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## LESSON LEARNED

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### Alabama Long-Term Community Recovery Task Force

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#### SUMMARY

Following the April 2011 storms that brought widespread damage to Alabama, a newly created Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) Task Force established partnerships among public, private, and non-profit sectors. These partnerships successfully provided resources, services, and personnel to help with four identified areas for community recovery.

#### DESCRIPTION

On April 27, 2011, a storm system struck Alabama causing widespread damage and claiming the lives of 252 people. Three successive waves of tornadoes wreaked havoc on rural and urban communities alike, including two of the most powerful tornadoes ever recorded in Alabama. The American Red Cross estimated that the storms destroyed 23,553 homes and caused \$1.1 billion in property damage. The April storms compounded Alabama's existing housing shortage.



Residents begin cleanup after a deadly April tornado destroyed almost all homes in a several block area of the Pratt City community in Alabama. (Source: FEMA Photo Library; <http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/images/58543>)

#### Creation of the Long-Term Community Recovery Task Force

In the aftermath of the storms, Alabama's governor established the Alabama LTCR Task Force under the Alabama Department for Economic and Community Affairs. Prior to the Task Force, local communities struggled to coordinate with—and gain access to—state and private sector resources. The goal of this new Task Force was to bring cohesion to the recovery efforts already underway, by addressing four areas of community recovery:

- Housing
- Economic Recovery
- Infrastructure
- Community Planning and Capacity Building

#### Task Force Support to Storm-Affected Citizens

During recovery, the LTCR Task Force established itself as the mediator between organized private/public groups and the community. The LTCR Task Force provided a central location for organizations and companies to meet, coordinate housing resources, and quickly disseminate those resources throughout the community. Community groups mobilized roughly 7,000 volunteers to provide assistance during the initial recovery phase.

The LTCR Task Force also approached partner organizations and matched them with heavily impacted communities. In response to this outreach, organizations such as the Alabama Family Housing Association, Habitat for Humanity, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and SocialServe contributed funds, labor, and/or technological tools to assist the housing recovery. The University of Alabama and Auburn University also played key roles in providing resources to communities that did not have the capacity to address certain facets of recovery such as community planning, architecture, and engineering. In addition, the Task Force supported local officials in providing financial incentives for housing reconstruction by helping them secure grants and donations from Federal, non-profit, and private sources. This helped revitalize the hardest hit communities by making housing in the impacted areas more affordable for displaced individuals and ensuring the repopulation of abandoned neighborhoods.

#### **Whole Community Members Participating in the LTCR Task Force**

The following organizations participated in the task force that responded to the April 2011 storms in Alabama:

- Faith-based organizations
- The Walker Community Foundation
- Universities
- SocialServe
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- America Responds with Love
- The Alabama Family Housing Association
- Insurance Associations

The LTCR Task Force aided Alabama's recovery from historic storms and continues to assist in long-term planning to help future survivors.

#### **REFERENCES**

Rocky Milliman, Alabama State Disaster Recovery Coordinator [retired]. Personal Interview. January 21, 2015.

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