



NEWS RELEASE

STATE OF NEBRASKA

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EF4 Tornado Confirmed in Pilger

Having declared a state of emergency, Governor Dave Heineman toured the areas hardest hit today, along with Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, Deputy Adjutant General Rick Dahlman and NEMA preparedness section manager Nikki Weber.

“When you walk through the town, there is shock and disbelief among the citizens of Pilger. They are resilient, but they are in shock,” Gov. Heineman said. “There is total destruction of homes, businesses and the grain elevator. It’s not going to hit them fully for several days.” Some photos from his tour are attached and more can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/nema.page>.

Sheriff Mike Unger said 45 to 50 homes were destroyed in Pilger. There is one fatality confirmed in Pilger and one in Cuming County. The two fatalities from yesterday’s storms are the first tornado deaths in 10 years. There were 10 to 12 homes destroyed in Dixon County.

Faith Regional Medical Center in Norfolk treated 17 patients; 13 were treated and released, three remain hospitalized in Norfolk and one was transferred to an Omaha hospital. Providence Medical Center in Wayne treated and released three patients, all from the Pilger area.

National Weather Service

Regarding the twin tornadoes from yesterday’s storm, Brian Smith, meteorologist with the NWS in Valley said the larger tornado which went through Pilger was an EF4 and the parallel tornado was an EF2. “You certainly don’t see that very often. It was the first time I’ve seen that in Nebraska and I’ve been here for 20 years,” Smith said.

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

A NEMA field team and the NEMA mobile operations center arrived in Pilger on Tuesday morning to work with local emergency management staff on recovery efforts.

Red Cross

The Wisner shelter (housed in the Wisner-Pilger Jr./Sr. High) will remain open until further notice.

Red Cross Volunteers

Gov. Dave Heineman said, “I know how Nebraskans think. They want to help. The desire of so many Nebraskans to help their neighbors in this difficult time is greatly appreciated.” According

to Susan Epps, disaster program manager for the Red Cross, volunteers may arrive at the Wisner-Pilger Jr./Sr. High (801 18th Street) on the west edge of Wisner at 7 a.m. on Wednesday. Volunteers will be bused in to Pilger and separated into groups to perform debris removal. Volunteers must have a photo ID and are encouraged to wear sturdy work shoes, long pants, hats, work gloves, safety glasses and bring insect repellent and sunscreen (lunch will be provided). Volunteers who arrive directly in Pilger will not be allowed to enter the town.

There is nowhere to hold donations of goods at this time. Financial donations can be made at any Midwest Bank branch, referencing the Pilger disaster.

Nebraska National Guard

Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman ordered 20 Nebraska National Guardsmen to state active duty following last evening's severe storms in northeastern Nebraska.

The Guardsmen, who are primarily from 189th Transportation Company based in Wayne and Norfolk, and five vehicles are being mobilized to support the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency as the agency works with local and county incident commanders and emergency management officials to determine the areas of greatest need. The Guardsmen will muster at the Wayne Army National Guard readiness center tomorrow morning before deploying to locations as determined by the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

Additionally, three Nebraska Army National Guard aviators were called to state active duty to provide support to Governor Heineman who flew to Pilger, Neb., and the surrounding area to survey damage caused by last evening's storm.

Federal Emergency Management Agency – Region VII

“On behalf of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), I would like to express our deepest condolences to the families of those who were killed and injured as a result of several tornadoes, severe winds and large hail that struck central and eastern portions of Nebraska yesterday,” said regional administrator Beth Freeman. “Also, I would like to commend the ongoing work of local and state first responders for the measures taken in the aftermath of these storms to protect lives and provide immediate assistance during this difficult time. FEMA has remained in constant contact with officials at the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) since the severe weather hit. We encourage residents to continue following the instructions of local officials who are still working to save lives and property in the impacted areas.”

Nebraska State Fire Marshal

State Fire Marshal, Jim Heine, said his office responded to 12 leaking propane tanks last night. Heine noted, with daytime heat, his staff would continue to monitor the tanks in the area for additional problems. Fire Marshal staff were onsite performing damage assessment of commercial and residential structures.

Nebraska Department of Agriculture

Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) Director Greg Ibach is encouraging producers who suffered livestock losses due to yesterday's tornado to keep detailed records documenting those losses as they continue to work to address storm damage.

Documentation could include third-party verification of the loss, such as a statement from a veterinarian or county extension agent, photographs, or receipts for expenses associated with carcass removal / disposal.

Producers are encouraged to contact their local Farm Service Agency to determine what type of documentation might best fit their circumstances. Federal programs such as the Livestock Indemnity Program are available for qualified producers.

NDA has sent a Livestock Emergency Disease Response System (LEDRS) trailer with supplies to the affected area. NDA staff members are helping to coordinate relief efforts from the State Emergency Operations Center and working with sister state agencies such as the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to assure the state is addressing producer needs. NDA will be on-site Wednesday assessing the extent of damage at area feedlots.

Ibach also encourages individuals that have sustained crop damage in recent weeks to share that information with their local Farm Service Agency as well for any additional federal programs that might be available.

Counselors are available to those individuals that are feeling stressed and overwhelmed by the circumstances. Those individuals are encouraged to call the Rural Response Hotline at 800-464-0258.

Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality

Jay Ringenberg, deputy director of DEQ, said, "The loss to livestock is significant, with hundreds of cattle and poultry killed by the storms." Producers who need assistance with livestock disposal may contact DEQ at 402-471-7436. DEQ will begin contacting individual producers Wednesday.

Nebraska Department of Roads

Highway 15 is closed from Hwy 275 (north of Pilger) to Hwy 32 (south of Pilger). This highway will most likely remain closed through June 18 for storm response activity. US Highway 275 is open.

Nebraska State Patrol

The Nebraska State Patrol Mobile Command Post is in Pilger. Troopers were onsite overnight providing security and will continue to assist with resources and assets as needed.

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

If people have public health-related questions, they can contact their local health department. Here's a link to a list of local health departments in the state:

<http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Documents/contacts.pdf>

Pilger's water supply lost power and pressure when Pilger was hit. The communities of Wisner, Madison and Norfolk have sent water crews to help repair service and a field representative from DHHS is at the scene. Water leaks have been repaired and the system has been flushed out. The water is clear and residual disinfectant is sufficient and a "Boil Water" advisory has been issued and will stay in effect until further notice. Testing for contaminants will be conducted by the DHHS Environmental Health Laboratory.

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