



IEMA-OHS

ILLINOIS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
AND OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY

JB Pritzker
Governor

Theodore (Ted) Berger
Director

July 8, 2026

Mr. Slade Berry, Coordinator

Winnebago County EMA

650 W. State Street

Rockford, IL 61102

Dear Coordinator Berry,

I have received and reviewed the After Action Report and Improvement Plan for your real world incident which occurred on April 17, 2026 in Winnebago County, Illinois and find that it meets the required Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program guidelines. Therefore, in accordance with Title 29 of the Illinois Administrative Code Part 301, Section 301.430 the After Action Report and Improvement Plan titled April 17, 2026 Severe Weather Event is approved.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact the Region 2 Office.

Sincerely,

Steve Builta, MSED, IPED

IEMA-OHS Region 2 Staff Development Specialist

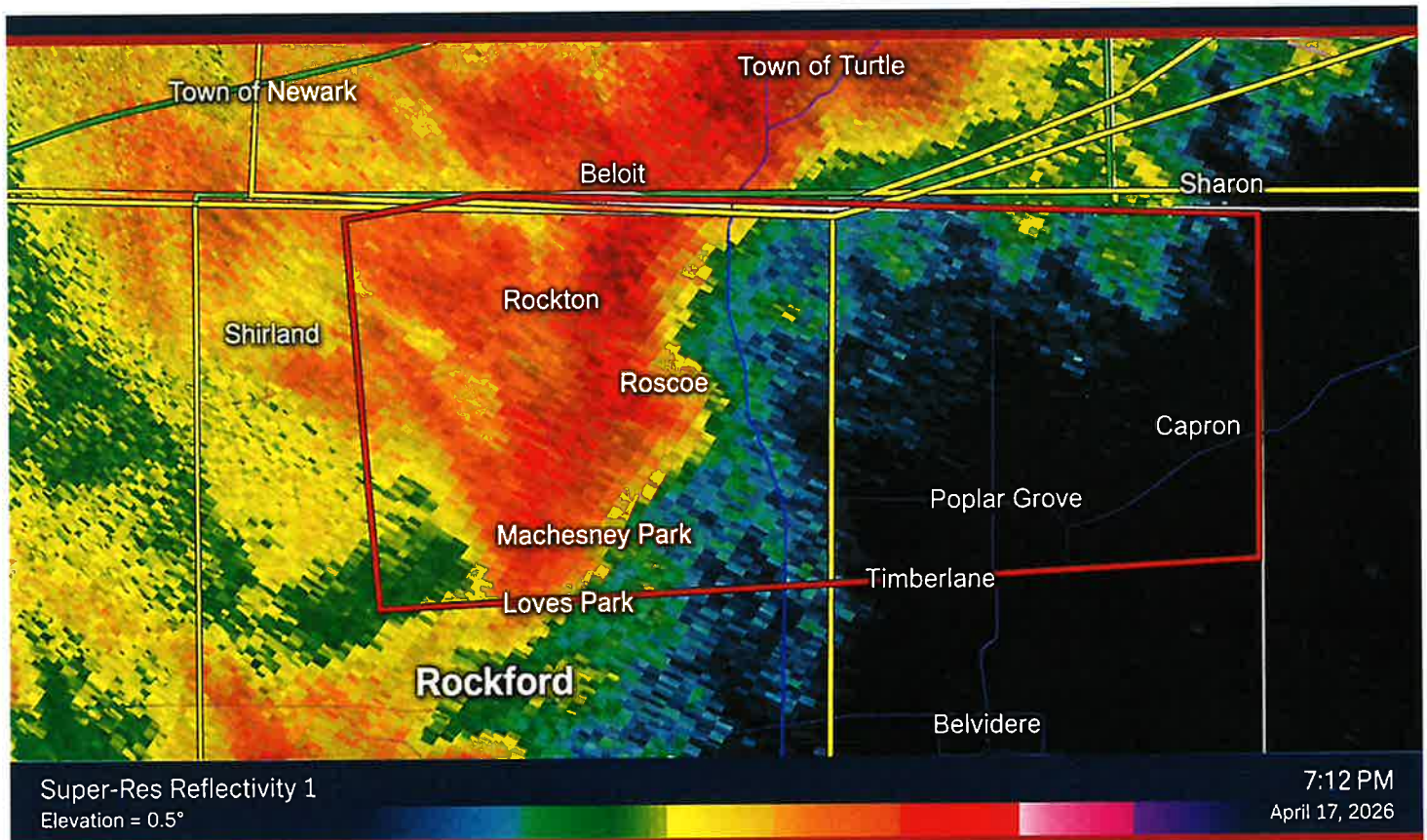


WINNEBAGO COUNTY AFTER-ACTION REPORT

& IMPROVEMENT PLAN (AAR/IP)

