



INNOVATIVE PRACTICE

Oklahoma's Regional Response System

October 14, 2014

SUMMARY

Oklahoma created the Regional Response System (RRS) – a collection of specialized units and equipment – to provide all-hazards response throughout the state within two hours of an incident. RRS units have responded to dozens of incidents, including the May 20, 2013 tornado near Oklahoma City.

DESCRIPTION

Oklahoma has a diverse risk profile, geographically dispersed population, and limited local emergency management resources. Nationally the state ranks 3rd in the number of Federal disaster declarations, 50th in state emergency management appropriations, and 49th in number of full-time emergency managers. To address these challenges, the Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security (OKOHS) created a statewide system of specialized units capable of responding to chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear, and explosive incidents; agriculture emergencies; technical rescue incidents; and natural disasters. RRS unites are strategically placed throughout Oklahoma so they can respond to incidents in any area of the state – even the most rural regions – within two hours. Local governments provide personnel and maintain the equipment, and OKOHS manages RRS deployments based on the size of the incident and the capabilities required. RRS all-hazards unites include bombs squads, Technical Rescue Teams, communications unites, and Regional Emergency Medical Services System (REMSS) unites. In addition, OKOHS provides RRS personnel specialized response training for their discipline.

When an EF 5 tornado struck communities in Newcastle, Oklahoma City, and Moore on May 20, 2013, the state dispatched RRS assets – including the Technical Rescue Teams, communications assets, and REMSS unites – to aid response and recovery operations. Five Technical Rescue Teams searched two schools (Briarwood and Plaza Towers Elementary) that the tornado hit while class was in session. The Communications Leader



Urban Search and Rescue team members search house for survivors in Moore, Oklahoma (Source: FEMA Photo Library)

RRS Capabilities	
▪ Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosives	▪ Logistics
▪ Technical Rescue	▪ Decontamination
▪ Communications	▪ Bomb Squads
▪ Urban Search & Rescue	▪ Regional Emergency Medical Services System
	▪ Agriculture Response

RRS is comprised of 117 units with nine distinct capabilities.

established an incident communications plan to repair communications breakdowns caused by many agencies communicating with incident command over multiple frequencies.

Oklahoma activated 33 REMSS teams on the afternoon of May 20, which allowed the units to respond immediately after the tornado touched down in the Oklahoma City metropolitan region. A REMSS unit arrived on-scene at the destroyed Moore Medical Center 10 minutes after the tornado passed through the area and established response operations at the nearby Warren Theater. During the eight-hour response operation, REMSS units also provided generator power to the medical station, lighting for citizens and responders in the area, and medical supplies for patient treatment and transportation.

INVESTMENT INFORMATION

Oklahoma invested more than \$35 million in homeland security grant funds in equipment for 117 response units and delivered over 1,500 training courses to more than 27,000 responders. RRS is funded by the State Homeland Security Grant Program, Urban Areas Security Initiative, Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Grant Program, and Metropolitan Medical Response System Grant Program.

REFERENCES

[Oklahoma Regional Response System](#)

[Urban Search and Rescue Team Photograph](#)

ABOUT THE LESSONS LEARNED INFORMATION SHARING PROGRAM

The LLIS program develops and disseminates lessons learned, trend analyses, case studies, and innovative ideas to improve preparedness for the emergency management and homeland security communities. These documents, produced through research and analysis by the LLIS team, support whole community learning and continuous improvement.

DISCLAIMER *The Lessons Learned Information Sharing Program is a Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency's resource for lessons learned and innovative ideas for the emergency management and homeland security communities. The content of the documents is for informational purposes only, without warranty, endorsement, or guarantee of any kind, and does not represent the official positions of the Department of Homeland Security. For more information please email fema-lessonslearned@fema.dhs.gov.*