information Station

### PRACTICE

Emergency personnel responding to a tornado in Greensburg, Kansas, used a travelers' information station (TIS) to communicate with residents dispersed by the incident. Personnel tuned transmitters to 1610 AM to broadcast critical information to disaster victims.

### DESCRIPTION

A series of tornadoes battered southwest Kansas in early May 2007. On the evening of Friday, May 4, 2007, a 1.7-mile-wide F5 super cell tornado hit Greensburg, Kansas, with winds in excess of 200 miles per hour. The tornado devastated 95% of Greensburg, causing 10 fatalities and massive destruction to public and private property. Federal, state, and local governmental and non-governmental entities worked together to coordinate response and recovery efforts. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VII established a Joint Field Office (JFO) in Wichita, KS, and its staff worked closely with state and local agencies throughout the response and recovery efforts.

Greensburg is located in Kiowa County in south-central Kansas. It has a population of approximately 1,500. FEMA Region VII is headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri, and is responsible for Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

The lack of housing after the tornado forced Greensburg residents to disperse to other states and cities across the region. Emergency response and recovery personnel faced challenges in notifying the public of critical information such as shelter locations and registration procedures for FEMA disaster assistance. The Federal Communications Commission granted response and recovery personnel a 6-month waiver to use the local TIS frequency (1610 AM). FEMA purchased six radio transmitters, tuned them to 1610am, and placed them in localities surrounding Greensburg.

The Federal Communications Commission authorized [TIS](#) for the purpose of providing useful noncommercial information to the traveling public by agencies of state and local governments.

A public information officer managed daily broadcasts that consisted of prerecorded messages and occasional special announcements from FEMA. Various recovery and response personnel delivered the daily announcements that covered topics such as upcoming public meetings, disaster assistance registration, and pet information. The use of TIS radio transmitters enabled responders to communicate effectively with disaster victims who had traveled outside of the immediate Greensburg area. FEMA found this method so

successful that it re-deployed the radios to southeast Kansas in July 2007 during the extensive flooding that occurred in the area.

#### **CITATION**

Lessons Learned Information Sharing. *The Federal Emergency Management Agency Response to the Greensburg, Kansas, May 4, 2007, Tornado After-Action Report*. 12 Dec 2008.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=39054>

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