



DECEMBER 1, 2018

Taylorville Tornado

“WE MAY BEND BUT WILL NOT BREAK”

# DECEMBER STORM WAIT.....WHAT???

- ◉ December 1, 2018. Largest outbreak of tornadoes in December
- ◉ December 2015, killed four in Christian Co from floods
- ◉ November 2014- Washington tornado leveled 1000 structures including homes and businesses

## EMA'S SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED

- ◉ Christian County is geographically situated in an area within the United States ripe for severe weather as warm, moist air from the Gulf States and dry, cold Canadian air come together within the area widely known as” tornado alley”.
- ◉ Since 1950, Christian County has experienced 28 tornadoes.

# DECEMBER 2015- FOUR DEATHS

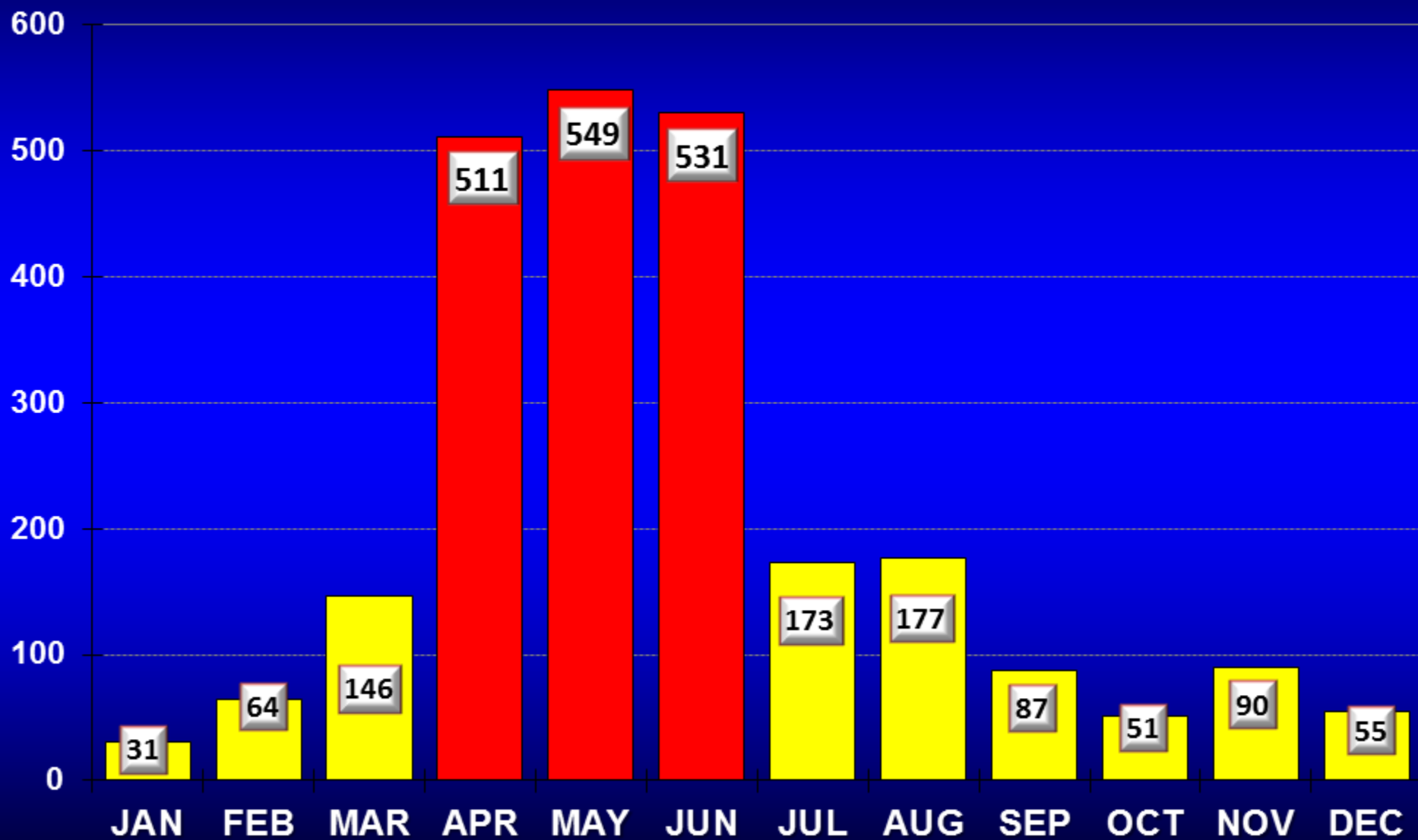




# NOVEMBER 17 TORNADO OUTBREAK

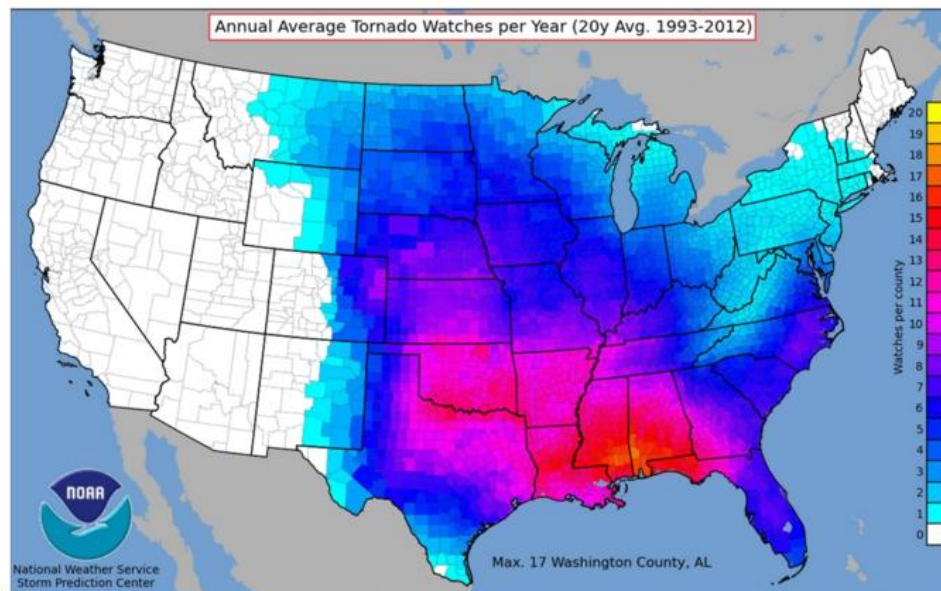


# Illinois Tornadoes (1950-2017)





# Tornado Watches per Year

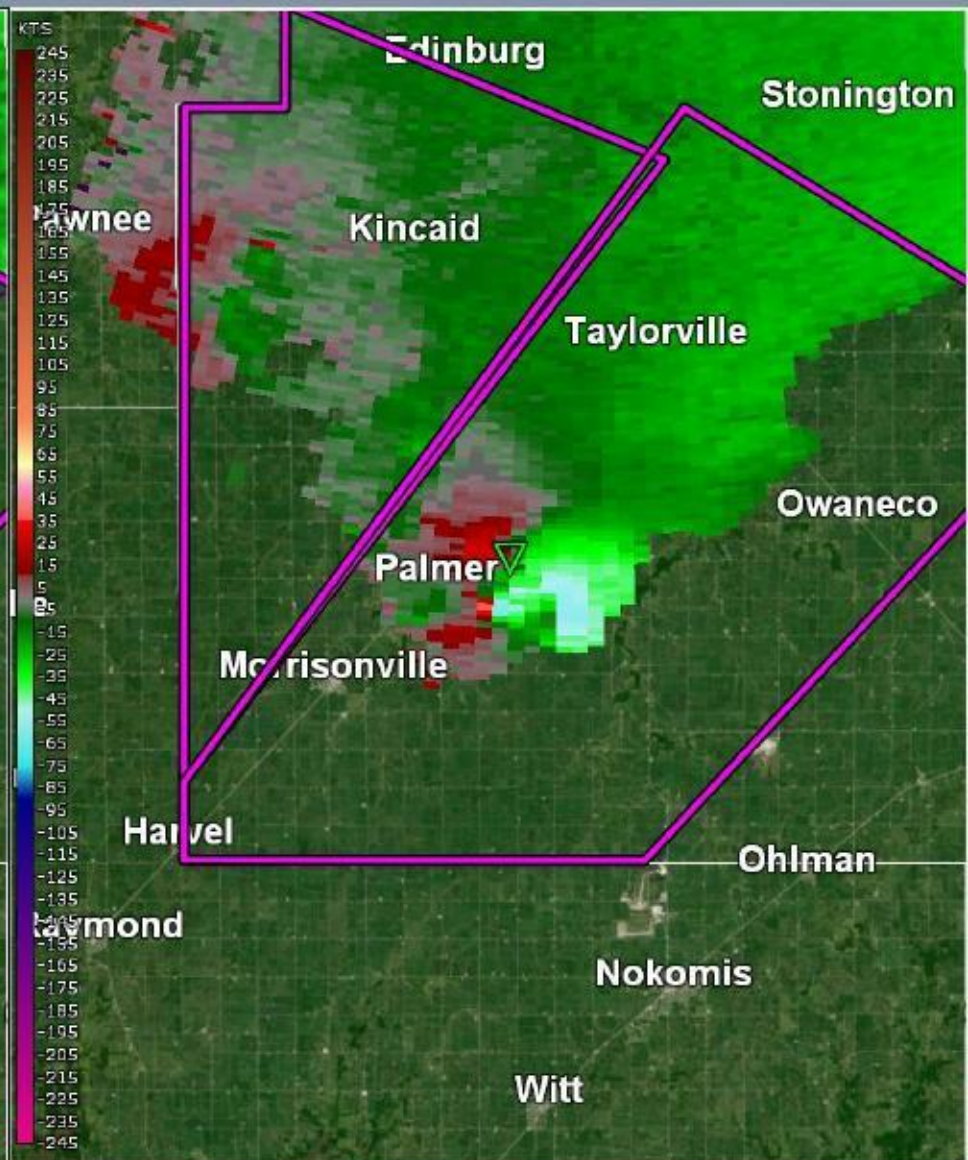






