

Area Red Cross Poised To Help: Devastating Nashville Tornado Topples 40 Buildings, 22 Reported Dead

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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NASHVILLE, TENN. - The American Red Cross office in St. Louis is awaiting assessment of the damage and needs after tornadoes ripped through Tennessee early Tuesday. At least 40 buildings collapsed and 22 people have been reported dead after the twisters struck.

Sharon Watson, the American Red Cross Chief Communications Officer for Missouri, Arkansas and the Metro Illinois area, said the main thing the organization is asking now is to contribute to disaster relief on the Red Cross site at redcross.org. She said soon, what is needed in the Nashville will be addressed and if there will be local deployment of resources, but Red Cross members and others are on the ground. The Red Cross should release more info by Wednesday.

Any area church or civic organization that is collecting items for the Nashville victims' needs, please e-mail news@riverbender.com. Also text or contact 618-623-5930 with any pertinent information if you prefer that means of communication.

"The storm in Nashville was very damaging and had a big impact," Watson said. "In times like these, the Red Cross provides shelters, food, mental health support and support to the area. They haven't yet requested deployment from our area."

Nashville is Hit Hard By Devastating Storm

Daybreak in Nashville revealed a much different landscape than before with blown-down walls, roofs, power lines, broken trees and created great congestion in the streets. Schools, courts, transit lines, an airport and the state Capitol were closed Tuesday and even polling stations had to be moved just before Super Tuesday voting.

Tennessee Emergency Management Spokeswoman Maggie Hannan said police and fire crews spent hours pulling survivors and bodies from wrecked buildings.

"Last night was a reminder about how fragile life is," Nashville Mayor John Cooper said at a Tuesday morning news conference.

"It is heartbreaking. We have had a loss of life all across the state," said Gov. Bill Lee. He ordered all non-essential state workers to stay home before going up in a helicopter to survey the damage.

The tornadoes were spawned by a line of severe storms with a line of storms that stretched from near Montgomery, Alabama, into western Pennsylvania.

In Nashville, it tore through areas transformed by a recent building boom. Germantown and East Nashville are two of the city's trendiest neighborhoods.

One tornado carved a path about 10 miles (16 kilometers) long, reportedly staying on the ground from near downtown Nashville along Interstate 40 to the city's eastern suburbs of Mt. Juliet, Lebanon and Hermitage.

"Our community has been impacted significantly," the Mt. Juliet Police Department said. Homes were damaged and injuries were reported, the department said. "We continue to search for injured. Stay home if you can."

Metro Nashville police confirmed crews were responding to about 40 building collapses. Among them was the Basement East Nashville, a popular music venue. Thankfully, the crowd left Basement East just before the twister hit.

A Red Cross shelter for displaced residents was set at the Nashville Farmers Market, but a power outage there forced people to move again to the Centennial Sportsplex.

(Associated Press also contributed to this story with information).