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SEAA Member United Rentals Assists After Tornado



Aerial work platforms, telehandlers, power and HVAC equipment were supplied by United Rentals to assist in the cleanup following the tornado that ripped through Moore, OK.

The massive tornado that struck Moore, Oklahoma destroyed blocks of homes, leaving thousands homeless, and at least 24 people dead.

"With a disaster of this scope, we expect all of our capabilities to be involved in the cleanup and rebuilding efforts — this includes our aerial, trench safety and tool units, as well as our government service specialists," said David Stewart, director, Customer Care Center, United Rentals.

"We have approximately 70 employees who work in five United Rentals locations in or near the area where the tornado hit. They are currently all involved in the recovery efforts, supported by many other people within our company, including our Emergency Response Team," he added.

United brought in additional employees from outside the immediate vicinity to assist with ongoing operations, which allowed its employees who were most impacted to focus on stabilizing their own situations.

"At least two of our employees had their homes completely destroyed, although thankfully no one was hurt, and another dozen or so had damage to their homes," Stewart said. "In addition, we have deployed the United Rentals Emergency Response Unit (ERU) to help the community and assist our customers who are involved in the recovery efforts."

The ERU is a high-tech, mobile command center that gives the rental company a self-powered base of operations at a disaster site. The unit had previously been located in West Texas where it was assisting with cleanup efforts following the fertilizer plant explosion.

United had immediate requests in Moore, OK for temporary lighting solutions to ensure that first responders could continue to work through the night. Then the company brought in earth- and debris-moving equipment, including front-end loaders, skid steers and other equipment. It also provided temporary power and climate control equipment to assist in the cleanup and the infrastructure re-establishment.

United Rental's Emergency Response Process

According to Stewart, United Rentals has a specific process that clicks into place once emergency response protocol has been launched.



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"With Moore, for example, members of our regional and district leadership, our corporate emergency response team and our senior leadership held a call to review the protocol within two hours of the tornado's strike," Stewart said. "Our first order of business in any disaster is always to account for our employees and their families. In this case, we learned that while everyone was safe, 10 employees were in immediate need of housing. We were able to secure hotel rooms for them that same night, and we're working on longer-term solutions."

After United's people are accounted for, the next step is to evaluate whether any of its locations have been impacted. The company then assesses what people in the community will likely need in terms of equipment and supplies.

"With the Moore tornado, we had trucks rolling within hours, carrying additional fleet to supplement the equipment at our area branches," Stewart said. Many times, in situations like the Moore tornado or Hurricane Sandy, equipment rental companies often work side by side with first responders – and, oftentimes – "competitors."

"It's the nature of our business – and it's a source of pride in our industry that we're in a position to help," Stewart said regarding working with other rental outfits. "Because of our scale, United Rentals is in a unique position to provide support by drawing on fleet from across the country if necessary," Stewart said. "We will do everything in our power to help this community get back on its feet."