

## Steve Eddy, City Manager, Moore, Oklahoma – F5 Tornado, May 20, 2013

Steve Eddy was appointed City Manager of Moore in December 1999. He has been the City's lead administrator through recovery efforts after three devastating tornadoes – an F5 tornado on May 3, 1999, an F4 tornado on May 8, 2003, and the most recent storm on May 20, 2013, which produced an EF5 tornado that devastated Moore. In addition there have been several smaller tornadic events that have affected the community. The May 20, 2013 tornado destroyed the City's hospital, numerous businesses, and several City parks. Over 1,100 homes were destroyed and several hundred more had significant damage. Sadly, one elementary school in Moore was destroyed and seven children lost their lives at Plaza Towers Elementary that day. In total, 25 people were killed in Moore and many more were injured.

To date, most of the businesses that were destroyed have been rebuilt and the parks have largely been restored. Of particular note, the hospital celebrated the grand opening of its beautiful new facility on May 7, 2016. Approximately 750 of the homes that were destroyed have been rebuilt, many being larger than before. Almost 5,000 new individual storm shelters have been installed since the storm, bringing the total number to over 7,500 individual shelters in town. The City received about \$13.5M from FEMA for recovery and debris removal. The City also received an allocation of \$53.9M in Disaster Recovery Funds from HUD to assist in the recovery. The people of Moore are, in a word, resilient, but we are also wary. Each storm season brings about new fears and anxieties as we watch the skies.

### **Top Three Takeaways:**

1. **The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow** – In the immediate aftermath of any major storm event, there are strong feelings of hopelessness, desperation, despair, fear, and depression, to name a few. As hard as it is to understand or accept, recovery is a long and difficult process and must go on. Many questions about “why” are asked but never answered. Despite these things, our community has become stronger after each event. Fear has been replaced with resiliency and determination, old has been replaced with new, and hopelessness has been replaced with a renewed sense of community spirit.
2. **Municipal/County Officials Need To Be Prepared** – The shock of a major storm event can be overwhelming. Dealing with the confusing and complicated labyrinth of rules and regulations in a federally declared disaster can be frustrating and burdensome. However, you must move forward with determination to begin the cleanup and recovery process. Not having at least a basic understanding of how FEMA works will put you behind the curve and could jeopardize funding reimbursements. The primary thing that cities can do is have a pre-bid contract for debris removal which meets FEMA standards and has been publicly bid following State and local laws and policies. In my experience, being able to begin debris removal as soon as possible and removing it as quickly as possible will go a long way towards helping your community regain a semblance of normalcy and expedite the recovery process.
3. **Stay Calm (at least publicly)** – While City leaders and officials should present a strong, positive, and encouraging face to their citizens, they should also be prepared to deal with the very stressful situation at hand. This would include having a good support network, asking for help and advice from those who have been through similar events before, and having regular debriefing sessions. We can't lead our communities through the devastation if we don't have an adequate support system in place to deal with any internal struggles that we may have. This may come from the faith based community or from mental health providers. It would not be possible to meet the demands placed on us without knowing that others “have our back”.

## Kimberly Neiman, Clerk/Treasurer, Village of Pilger, NE EF4 Tornado June 6, 2014

Kimberly Neiman has been the Clerk/Treasurer since March of 1998, and has experienced a number of significant disasters over the years including high winds on June 23, 2003, snow storms on December 22, 2009, heavy rains/snow melt on March 3-6, 2010, and heavy rains on June 2, 2010. None of these remotely prepared her for the most recent disaster, an EF4 tornado on June 6, 2014. Pilger was a town of 352 at the time of the tornado. After the tornado the population was 160. At this time there are 212 residents. The June 6 tornado took two lives, destroyed 73 homes and all of Pilger's businesses, which was 75% of the Village of Pilger.

Neiman was front and center at the initial response serving as part of a three jurisdiction unified command. She has been the point of contact for FEMA/NEMA since the start and continues to be heavily involved during the recovery and ongoing rebuilding process. Her home, office, and church were all destroyed in the tornado. Despite her personal losses, she continues to push past her own problems to help her community.

### Top Three Takeaways (plus a bonus section!):

1. **Learn to accept assistance of any kind** - Even if you have never accepted help before, accept it now.
2. **Remember that residents/businesses are dealing with what is like a "death" of their home or livelihood** - They will go through many different stages of emotions and reactions to the disaster. The reality is that they will seek you out to give voice to their emotions – sometimes nicely or more often not so nicely. After speaking with people, give yourself a "time-out" to take a deep breath – even if you retreat to the restroom for a few minutes.
3. **Learn early who the "go-to" person is with your state emergency management and with FEMA**  
- Ask questions, be vocal, and hold your ground.
4. Realities:
  - You will become overwhelmed.
  - Your "normal" workload will not cease to exist during recovery.
  - Residents will expect that you have all the answers.
  - When most of the visible destruction disappears, people will think your life/work is back to normal.
  - While most will be able to not constantly think or deal with the disaster, you will be dealing with the disaster every day.
5. You must remember to take care of your personal life - not just everyone else's or your town's issues.
6. Find "good" ways to release stress: walking, talking, exercising, reading anything that is not disaster related, spending time with family and friends.
7. Stay away from excessive drinking, caffeine, smoking, and stress eating!
8. It is ok to say "I don't know" or "I don't understand" or "I need help".