APRIL 17, 2026
SEVERE WEATHER EVENT

*Lessons Learned. Stronger Together.
Ready Today. Resilient Tomorrow.*



PREPARED BY THE
WINNEBAGO COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES & DISASTER AGENCY

PREPARED JUNE 2026

Winnebago County

Emergency Services & Disaster Agency



650 West State Street
Rockford, Illinois 61102
815/319-6017

To Our Emergency Response Partners, Community Leaders, and Residents,

On April 17, 2026, Winnebago County experienced a significant severe weather event that tested the preparedness, coordination, and resilience of our communities. Three tornadoes, widespread straight-line wind damage, heavy rainfall, and localized flooding impacted residents, businesses, and public infrastructure across the county. While the damage was substantial, we are grateful that there were no fatalities or serious injuries. This outcome reflects the professionalism of our first responders, the effectiveness of timely public warning, and the strong partnerships developed through years of planning, training, and collaboration.

The response and recovery efforts demonstrated the strength of Winnebago County's Whole Community approach to emergency management. Fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services, public works, healthcare providers, utility companies, volunteer organizations, faith-based partners, state agencies, and local governments worked together with a shared commitment to protecting lives, restoring services, and supporting our residents. The establishment of the Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) further demonstrated our community's commitment to helping those affected begin the recovery process.

This After-Action Report and Improvement Plan documents the strengths observed during the response while identifying opportunities to enhance future preparedness and recovery efforts. The recommendations contained in this report are intended to build upon our successes, strengthen interagency coordination, and improve our ability to respond to future emergencies.

On behalf of the Winnebago County Emergency Services and Disaster Agency, I extend my sincere appreciation to every responder, volunteer, public servant, healthcare professional, utility worker, elected official, nonprofit organization, and community member who contributed to this successful response. Your dedication and professionalism continue to make Winnebago County a safer and more resilient community.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to serving the residents of Winnebago County.

Respectfully,

Winnebago County ESDA Coordinator

Office of the Sheriff Gary Caruana
295th Nationally Accredited Law Enforcement Agency



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Letter from the Emergency Services and Disaster Agency Coordinator	
2. Table of Contents	2
3. Purpose and Scope	3
4. Incident Overview	5
4.1 Incident Summary	5
4.2 Incident Description	5
4.3 Response Operations	6
4.4 Recovery Operations	7
4.5 Federal Recovery Assistance	7
5. Analysis of Core Capabilities	9
5.1 Planning	9
5.2 Public Information and Warning	9
5.3 Operational Coordination	10
5.4 Operational Communications	11
5.5 Mass Care Services	11
5.6 Infrastructure Systems	12
5.7 Environmental Response, Health, and Safety	12

5.8	Community Recovery	13
6.	Improvement Plan	14
7.	Appendices	21
7.1	Appendix A – Incident Timeline	21
7.2	Appendix B – Participating Agencies	23
7.3	Appendix C – Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC).....	25
7.4	Appendix D – Federal Recovery Assistance	29
7.5	Appendix E – National Weather Service Overview	30
7.6	Appendix F – Menti Survey Results	34
7.7	Appendix G – Acronyms	39
7.8	Appendix H –Lessons Learned Summary	39
7.9	Appendix I – References	40
7.10	Appendix J - Acknowledgements	41

Purpose and Scope

Purpose

The purpose of this After-Action Report and Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) is to document the response and recovery activities associated with the April 17, 2026 severe weather event that impacted Winnebago County, Illinois, evaluate operational performance using the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) methodology, and identify corrective actions that will strengthen the County's preparedness for future incidents. This report serves as a comprehensive assessment of emergency management operations and is intended to capture both successful practices and opportunities for improvement identified throughout the response and recovery process.

The AAR/IP is designed to support continuous improvement by documenting observations from participating agencies, identifying strengths that should be sustained, and establishing practical recommendations to enhance planning, response, recovery, and mitigation capabilities. Consistent with HSEEP doctrine, the report emphasizes organizational learning and capability enhancement rather than assigning blame or evaluating individual performance. The findings and recommendations contained within this report are intended to guide future planning efforts, training initiatives, exercises, policy development, and operational decision-making across Winnebago County and its Whole Community partners.

