Adventists Respond in Aftermath of EF5 Tornado in Moore, Oklahoma

On Monday, May 20, the second consecutive day of tornadoes in Oklahoma, an EF5 tornado with peak winds of 190 mph, tore through part of the state, touching down on the town of New Castle, Moore and other Oklahoma City suburbs. The tornado spent 40 minutes traveling 17 miles on the ground and devastated an estimated 30 square miles that included neighborhoods and two elementary schools. The latest count reveals that 24 people are confirmed dead, at least seven of them children. Authorities are continuing to search the rubble.

"Please remember to pray for the many victims of this tragedy, and for all of our faithful ACS and rescue and relief workers and volunteers," said Sung Kwon, NAD ACS executive director.

Adventist Community Services Disaster Response (ACS DR) coordinators from across the United States will join in a teleconference tonight to coordinate response efforts. They will discuss plans for a collaborative response so people can be directed when and where they are most needed so their help and skills will be most effective. The actual needs of survivors will also be discussed. More information about how to volunteer or what items may be needed will be shared when it becomes available.

ACS DR is a member of National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) along with about 55 other nonprofit members. Each response organization has its own specialty and work together in a disaster area, cooperating seamlessly with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) other state VOADs in an orderly, well-trained manner within their own area of expertise. ACS DR specializes in handling donated goods and distributing relief supplies. This means that they collect, sort, warehouse and distribute goods. Much-needed relief supplies are distributed to survivors and responders using fixed sites which often are Adventist churches and schools, and also using mobile distribution units.

ACS is currently operating a distribution center from the Hope Adventist Fellowship in Moore. Collection centers are being operated at the Midwest City Adventist Church, Oklahoma City Central Spanish Adventist Church, Tulsa Adventist Fellowship, and Tulsa Adventist Academy.

ADRA International has committed $50,000 to the relief efforts, and will work with ACS to assist with the disaster response.

How You and Your Church or Group Can Help - With so much trouble and so many disasters surrounding us, or even far away, what can you do to help? ACS gives advice on how to be prepared for a disaster and to help others when affected here.

ACS is able to leverage its partnerships and bulk purchasing power to provide goods to disaster survivors for a fraction of retail cost. A financial donation to ACS today will help your church bring vital supplies and relief to people devastated by the Moore, Okla. tornado. More information will be available soon regarding specific needs.

A flyer and/or bulletin insert are available for downloading on the Adventist Community Services website.

For an example of how your financial donations and ACS volunteerism are multiplied, read this report from the Georgia-Cumberland Conference ACS Director Terry Haight, who tallied up the value of the volunteers, the donated goods and help during one disaster aftermath in 2011.

Volunteering and donating: PLEASE do not self-deploy to the disaster area. Individuals who do not deploy with a
disaster response agency in coordination with emergency management often create a second disaster. Contact your local conference Disaster Response Coordinator if you would like to volunteer.

If you would like to make a donation, the most effective and efficient way to help your church help others is to make a financial donation to Adventist Community Services Disaster Response. Each disaster results in different needs and needs will change as the recovery continues. Your financial donation will allow ACS to respond to these changing needs.

To donate:
- Visit www.communityservices.org
- Call 1-800-381-7171
- Mail a check to ACS, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD or
- Place a donation in your church offering plate marked “ACS disaster response”

For updates, "Like" the North American Division Facebook page and the NAD Adventist Community Services Disaster Response Facebook page.