# KILX Radar Imagery

Taylorville Tornado – 5:06 PM



# THE END RESULT

- On December 1<sup>st</sup>, a EF-3 rating scale tornado moved through Taylorville with estimated winds at 155 mph and a maximum width of 1/2 mile.
- The tornado traveled 12.7 miles moving through the Village of Stonington after leaving Taylorville.
- The National Weather Service issues a “Tornado Emergency”; a rare warning issued when a damaging tornado has been confirmed moving towards a populated area.

# STORM IRONY

- One great irony of this storm was a drill the CCEMA conducted for the public works agencies within Christian County. The slide below was a fictitious portrayal of a tornado striking Hewittville; designed to exercise our local public works plans for debris management.
- It gives me great pleasure to share that Taylorville Street Superintendent believed this tabletop exercise assisted him with the overall response.



# Hewittville Destroyed



South Houston Street

Route 48



## DAY OF THE INCIDENT- 12/1/2018

- On 12/1, not only did Taylorville have the normal population in their homes and moving around the community, but a dense population of Christmas parade attendees assembling for the event scheduled for 5:00.
- The parade staging area where crowds gathered ended up being where damage began on the eastern edge of the storm's path, 200 feet away

- ◉ NWS began reporting the possibility of severe weather early Saturday morning in the usual format of a daily weather brief email.
- ◉ Of note in this email was a prediction of strong to severe weather developing in the mid-afternoon and slight possibility of isolated tornadoes.
- ◉ This information was copied onto the Christian County Severe Weather and Disaster Recovery Facebook page at 07:48am becoming the first official notification from Christian County Emergency Management (CCEMA).