**Linda Langston Linn County, IA (Cedar Rapids) Historical Flooding June 13, 2008**

During the June 2008 floods, Linda Langston was serving as the Chair of the Linn County Board of Supervisors. She has been in office for five and a half years. With an annual budget of just over \$100 million, the county kept a 25% reserve cash fund. This, and the county’s Triple A bond rating, were significantly instrumental in recovery. In 2007, Langston attended the Kennedy School of Government program for State and Local Officials. The learning and connections fostered in the class assisted in finding resources and relationships that helped sustain the flood response and recovery. Langston’s involvement in National Association of Counties (NACo) leadership also led to outreach among other elected officials around the nation. Ultimately, the efforts by Linn County and Langston’s work led to involvement with the National Academy of Sciences and others advancing the concept of resilience.

After heavy spring rains, the Cedar River reached flood stage (12 feet) on June 2. By June 13, the flood waters crested at 31.2 feet – with water moving beyond the 100 hundred and 500 year levels into areas that had never seen flooding. Almost 10 square miles of the downtown and surrounding housing were flooded. Over 25,000 people were evacuated, with 18,000 residents and 5,000 homes impacted in Cedar Rapids. Also hit was the small town of Palo with 75% of the town evacuated and under water. The nearby nuclear power plant came within hours of shutting down completely.

The City Hall, County Courthouse and Jail were all evacuated – including almost 400 inmates. These buildings remained out of commission from seven months to four years. 310 public facilities were impacted, including the Federal Courthouse, relocated until a new facility was built five years later. Both downtown hospitals were threatened and one evacuated. Many key cultural and historic buildings, museums, not-for-profit and social service agencies were significantly impacted, the local library was moved and rebuilt, and the county moved through three locations in four years. Many churches were impacted such that some citizens were impacted at their homes, their jobs and their churches.

The Cedar Rapids water system nearly shut down, but was rescued by more than 1,000 citizens responding in driving rain and lightning to a TV call for aid to sandbag the remaining functioning well. Much of the downtown operated on steam for energy. The system was crippled and eventually replaced by gas boilers. The total number of businesses impacted directly or indirectly were 1,281 with businesses lost – 131, businesses reopened - 671 and businesses reopened outside of the flooded area - 143. Number of jobs lost were 1,865 of which 1,324 were permanent.

Three of four bridges were underwater, with I 380 the only remaining way for people to get across town. It was reduced to two lanes to allow critical and emergency traffic to pass. One railroad bridge collapsed, fully loaded with train cars in order to stabilize the bridge. All the houseboats on the Cedar River were unmoored and destroyed, floating into downstream bridges.

Ultimately no lives were lost – which was so important – however, since Hurricane Gustav hit shortly after the flooding, the lack of deaths led to a quick refocus of public attention to another part of the country.

**Linn County impacts**

\$2 million damage to county roads  
\$15 million in damage to county residential properties  
\$60 million damage to county facilities

**Palo impacts**

\$10 million to city infrastructure  
\$22 million to 410 city homes  
\$1.75 million in damage to city businesses

**Cedar Rapids School’s impacts**

\$33.5 million in damage to buildings

### Linda Langston - Top three takeaways:

1. **Self-care is important** – Disaster response and recovery are for the long haul. Many people suffer from PTSD without knowing it. Make sure you take time off, make sure you get sleep – recognize when you aren't sleeping well it is likely a result of the disaster response.
2. **Understand your political reality** – Know your networks and use them. Relationships are important – and use the relationships that are local and at a distance. There are times when you need someone to listen to things you might not want to say locally – that's what your networks that are far away are for. It is OK to ask for help.
3. **Understand your abilities** – Some people operate in a crisis better than others. Be willing to leverage your authority when necessary and know when you have to reach beyond your authority and when you have to leverage relationships to broaden the scope of your authority.

### Dr. C.J. Huff, Former Superintendent of Joplin Schools EF5 Tornado, May 22, 2011

Dr. Huff was the superintendent of schools in Joplin from July 1, 2008 until June 30, 2015. On May 22, 2011 an EF-5 tornado ripped through the heart of Joplin Missouri at 5:41 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon, shortly following graduation ceremonies that ended at 5 p.m. In addition to being the most costly tornado in U.S. history, the storm tragically took the lives of 161 people including seven of his students and a staff member. The devastation to the school district was substantial. In total, ten school buildings sustained damage of which six were destroyed. Although the remaining nine days of school were cancelled, Joplin Schools promised to reopen school as scheduled on August 17, 2011. The community rallied to the cause and made that happen. With a deliberately strategic and long-term view, five years later, all of the schools have been rebuilt around a 21st Century vision of teaching and learning. In the fall of 2015 the U.S. Department of Education recognized Joplin Schools as one of nine "Future Ready" schools in the nation.

### Top Three Takeaways:

1. **Vision Matters** - Even in a crisis situation, community leadership has to project a vision of the future to help people in the community see beyond the challenges of today and give them hope for tomorrow.
2. **Pre-Need Relationships Matter** - The relationships we had in place prior to the storm were critical to our immediate and long term recovery efforts. We weren't trading business cards at the EOC. We knew each other well.
3. **People Matter** - Stay focused on taking care of people first. Buildings can be rebuilt, but it will be the people of the community that make recovery happen. And as you take care of others, there should be a plan on how the community is going to take care of its leaders. Recovery is a marathon that starts out at a sprint pace. If you aren't taking care of yourself you can't take care of anyone else.