



# MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **April 24 Tornado: One Year Later**

**PEARL** —Sunday marks the one year anniversary of one of the worst natural disasters to hit Mississippi since Hurricane Katrina. On April 24, 2010, an EF-4 tornado with winds of 170 mph hit a large part of Mississippi causing devastating damage from high winds and tornados.

The storm caused 10 fatalities and more than 150 injuries. Five people were killed in Choctaw, four in Yazoo and one in Holmes County. Gov. Haley Barbour declared a State of Emergency for 17 counties and proclaimed April 27 as a day of prayer for the victims. That same day FEMA received the state's request for federal assistance. Attala, Choctaw, Holmes, Warren and Yazoo counties were declared as federal disaster areas.

“Even though the National Weather Service had predicted it would be an active weather day, I still didn't believe it would be as severe as it was,” said Yazoo County Emergency Management Director Bernice McGinnis. “After it hit, I quickly got in my vehicle to survey the damage. What I saw took my breath away. The destruction was so overwhelming. People were crying, holding their faces, moaning and groaning with some having cuts and bruises.”

A total of 390 homes were destroyed or received major damage and close to 2,000 individuals and families registered for federal assistance. In an effort to provide housing assistance and other disaster-related needs:

- Nearly \$4.3 million was provided towards individual assistance to disaster survivors.
- Forty-three families were provided with a state housing solution Mississippi Cottages.
- The U.S. Small Business Administration also approved \$3.7 million in low-interest disaster loans for homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes, and private nonprofits. These loan funds were approved to repair or replace real estate and/or personal property damaged by the disasters.

Although it's been almost one year since the storm hit, the recovery process continues in public assistance.

- More than \$6.6 million has been obligated for public assistance to repair infrastructure, of which, \$2.6 million for debris removal and emergency protective measures and \$1.5 million to repair roads, bridges and public buildings.

**-more-**

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“With help from their neighbors, voluntary agencies, local, state and federal governments, tornado survivors worked hard to get back on their feet,” said MEMA Executive Director Mike Womack. “We’re proud of the recovery so far, but there’s more work to do.”

McGinnis agreed and applauded all of the local EMA directors and state agencies who came to her “rescue,” such as MEMA, Homeland Security and the Mississippi Civil Defense Emergency Management Association.

“Overall, [Yazoo County residents] did as they always do. They felt compassion for each other,” McGinnis said. “When Hurricane Katrina hit Mississippi’s Gulf Coast, Yazoo County residents opened their homes to evacuees. This compassion is still being shown during the recovery phase.”

The tornado was the 9<sup>th</sup> deadliest in Mississippi since 1900. Many of those who were affected lived in rural areas and had uninsured homes.

“Mississippi is one of the most vulnerable states for all types of severe weather and unfortunately, tornadoes are a constant threat,” said Womack. “But there are precautions people can take to protect themselves. They can stay in a safe room or other interior room in their home if they hear a warning in their area on their weather radios. Every home should have a weather radio. And keeping your home insured is also very important.”

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