## Decision Support Briefing

Forecast Highlights

Weather Forecast Office  
Lincoln, Illinois



- While scattered thunderstorms are possible this morning, better chances exist from mid afternoon into the evening. It is this latter period that may see severe weather. A slight risk of severe weather exists over most of central and southeast Illinois.
- Another  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 inch of rain is likely through tonight. While flooding is largely not expected, some minor flood issues may develop where this rain falls on the rapidly melting snow.
- Between the rain and the melting snow, rises on area rivers will occur over the next few days. There is potential for some minor flooding along the Spoon River, the eastern end of the Sangamon River, the Little Wabash River, and parts of the Wabash River.

<https://www.weather.gov/ilx/DSS>

Saturday, December 01, 2018

## Decision Support Briefing

Today's Weather Story Graphic

Weather Forecast Office  
Lincoln, Illinois



### Severe Weather Possible Later Today

#### Timing:



Greatest threat from 3 pm to 8 pm

#### Expected Storm Hazards:



**Hail:**  
Up to quarter size



**Wind:**  
Scattered gusts up to 60 mph



**Tornadoes:**  
Brief touchdowns possible

#### Actions to Take:

- Be alert for storm development
- Know where you would take shelter if severe storms occur



Greatest potential in yellow shaded areas

Published on: 12/01/2018 at 2:43AM

National Weather Service - Lincoln, IL

<https://www.weather.gov/ilx/DSS>

Saturday, December 01, 2018

## Decision Support Briefing

Day 1 Severe Weather Outlook

Weather Forecast Office  
Lincoln, Illinois



Expected Severe Weather Hazards

Hazards are based on

- ◉ As the day progressed, the possibility of significant weather increased, prompting on-the-hour discussions between myself, Christmas parade organizer Marcia Neal and NWS meteorologists.
- ◉ At **3:11pm**, CCEMA posted a Tornado Watch from NWS indicating conditions were favorable for a tornado but given the current conditions, the parade was still planned to move forward.
- ◉ Marcia and I agreed the decision to cancel would come at **4:00**, just prior to assembling parade participants. We also determined the means to alert those already lining the parade route if a cancellation occurred.



- ◉ Just after **4:00**, I was on the phone with a meteorologist discussing chances of lightning within five miles of the parade route. Up until this time, lightening was the prevailing threat.
- ◉ During this call, reports began to surface of funnel clouds near Litchfield from a storm front moving northeast towards Christian County along Illinois Route 48. The meteorologists confirmed there was rotation quickly developing in Montgomery so the parade was cancelled at **4:18** and sirens were activated.

# SIREN ACTIVATION SOG FOR CHRISTIAN

- 1] The NWS issues a tornado warning. If a warning is for a community within a polygon warning box, only the sirens in that affected area will be activated.
- 2] *A weather spotter, firefighter or law enforcement officer sights a tornado or funnel cloud.*
- 3] The storm has a history of producing tornadoes or damage in upstream counties.
- 4] *The NWS issues a wind speed warning in excess of 75 mph or sustained wind speeds of 50mph.*
- 5] There will never be an all-clear siren activation

*“Mr. Crews,*

*The sirens went off last night for no apparent reason. I was informed this was your decision. There are elderly people that get scared when this happens so what you did was very inappropriate.*

*If you continue to set off the sirens and nothing occurs, all you will create is a situation of cry wolf. This was very irresponsible on your part”.*

NOT SO IRRESPONSIBLE AFTER ALL,  
JUST SAYIN.....