Scope

This report evaluates emergency management activities associated with the severe weather event occurring between **April 12 and April 24, 2026**, with primary emphasis on the response to the tornadoes that impacted Winnebago County on **April 17, 2026**, and the subsequent recovery operations. The assessment encompasses preparedness activities conducted prior to the event, emergency response operations, Emergency Operations Center (EOC) coordination, damage assessment, debris management, public information and warning, mass care services, infrastructure restoration, and recovery activities, including the establishment and operation of the Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC).

The AAR/IP reflects input and observations from local, county, regional, state, nonprofit, healthcare, volunteer, and private-sector partners that participated in preparedness, response, and recovery operations. Information contained within this report was compiled through review of incident documentation, operational timelines, National Weather Service products, Emergency Operations Center records, agency After-Action Reports, hot wash discussions, participant surveys, lessons learned documentation, and Multi-Agency Resource Center

planning materials. Collectively, these sources provide a comprehensive evaluation of the County's performance across the applicable National Preparedness Goal Core Capabilities.

The scope of this report is limited to emergency management activities directly associated with the April 2026 severe weather incident and is intended to provide an objective assessment of countywide operations. It does not constitute a formal investigation, financial audit, or evaluation of individual personnel performance. Rather, the report is intended to support continuous improvement by documenting lessons learned, promoting collaboration among partner agencies, and strengthening Winnebago County's ability to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the impacts of future disasters.

Incident Overview

Incident Summary

Between April 14 and April 17, 2026, Winnebago County experienced multiple rounds of severe weather that included heavy rainfall, flash flooding, large hail, damaging straight-line winds, and tornado-producing thunderstorms. Forecasts issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) indicated an increasing potential for significant severe weather throughout the week, prompting Winnebago County Emergency Services and Disaster Agency (ESDA) to initiate enhanced monitoring and distribute frequent weather briefings to emergency management partners, public safety agencies, municipal officials, healthcare organizations, and critical infrastructure stakeholders. More than 250 recipients received regular weather updates, situational awareness information, and preparedness notifications in advance of the event.

Throughout the week, Winnebago County activated outdoor warning sirens on multiple occasions in response to tornado warnings and confirmed severe weather threats. Although tornado warnings were issued on April 14 and April 15, no tornadoes touched down within Winnebago County on those dates. These early weather events provided an opportunity to validate notification procedures, Emergency Operations Center (EOC) staffing, and interagency communications prior to the more significant storms that occurred on April 17.

Preparedness efforts conducted prior to the event contributed significantly to the County's operational readiness. On March 30, 2026, ESDA facilitated a multi-jurisdictional preparedness meeting for the Village of Roscoe involving municipal leaders, township officials, fire and law enforcement agencies, water utility representatives, and county leadership. Discussions focused on emergency roles and responsibilities, debris management, coordination procedures, and communication expectations. These relationships and planning efforts proved valuable during the subsequent response and recovery operations.

Incident Description

On Friday, April 17, 2026, the National Weather Service (NWS) issued a Tornado Watch for Winnebago County during the early afternoon as a rapidly developing line of severe thunderstorms moved east across northern Illinois. At approximately 4:10 p.m., the first Tornado Warning was issued for Winnebago County, providing advance notice before storm impacts reached the area. County warning sirens were activated and Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) notifications were disseminated to the public.

Not long after the first National Weather Service IPAWS warning was released for Winnebago County, a tornado was spotted briefly touching down in a field approximately 3 miles north of Pecatonica at 4:35 pm. The tornado was only on the ground for two minutes and caused no known damage. This was the first documented tornado of the day in Winnebago County but one of 22 that occurred in Illinois on April 17. A lack of damage evidence classified this tornado as an EF-U or “undetermined”.

At approximately 5:00 p.m., the second tornado, later rated EF-1, touched down near Meridian Road and Favor Road in western Winnebago County. The tornado remained on the ground for approximately ten minutes, damaging residences, agricultural buildings, trees, and utility infrastructure before dissipating. Fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services, township road districts, and utility providers responded immediately to conduct damage assessments, clear roadways, secure utilities, and verify the absence of injuries.

