

Tornadoes rip through Oklahoma City highlighting need for postal relief fund

Nature's full fury was on display for residents of the Oklahoma City area in May. A wave of tornadoes, including two monster twisters, hit the area in a two-week span. On the "Enhanced Fujita" scale, the two biggest tornadoes ranked EF5, the most powerful—and rare—size. The second EF5, which touched down east of the city on May 31, was the largest tornado ever recorded in the world—2.6 miles wide at ground level—with the second-fastest winds ever measured at 295 miles per hour. The weather that spawned these two giants generated several other twisters and flash floods.

The combined death toll of the two storms was at least 37, including a

postal clerk who died in the first EF5 tornado, which struck Moore, OK, May 20. There were no reports of deaths or injuries among letter carriers, though the first tornado inflicted severe damage on the Moore post office. That facility is now shut down, with its workers handling mail delivery from a facility 15 miles away.

Three active letter carriers and one retiree lost their homes, Oklahoma City Branch 458 President **David Miller** said, and more than a dozen others experienced substantial damage to their homes. Many personal vehicles owned by letter carriers and other postal workers parked at the Moore station were destroyed, including 27 owned by letter carriers. "Some of these vehicles have not been found," Miller said—the cars and trucks had been carried off or pitched into piles of rubble.

"When a storm like this hits, we must match its ferocity with our own generosity," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "Please contribute to the Postal Employees' Relief Fund to help our

brothers, sisters and co-workers rebuild after this tragedy."

The Postal Employees' Relief Fund (PERF) provides assistance to postal employees who are victims of natural disasters or fires. For many postal employees who experience a disaster, insurance claims and emergency government benefits fall short of what they need to make their lives whole again. PERF steps in to fill the gap. PERF gives grants to both craft workers and managers ranging from \$1,000 to \$14,000, depending on the total amount of qualified loss after insurance and other relief assistance.

Your donation is especially important now because PERF's resources are running low as it provides assistance to victims of Hurricane Sandy, the huge storm that hit the New York/New Jersey area in October.

True to their nature, many of the postal workers who were in the Moore post office during the tornado emerged from the rubble and immediately went to the hospital next door—not for treatment, but to help the staff dig out. Letter carrier **Richard Gronski**, who retired May 31, went from room to room to help firefighters assure patients were OK and assist those who needed help.

Images of the post office and hospital in the aftermath of the May 20 tornado showed severe structural damage and parking lots full of overturned and crushed vehicles. The same tornado hit two elementary schools in Moore. Miller said that one letter carrier's child had been trapped in the rubble of a school and injured, but was not hospitalized. A total of 10 children died in the tornado.

"Supporting PERF is one way we can all show the members of our postal family in Oklahoma that we've got their backs and we won't forget them in time of need," Rolando said.

You can mail a check to PERF at P.O. Box 7630, Woodbridge, VA 22195, donate by credit card online at its website, postalrelief.com, or text the word "PERF" to 50555 to make a one-time donation of



Images of the Moore, OK post office



\$10 (other charges may apply). You also can give to PERF through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC); the CFC number for PERF is 10268. Contributions to PERF are tax-deductible for federal income tax purposes.

If you need help from PERF, visit its website, postalrelief.com, for eligibility and application information, call

202-408-1869 or send an e-mail to perf10268@aol.com.

Miller thanked the letter carriers and other supporters from across the country who have already sent relief donations of uniforms, supplies and cash, as well as Wasserman Uniforms and Brookfield Uniforms for supplying free uniforms. His branch also has created a relief fund

for immediate assistance to NALC members affected by the tornadoes. You can send donations to **Branch 458 Relief Fund, Branch 458, 221 S. Eagle Lane, Oklahoma City, OK 73128.**

Note: Contributions or gifts to the Branch 458 Relief Fund are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. PR

Carrier returns to route after recovering from dog attack

After recovering from severe injuries inflicted in a dog attack, Bethlehem, PA Branch 254 letter carrier **Lisa Earich** is back on her route.

The dog, a pit bull breed that had displayed aggression to her daily from behind a fence, attacked Earich on her route last October. After escaping from the fenced yard because the owner forgot to close the gate, the dog ignored the dog

spray Earich used to repel it. "It didn't affect him at all," she said. Instead, the dog bit her outstretched arm and pulled her to the ground. The dog's owner managed to pull the animal away, but it escaped the owner's grasp and attacked again while Earich was on the ground.

"He took a bite at my eye, my face and my ear," she said. One of the dog's teeth penetrated her eye socket. The dog also bit her chest and leg before running away.



Lisa Earich

It took 36 stitches over her face and body to close her wounds.

"She was a total mess," said Branch 254 President **Angelo Fetter**, who visited Earich in the hospital that day. "Her face was severely swollen. She had black-and-blues all over her arms, legs and face. She had stitches everywhere." The dog had not been vaccinated against rabies, so Earich had to endure preventive rabies treatments. The dog was later euthanized.

Though Earich feared she would lose the eye, she has suffered no vision problems, and aside from scars and numbness in a few fingers, Earich has made a remarkable recovery. She was back on the job within a month, and back on her old route by December, though the post office has not sent her down the street where the attack happened. Though the dog is gone, the memories of the attack are still too vivid, she said.

Earich warned other carriers that dog spray doesn't always work. "I had so much confidence in my spray—I wish I had more confidence in my bag," she said. "If I had lifted my bag between him and me, it might have been different."

Letter carriers who encounter a threatening animal should fill out a PS Form 1778, Dog/Animal Warning Card, to warn other carriers and managers of the threat. **PR**

Letter carrier struck, injured while unloading rear of LLV

On May 14, Garden Grove, CA Branch 1100 member **Joel Cabrera** was struck while working the mail from the rear of his LLV. He survived the accident but suffered compound fractures in both legs.

"On behalf of the entire membership of the NALC, I extend our most heartfelt wishes to Brother Cabrera and his family," NALC President Fredric Rolando said. "We pray for his speedy recovery."

In February 2012, a similar incident killed Los Angeles Branch 24 letter carrier **Anthony Dunn**. Then, in July 2013, Seattle Branch 79's **Keith Wagner** survived a comparable crash that crushed both of his legs.

Following Dunn's tragic accident, President Rolando gained agreement from the Postal Service to prepare a safety stand-up talk about this particularly hazardous part of delivering America's mail. A talk was put together by the Joint NALC—USPS National Safety Task Force.

If you have not yet received this stand-up talk, speak with your shop steward or other branch leaders and ask for it. Note that Article 14, Section 1 of the National Agreement between the NALC and USPS states:

"It is the responsibility of management to provide safe working conditions in all present and future installations and to develop a safe working force. The Union will cooperate with and assist management to live up to this responsibility...." (See NALC Director of Safety and Health Manuel L. Peralta Jr.'s column on page 34 for a more in-depth discussion about this serious problem.)

Those who wish to send well wishes or contributions to Cabrera may do so care of Garden Grove Branch 1100, 13252 Garden Grove Blvd., Garden Grove, CA 92843. **PR**



Joel Cabrera