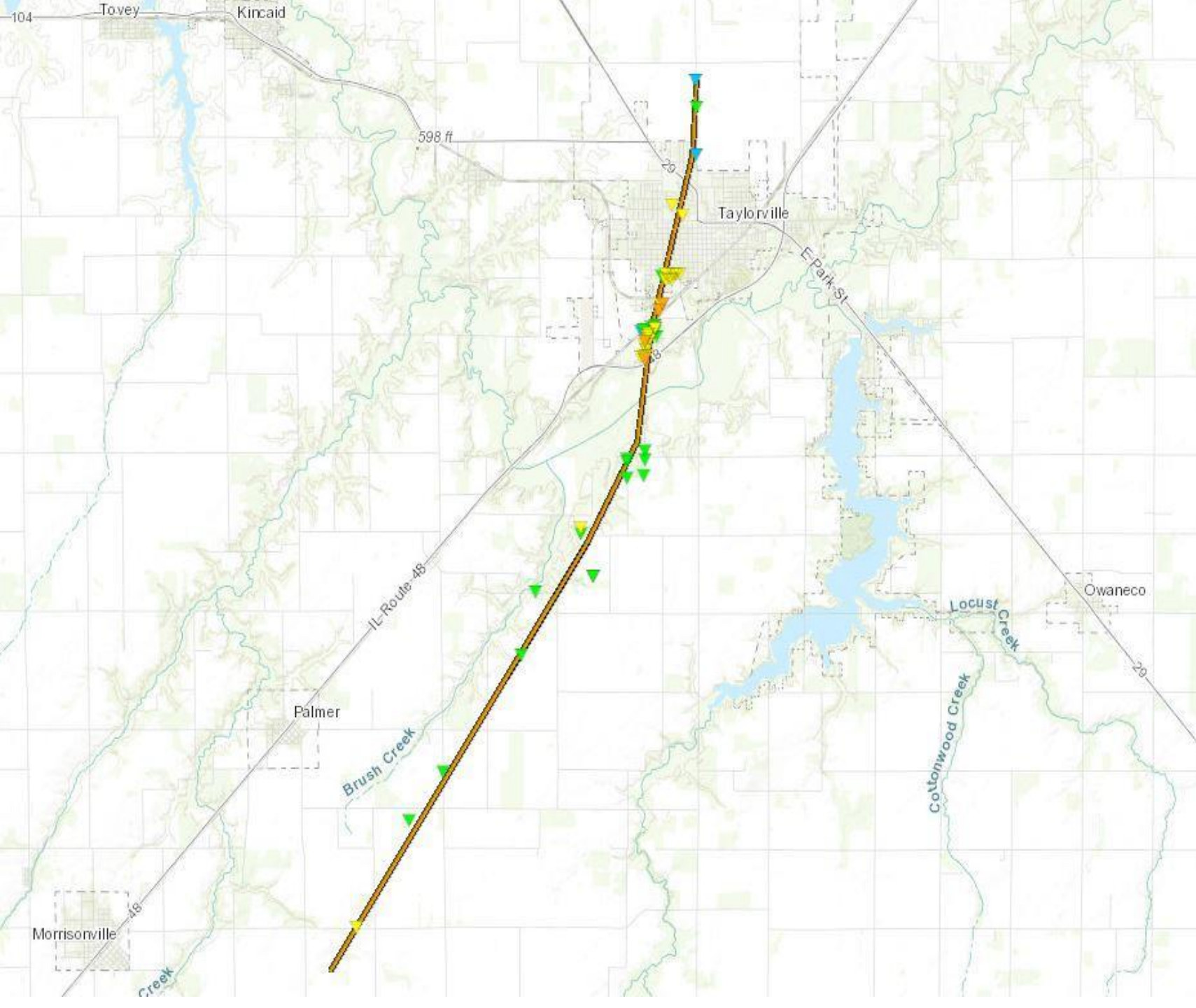


# *DESCRIPTION OF EMERGENCY RESOURCES AT TIME OF DEPLOYMENT*

- ◉ TFD was covered with four members worked, two off-duty members were at the station for the parade.
- ◉ Taylorville Police had four officers working, Christian County Sheriff, two deputies.
- ◉ By comparison, larger communities such as Springfield would have an initial response of 18-24 firefighters operating from multiple fire companies.

- ◉ Given the apparent path of the storm, I directed all fire crews to leave the city and stage at Lake Taylorville to assure our fire apparatus would be spared should TFD receive a direct hit at city center.
- ◉ When the tornado arrived at 5:21, City emergency resources were all-hands.

