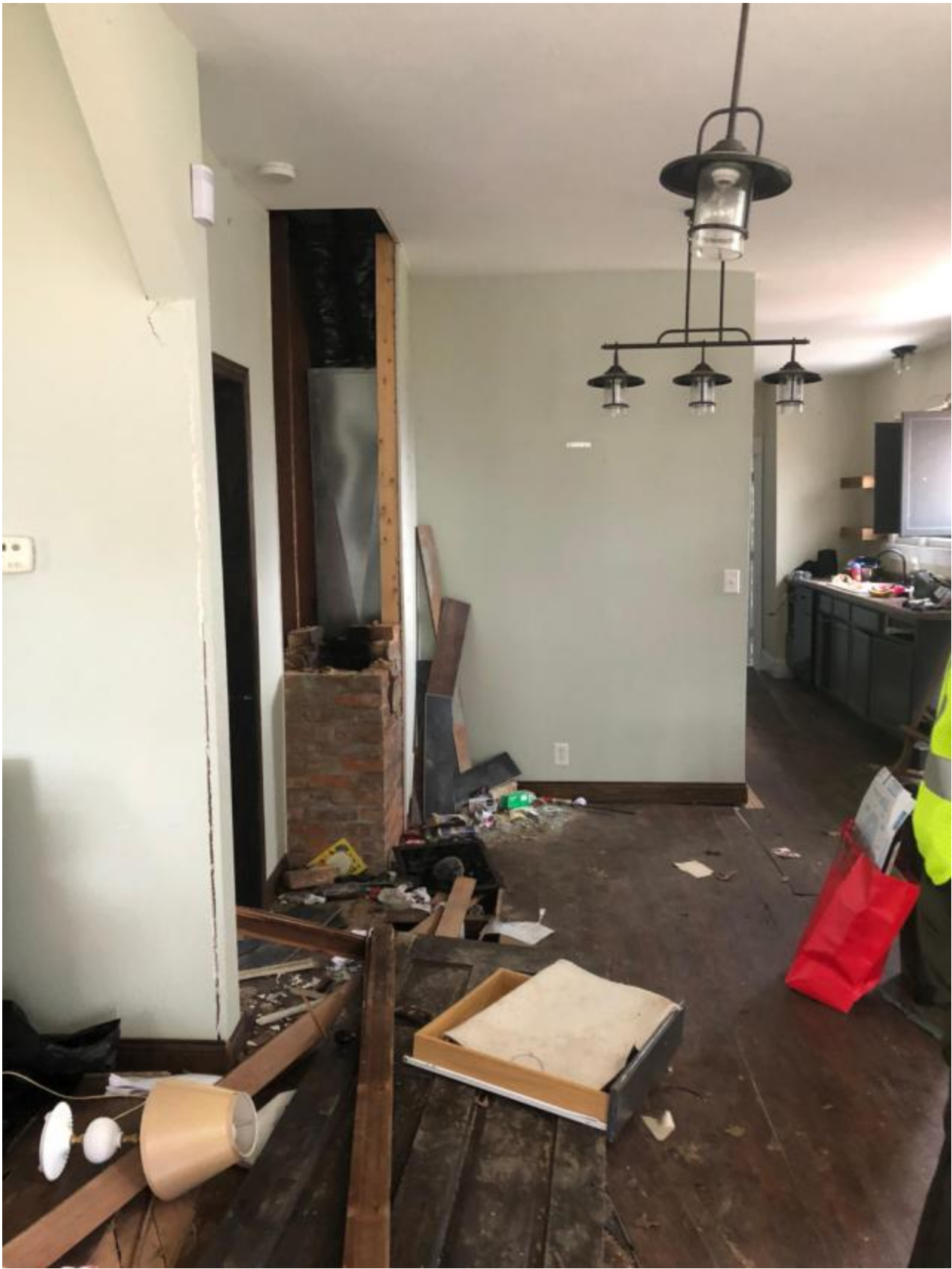


MASS DESTRUCTION: Tight-knit Taylorville hangs on to hope, despite widespread damage after EF-3 tornado

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
December 4 2018 2:11 PM









SEE 108-PICTURE PHOTO GALLERY BY CHRIS RHODES:

CONTENT DIRECTOR'S NOTE: Photojournalist Chris Rhodes did a tour of Taylorville on Monday and returned with the images that follow and descriptions from the tornado damage.

TAYLORVILLE - The City of Taylorville was devastated by the recent tornado Saturday, with much of the community damaged in one form or another. However, led by a determined mayor, the community is now working to rebuild and assist one another.