Later that evening, a third tornado, developed in the Roscoe area, touching down near Roscoe Road and Old River Road before moving through several residential subdivisions. This EF-1 rated tornado caused the most significant damage of the incident, destroying or heavily damaging multiple homes, downing hundreds of trees, blocking roadways, and disrupting electrical service to approximately 3,300 customers. Multiple fire departments responded under the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS), while law enforcement agencies secured affected neighborhoods, public works agencies initiated debris clearance, and utility providers began infrastructure restoration. Search operations conducted throughout the evening confirmed that no fatalities or significant injuries had occurred.

The Winnebago County Emergency Operations Center maintained operational coordination throughout the incident with assistance from county personnel, neighboring emergency management agencies, municipal officials, and state partners. Continuous communication between ESDA, local governments, emergency responders, healthcare partners, utilities, and voluntary organizations facilitated resource coordination, situational awareness, and support to affected jurisdictions. Established relationships developed through previous planning meetings, regional exercises, and day-to-day collaboration significantly enhanced coordination during both response and recovery operations.

Response Operations

Response priorities focused on life safety, incident stabilization, and protection of property. Emergency responders conducted rapid damage assessments, searched damaged structures, restored access to impacted neighborhoods, secured utilities, established traffic control, and coordinated emergency shelter operations. The American Red Cross opened an emergency shelter at Roscoe Middle School on the evening of April 17, while The Salvation Army provided

meals and refreshments for first responders operating overnight. Hospital emergency managers confirmed the following morning that no storm-related injuries had presented to area hospitals.

Local public works departments, township highway commissioners, utility companies, and volunteer organizations began debris clearance operations immediately following the storms. Damage assessments were coordinated with municipal officials, GIS personnel, and state recovery representatives to document impacts and evaluate potential disaster assistance eligibility. Throughout the response, strong collaboration among local government, emergency management, fire departments, law enforcement, public health, nongovernmental organizations, and state agencies contributed to an efficient and coordinated response effort.

Recovery Operations

Recovery activities began immediately following completion of life safety operations and continued over the subsequent weeks. Initial priorities included detailed damage assessments, debris management planning, restoration of electrical service, assistance to displaced residents, and coordination with state and voluntary organizations. Meetings were conducted with municipal officials, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), voluntary organizations active in disaster (VOAD), utility providers, and nonprofit organizations to determine resource requirements and identify available assistance programs.

To support residents affected by the tornado, Winnebago County coordinated establishment of a Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) at Life Church in Roscoe. The MARC brought together federal, state, local, faith-based, nonprofit, and private-sector partners to provide disaster recovery information, insurance assistance, social services, financial counseling, health resources, and community support. Participating organizations included the Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Department of Insurance, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Winnebago County Health Department, American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Lutheran Emergency Response Team (LERT), Regional Office of Education, Rock River Chaplain's Association, Illinois Realtors Relief Foundation, Catholic Charities, Roscoe Police Department, Winnebago Farm Bureau, YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral, Life Church, and numerous additional community partners.

Federal Recovery Assistance

Although the April 17, 2026 severe weather event did not result in a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration, affected residents and businesses became eligible for important federal recovery assistance through the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

On May 18, 2026, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) issued Administrative Disaster Declaration IL-20025 for the April 17, 2026 Severe Storms and Tornadoes. Stephenson County

was designated as the primary disaster county, with Winnebago County included as a contiguous county, making eligible homeowners, renters, businesses, and private nonprofit organizations potentially eligible for low-interest SBA disaster loans.

The declaration established the following application deadlines:

- **Physical Damage Loan Application Deadline: July 17, 2026**
- **Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Application Deadline: February 18, 2027**

SBA disaster loans became an important recovery resource for residents and businesses experiencing uninsured or underinsured losses. The availability of these loans helped bridge recovery gaps by providing financial assistance for property repairs, replacement of damaged personal property, mitigation improvements, and economic recovery, despite the event not meeting federal thresholds required for broader FEMA Individual Assistance or Public Assistance programs.

As of June 29, 2026, 62 Illinois applicants had submitted SBA disaster loan applications related to Disaster Declaration IL-20025. Of those, 14 applications originated from Winnebago County residents. The SBA had approved more than \$117,000 in disaster loan assistance for Winnebago County applicants and had disbursed approximately \$86,000. Statewide, the SBA had approved more than \$1 million in disaster loans and had disbursed nearly \$210,000, demonstrating the program's value as an important source of financial assistance during recovery.