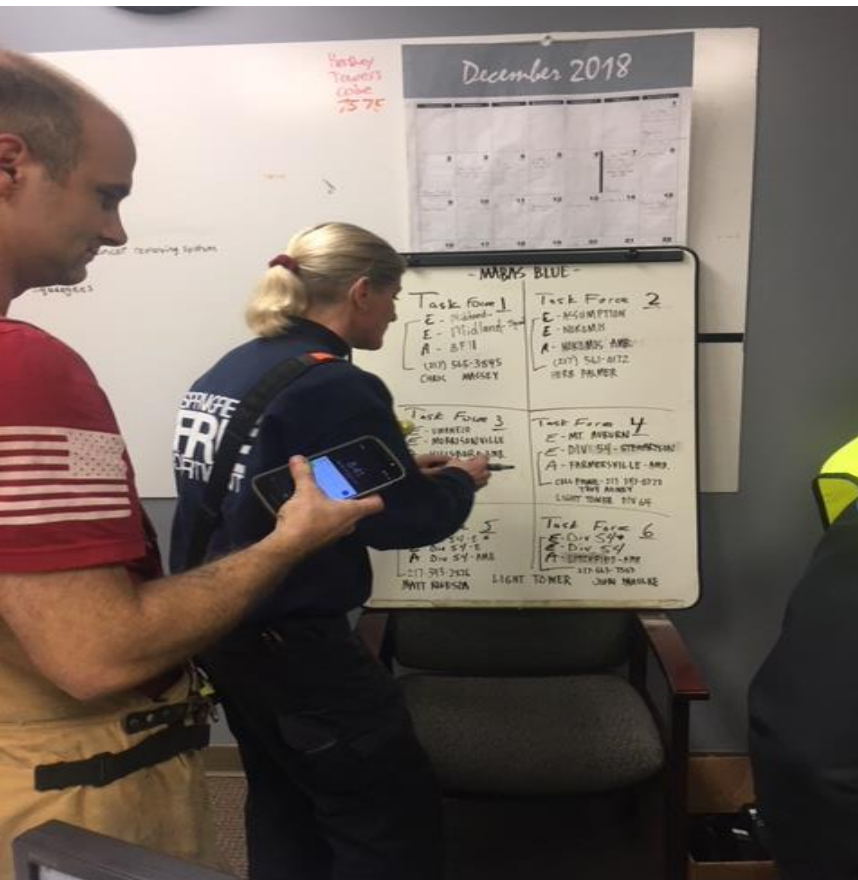






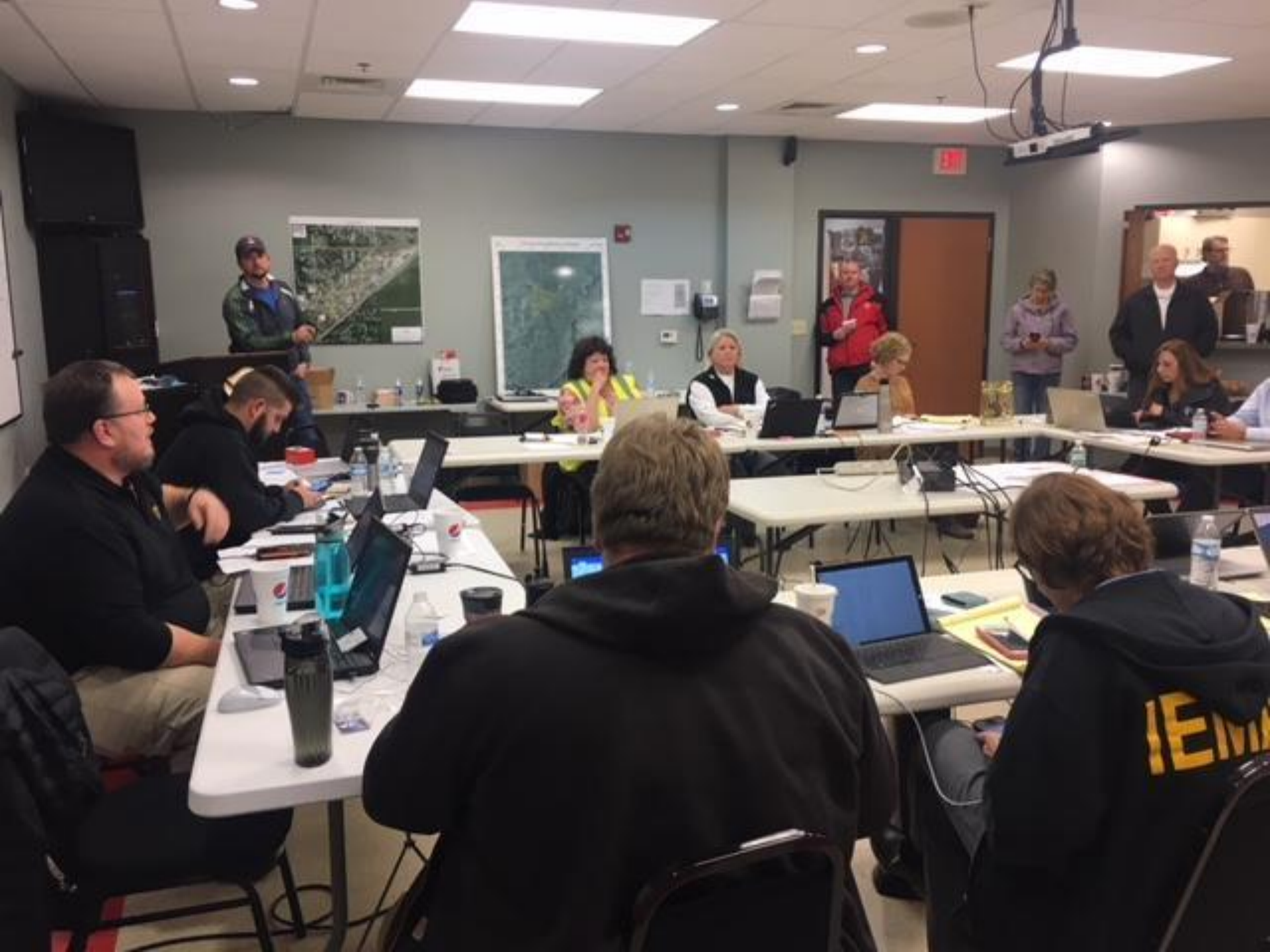


- ◉ Initial on-scene reports coming from TFD fire crews reported difficulties moving through town and multiple people trapped at numerous locations.
- ◉ It became immediately clear this response would task our local resources requiring a regional response from the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System and the Illinois Law Enforcement Agency System.
- ◉ At the height of the deployment TFD assigned search and rescue task forces utilizing 13 fire departments and 15 ambulances.





- Given the scope of the incident from the onset this would be a response covering multiple days, so an emergency management assistance team was requested through emergency management communications, known as EM-Com, located in Lincoln; this request went out at 6:16pm.
- This team would be assigned the positions of finance, planning, logistics, and operations within the EOC. Although their mission changed when they arrived into operations, they proved to be a great resource on the ground assisting the Christian County Damage Assessment Team.







- Fire crews treated, packaged and transport 21 patients, 3 of which were life threatening. By 02:00am, rescue efforts had subsided into a benchmark of All Clear, transitioning the city from life safety to incident stabilization.
- The Cross-Roads church had taken the initiative to open their doors as a shelter thus the EOC moved from a pre-determined location and moved into Crossroads.
- At the height of the incident, the shelter housed five residents, supported by the American Red Cross.

# INCIDENT STABILIZATION

- ◉ Even today, I hold no ability to visit a store, talk with friends and family who don't share how immensely impressed by the work our public works employees have done in the cleanup efforts. These workers and their superintendents are the backbone to the community recovery. Seeing what they have accomplished since December 1<sup>st</sup> is simply remarkable.
- ◉ Residents have been encouraged to segregate piles into woody debris which is tree limbs, shrubs, etc and construction and demolition debris. The woody debris will be collected first and it should be moved to curbside so responders can begin the process of removing debris.