The tornado struck the city of 11,000 at 5:15 p.m. and was rated an EF-3. Fire departments from Christian County, including Assumption, Edinburg, Midland, Moweaqua, Mt. Auburn, Morrisonville, Owaneco, Pana and Nokomis from Montgomery County. Two search and rescue teams from the Mutual Aid Box Alarm Organization responded to assist and were not released until 1 a.m. Sunday.

The city was broken down into two geographical areas and rescue groups were broken down into task forces. These task forces worked through the night checking for people who could have been trapped in residences and also looked for downed power lines or

gas leaks. Ameren was given any gas leaks that were uncovered. Photographs and video from Taylorville showed several houses flattened, with residents wading into debris to salvage what they could. Some homes remained standing but with gaping holes in the roofs or with no roofs at all.

A common thread with people on Monday in Taylorville was the quote: “We feel lucky to be alive.” This statement was said over and over to reporters at the scene. Many of the residents were still in the state of shock and did not want talk.

Taylorville Mayor Bruce Barry said there was a Christmas Parade in Taylorville slated for 5:15 p.m. Saturday and it thankfully was cancelled at 4:15 p.m. or it could have devastating to those in attendance.

“The good Lord was looking out for us,” Barry, a devout Catholic, said in an interview about the quick decision to cancel the annual parade. “Everything happened so quickly. The National Weather Service said the tornado stayed on the ground for basically a half hour doing damage. We have never had a tornado with this kind of destruction here. We had a tornado here in 1986, but I wasn’t living here then.”

Injury Status

Two patients were transferred to Springfield after sustaining injuries in the tornado, the City of Taylorville said in a release. A citizen cleaning debris also suffered a cardiac event and was taken to Taylorville Memorial Hospital after being revived by the Taylorville Fire Department Paramedics. He was later transferred to Springfield.

Utility Status

Ameren resources are reporting that several power poles in the Taylorville area have been destroyed. The emergency management agency is working with Ameren to determine the areas without power. Ameren reports as of 9 a.m. Dec. 3, 313 customers were still without power. Eighty poles have been replaced, Ameren said.

Damage Assessment

Christian County Emergency Management Agency is working with the Illinois Emergency Services Management Association to determine damage assessment. As of 7 a.m. Monday, it was revealed that 66 structures have major damage in Taylorville, 34 structures are destroyed and 506 structures are damaged, but inhabitable.



Debris Clearing

Residents are advised to be careful as they clear debris as there may be downed power lines in the debris. Debris should be segregated into woody debris, which is tree limbs, shrubs, etc., and construction and demolition debris. The City of Taylorville said the woody debris will be collected first and should be moved curbside. Team Rubicon and the Baptist Response Group are at the scene collecting debris. Team Rubicon is a veteran led disaster response organization that works in conjunction with state and local authorities. The Southern Baptist Response Team is also on site and are presently based in the agriculture building at the fairgrounds. The Lutheran Ministries Early Response team is also present, working.

At least 23 tornado touchdowns on Saturday have been confirmed in Illinois, said Dan Smith, a meteorologist with the weather service's Lincoln, Illinois, office. That was the most tornadoes in Illinois during a December storm since a Dec. 18-19, 1957, outbreak produced 21, Smith said Monday afternoon.

The weather service sent crews Sunday to survey the hardest-hit areas in Illinois, which included Taylorville, 25 miles (40 kilometers) southeast of Springfield. A survey showed that storm produced estimated peak winds of 155 mph (249 kilometers per hour).

Taylorville Police Department and Christian County Sheriff's Office have implemented a 9 p.m. curfew for areas affected by the tornado. Monetary donations are preferred as a way of assisting.

The official Facebook page for information about the response and recovery activities is [Christian County Severe Weather and Disaster Recovery](#).

For additional information, contact Joe Gasparich, Montgomery County EMA or Mike Crews, Christian County Emergency Management Agency Coordinator.

Taylorville Mayor Barry said right now the residents and the city is in need of monetary donations to help with the rebuilding. The mayor said any contributions can be mailed to the City of Taylorville, 115 N. Main St., Taylorville, IL., 62568. He encouraged Riverbender.com/Edglentoday.com to contact back in two weeks to see what specific needs at that point they would requesting. He said volunteers are needed to help with cleanup. Barry said the best time to come would be the weekend of Dec. 15-16 for cleanup as things are still being assessed.







[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)