While the number of applications submitted within Winnebago County was relatively limited, the SBA declaration nevertheless represented a significant recovery milestone by providing affected residents and businesses with access to federal recovery resources that otherwise would not have been available.

An After-Action Review (Hot Wash) was conducted on May 29, 2026, with participating agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of preparedness, response, and recovery operations. The review identified numerous strengths, including proactive preparedness activities, strong interagency relationships, effective Unified Command, rapid emergency response, and exceptional collaboration among local, state, and nongovernmental partners. Participants also identified opportunities to improve neighborhood access control during recovery, enhance debris management planning, strengthen public information efforts, improve common operating picture capabilities, and expand disaster recovery education for local officials. These observations form the basis of the Improvement Plan contained within this report.

Analysis of Core Capabilities

The April 17, 2026 severe weather event required a coordinated response involving numerous local, regional, state, nongovernmental, and private-sector partners. This After-Action Report evaluates response and recovery activities using the applicable Core Capabilities identified within the National Preparedness Goal. The following observations summarize the County's performance, highlight strengths, identify areas for improvement, and establish recommendations intended to enhance preparedness for future severe weather incidents.

Planning

Strength

Preparedness activities conducted prior to the tornado outbreak significantly enhanced the County's response capabilities. During the weeks leading up to the event, Winnebago County ESDA coordinated regular weather briefings and situational updates with emergency management partners, fire departments, law enforcement agencies, municipal officials, healthcare organizations, and critical infrastructure partners. Additionally, a multi-jurisdictional preparedness meeting held on March 30, 2026, clarified local roles and responsibilities, discussed debris management, and strengthened relationships among township, municipal, and county officials. These proactive planning efforts contributed directly to efficient decision-making and coordinated operations during the incident.

Area for Improvement

While preparedness efforts proved effective, participants identified opportunities to expand planning efforts for recovery operations. Existing plans did not sufficiently address scalable debris management, alternate debris staging locations, disaster declaration processes, or recovery coordination following localized tornado events.

Recommendation

Update county emergency plans to include scalable recovery procedures, alternate debris management locations, recovery coordination checklists, and disaster declaration guidance for local jurisdictions.

Public Information and Warning

Strength

The National Weather Service provided timely forecasts and warning information throughout the week preceding the event. Winnebago County ESDA successfully distributed frequent

weather briefings to more than 250 emergency management, fire, law enforcement, and government partners while activating outdoor warning sirens and utilizing IPAWS notifications as tornado warnings were issued. These proactive warning efforts increased situational awareness and provided residents with valuable time to seek shelter.

Area for Improvement

Participants noted that public messaging during the recovery phase could be improved. Unauthorized contractors, sightseers, and social media rumors created unnecessary congestion within damaged neighborhoods and increased public confusion regarding available assistance. Last, outdoor warning sirens were not heard in all locations of Winnebago County.

Recommendation

Develop standardized post-disaster public messaging templates addressing neighborhood access restrictions, contractor awareness, debris collection procedures, disaster assistance resources, and rumor management. Continue to repair and maintain the County's outdoor warning system.

Operational Coordination

Strength

Operational coordination represented one of the County's greatest strengths during this incident. Emergency management personnel successfully coordinated response efforts among municipal governments, township road districts, fire departments, law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, public health, utility providers, hospitals, neighboring emergency management agencies, voluntary organizations, and state partners. Established relationships developed through previous planning meetings and regional exercises significantly enhanced Unified Command and resource coordination throughout response and recovery operations.

Area for Improvement

Following completion of immediate life safety operations, access into damaged subdivisions became increasingly difficult to manage. Contractors, utility personnel, volunteers, media representatives, and members of the public entered affected neighborhoods with limited oversight, creating traffic congestion and complicating ongoing response and recovery activities.

Recommendation

Develop phased neighborhood access control procedures that include resident-only access periods, contractor credentialing, traffic control points, coordinated law enforcement staffing, and public messaging regarding restricted access during recovery operations.

Operational Communications

Strength

Communication between emergency management, fire, law enforcement, public works, healthcare partners, and state agencies remained effective throughout the incident. Continuous information sharing supported rapid decision-making and coordinated resource deployment.

Area for Improvement

Participants identified opportunities to improve the County's common operating picture within the Emergency Operations Center. Several agencies indicated that broader situational awareness and improved interoperability between responding organizations would enhance future operations.