# INCIDENT STABILIZATION

- Like all disasters of this magnitude, local residents wanted to help necessitating a coordinated effort to bring volunteers together. A Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) opened on Wednesday Dec 5th through Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup> from 0900-3:00 at the Taylorville Township building. This mission was managed by representatives from the disaster relief group Team Rubicon. Volunteers were appropriated vetted and assigned to Team Rubicon, Lutheran Relief Group or the Southern Baptists Relief Group.
- Donations continue to pour into the City. To their benefit, the City had use of the Gagne distribution center to store donated goods of all types. City Aldermen Budd, Olive, Walters, Burtle, Water Supt Speagle and their spouses have manned this building and organized the donated items.

# INCIDENT STABILIZATION

- ◉ There was a coordinated effort early on to seek monetary donations only however items flooded the City spontaneously. The City approach has been to collect, inventory and distribute these items for those in need. Long-term storage will need to be addressed by the City Council as time moves ahead and away from the storm timeline.
- ◉ Speaking to monetary donations, these are under the care and distribution of Missions for Taylorville. This group is self-organized and is establishing rules for monetary distribution. This group has sought guidance from Kincaid Police Chief Dwayne Wheeler who coordinated the relief effort during the Kincaid floods.
- ◉ At the height of the incident Ameren, Shelby and Rural Electric had 2200 customers without power. Within two days, most customers power was restored, the remainder on day three. These companies responded in mass, working by one account over 24 hours non-stop shifts installing poles, hanging powerline and transformers. These workers deserve our deepest respect and gratitude.



# DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

- ◉ Damage information (private property, business losses, and public infrastructure damages) must be first collected by local officials. Based upon the information collected by local officials, IEMA may request a Federal/State Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA). During the visit, the PDA team tours, collects and analyzes the damage information. The damage assessment team members include IEMA, FEMA, SBA, and local officials. Local officials **MUST** be prepared to show all damages to the PDA team(s).

# DONATIONS MANAGEMENT







# DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

- ◉ A summary of damage collected is below:
- ◉ Affected- 185
- ◉ Minor- 374
- ◉ Major- 104
- ◉ Destroyed- 33
- ◉ Total number of insured structures is in flux but on December 10 that number was 324.

# DISASTER PROCLAMATION

- ◉ Mayor Barry signed a Proclamation of Disaster for Taylorville on December 1st, effective for 7 days; Christian County Chairwoman Becky Edwards signed their proclamation on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- ◉ Both of these chief elected officials were engaged at the highest level for this incident providing strong leadership.
- ◉ The State of Illinois declared soon after releasing additional funding for overtime expenses.









## Multi Agency Resource Center (MARC)

Providing recovery resources for people affected by the tornadoes in Christian County.

- Date:** Friday, December 7  
Saturday, December 8
- Location:** Taylorville Christian Church  
1124 N Webster St  
Taylorville, IL 62568
- Time:** 11:00 am – 7:00 pm Friday  
08:00 am – 1:00 pm Saturday

Partner resources available at the MARC will include service agencies such as American Red Cross, American Baptist Disaster Response, Salvation Army, along with other state and local partners including Department of Insurance, Department on Aging, Department of Human Services, Illinois Attorney General, Christian County Health Department, Christian County CEFS, and many more.



# INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

- ◉ From the onset of the incident, the public craved information. Coordinating this effort on the behalf of CCEMA was Joe Gaspirich, Gregg Nimmo (Montgomery County EMA), 911 Administrator Mickie Ehrhardt and Coroner Amy Calvert.
- ◉ Mr. Gaspirich served as the Public Information Officer coordinating two press conferences each day through Wednesday at the Taylorville City Council. These conferences served as our primary outreach to the media; each vetted by our Command and General Staff.
- ◉ Serving the residents and taking their questions was managed through the Christian County Severe Weather and Disaster Recovery Facebook page.





# WHO WERE THE ROCK STARS?

- ◉ IEMA and staff Phil and Jarrod
- ◉ Joe Gaspirich
- ◉ Adermann