The Great Plains Tornado Outbreak of May 3, 1999

On May 3, 1999, multiple super cell thunderstorms produced many large and damaging tornadoes in central Oklahoma during the late afternoon and evening hours. Some of these storms were killers, including the twisters which moved through and/or near Dover, Shawnee, Perry and Bridge Creek, and the Moore and southern Oklahoma City metropolitan areas. Additional tornadoes also hit areas in south central Kansas, eastern Oklahoma and northern Texas, with over 70 tornadoes being observed across the region. The total tornado count makes this tornado outbreak the largest ever recorded in Oklahoma.

Statistics show that 40 people have died in Oklahoma due to the twisters and 675 were injured. Many homes and businesses have been damaged or destroyed throughout the affected areas with a total damage estimate of $1.2 billion.

Initial Damage list (from windshield survey/flyover):

Oklahoma and Cleveland Counties
Homes damaged: 8,330
Apartments damaged: 1,041
Businesses damaged: 127
Churches damaged: 3.
Schools damaged: 2.

Other Nearby Counties
Homes damaged: 1,412
* Businesses damaged: 133
Churches damaged: 2.
Public buildings damaged: 11
* Includes 53 stores at the Tanger Outlet Center in Stroud.

Discussion:

In your work group, discuss and answer the questions, below. Write your responses on easel pads and be prepared to present your findings in 10 minutes.

1. What building inspection and public works issues might be involved in this case study?
2. What resources will be needed to address the issues?
3. What options might be available for the impacted communities to obtain needed resources?

Time allocation for this activity: 20 minutes