Recommendation

Expand EOC information-sharing capabilities through enhanced status boards, GIS mapping, interoperable communications, and standardized situation reporting.

Mass Care Services

Strength

Mass care operations were implemented rapidly following the tornado. The American Red Cross established an emergency shelter at Roscoe Middle School while The Salvation Army provided meals and refreshments for responders operating throughout the evening and overnight hours. Recovery planning quickly transitioned into establishment of a Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC), providing affected residents with access to numerous governmental and nongovernmental recovery resources.

Area for Improvement

Participant feedback suggested that public awareness of available recovery resources could be improved through earlier and more coordinated outreach efforts.

Recommendation

Develop a standardized recovery communications strategy identifying shelter information, MARC operations, voluntary agency services, and available disaster assistance programs.

Infrastructure Systems

Strength

Utility companies, public works departments, township highway commissioners, and municipal agencies rapidly restored access to damaged neighborhoods by removing debris, reopening roadways, and restoring electrical service. Close coordination between public works and emergency responders minimized additional hazards and supported efficient recovery operations.

Area for Improvement

Damage assessments and debris tracking procedures varied among jurisdictions. Participants also noted challenges associated with identifying alternate debris storage locations when the primary site became unavailable due to flooding.

Recommendation

Enhance infrastructure restoration procedures by establishing standardized debris documentation methods, alternate debris management sites, and resource prioritization guidelines.

Environmental Response, Health, and Safety

Strength

Emergency responders effectively managed immediate hazards associated with damaged structures, downed power lines, natural gas leaks, and storm debris. Safety remained the primary operational objective throughout the incident, resulting in no responder fatalities or serious injuries.

Area for Improvement

The County Debris Management Plan was primarily designed for large-scale disasters and did not provide sufficient operational guidance for a localized tornado event. Existing procedures lacked scalable response options, alternate temporary debris management locations, and decision criteria for utilizing local public works resources versus contracted debris removal services.

Recommendation

Revise the County Debris Management Plan to include scalable response options for small, moderate, and catastrophic incidents; identify primary and alternate debris management sites; establish debris monitoring procedures; and clarify transition criteria between local resources and contracted debris removal operations. Future revisions should also include responder

safety considerations related to solar photovoltaic systems and other emerging post-disaster hazards identified during the After-Action Review.

Community Recovery

Strength

Recovery efforts demonstrated exceptional collaboration among county government, municipalities, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, private-sector partners, and federal recovery programs. The establishment of the Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) provided residents with centralized access to recovery services while the U.S. Small Business Administration Administrative Disaster Declaration expanded financial recovery opportunities for eligible homeowners, renters, businesses, and nonprofit organizations. Together, these initiatives strengthened the County's Whole Community approach to disaster recovery by connecting affected residents with local, state, and federal assistance resources.

Area for Improvement

Participant feedback and recovery discussions indicated that many residents were unfamiliar with SBA disaster assistance programs, eligibility requirements, loan application procedures, and the types of damages eligible for assistance. Several residents mistakenly believed SBA disaster loans were available only to businesses or were unaware that homeowners and renters could also qualify for assistance. Additional public education and targeted outreach could improve participation in future federal recovery programs.

Recommendation

Develop standardized public information materials and recovery outreach procedures explaining available federal and state disaster assistance programs, including SBA disaster loans, eligibility requirements, application deadlines, and available recovery resources. Future recovery operations should include coordinated outreach through public information officers, municipal partners, social media, community meetings, and Multi-Agency Resource Centers to maximize awareness and participation in available assistance programs.

Improvement Plan

The following Improvement Plan identifies corrective actions developed through the After-Action Review process and participant feedback. These actions are intended to strengthen county preparedness, improve interagency coordination, enhance recovery operations, and increase community resilience. Winnebago County ESDA should monitor implementation of these actions through the County Emergency Management Committee and incorporate progress into future training, exercises, and plan revisions.

Core Capability	Observation	Corrective Action	Lead Agency	Priority	Target Completion
Planning	Existing recovery plans require additional detail for localized disasters.	Revise the County Emergency Operations Plan to include scalable recovery procedures, localized tornado response guidance, and recovery checklists for municipal officials.	Winnebago County ESDA	High	12 Months
Planning	Recovery planning focused primarily on large-scale disasters.	Develop incident-specific recovery templates for small, moderate, and catastrophic events.	Winnebago County ESDA	Medium	18 Months
Operational Coordination	Access into damaged neighborhoods became increasingly difficult to	Develop a phased neighborhood access control plan that includes resident-only access periods, contractor	ESDA / Law Enforcement / Municipal Police Departments/Winnebago County Highway Dept.	High	6 Months

Core Capability	Observation	Corrective Action	Lead Agency	Priority	Target Completion
	control during recovery operations due to contractors, volunteers, media, and sightseers entering impacted areas.	credentialing, traffic control points, and coordinated law enforcement staffing.			
Operational Coordination	Recovery coordination among agencies could be further standardized.	Develop a Recovery Coordination Annex identifying agency responsibilities during transition from response to recovery.	ESDA	Medium	12 Months
Operational Communications	Agencies requested improved situational awareness within the Emergency Operations Center.	Expand Common Operating Picture capabilities through GIS mapping, status boards, WebEOC (or equivalent), standardized Situation Reports, and resource tracking.	ESDA / GIS / County IT/Winnebago Co. PIO Group	High	12 Months
Operational Communications	Communication with field personnel varied	Review interoperable communications procedures and conduct	ESDA / Fire / Law Enforcement/County IT	Medium	Annually

Core Capability	Observation	Corrective Action	Lead Agency	Priority	Target Completion
	during extended recovery operations.	annual communications exercises involving municipal, county, healthcare, and utility partners.			
Public Information & Warning	Social media rumors and unofficial information created confusion following the tornado.	Develop a Rumor Control Annex and establish procedures for monitoring and responding to misinformation during disaster operations.	ESDA / Public Information Officers	High	6 Months
Public Information & Warning	Residents were uncertain about contractor access, debris collection, and available assistance.	Develop pre-scripted recovery messaging addressing contractor safety, debris removal schedules, MARC operations, disaster assistance, and neighborhood access restrictions.	ESDA / Municipal PIOs	High	6 Months
Mass Care Services	Recovery resources were well coordinated but could be	Develop standardized MARC activation procedures and public information materials	ESDA / American Red Cross / The Salvation Army	Medium	12 Months

Core Capability	Observation	Corrective Action	Lead Agency	Priority	Target Completion
	publicized more effectively.	that identify participating agencies and available services.			
Infrastructure Systems	Damage assessment and debris tracking procedures varied among jurisdictions.	Standardize Initial Damage Assessment documentation and debris reporting procedures across municipalities and townships.	ESDA / Municipal Public Works	High	12 Months
Environmental Response, Health & Safety	The County Debris Management Plan lacked scalable procedures for localized tornado events.	Revise the Debris Management Plan to include scalable response options, estimated debris volumes, local versus contracted cleanup resources, and debris monitoring procedures.	ESDA / Public Works	High	12 Months
Environmental Response, Health & Safety	Alternate temporary debris storage sites were not fully identified.	ID and pre-approve primary and alternate debris management locations throughout the County.	ESDA / Highway Department / Municipal Public Works	High	12 Months
Environmental Response, Health & Safety	Decision-making regarding local versus contracted debris removal	Develop decision criteria for utilizing municipal resources, mutual aid, or contracted debris	ESDA / Highway Department	Medium	12 Months

Core Capability	Observation	Corrective Action	Lead Agency	Priority	Target Completion
	could be improved.	removal services based on incident complexity and debris volume.			
Environmental Response, Health & Safety	Emerging hazards such as damaged solar photovoltaic systems were identified during the incident.	Incorporate solar energy hazards and other emerging technologies into responder training and operational procedures.	Fire Departments / ESDA	Medium	18 Months
Community Recovery	Local officials expressed varying levels of familiarity with disaster declaration processes and recovery funding.	Conduct annual recovery workshops covering disaster declarations, FEMA Public Assistance, Individual Assistance, damage assessment, and recovery planning.	ESDA / Illinois Emergency Management Agency	Medium	Annually
Community Recovery	Relationships developed before the disaster significantly improved	Continue annual multi-jurisdictional preparedness meetings with municipal leaders, township officials, healthcare partners, public works agencies,	ESDA	High	Annually

Core Capability	Observation	Corrective Action	Lead Agency	Priority	Target Completion
	response effectiveness.	utilities, volunteer organizations, and private-sector partners.			
Community Resilience	Public preparedness remains essential for reducing disaster impacts.	Expand community outreach efforts promoting severe weather preparedness, family emergency plans, warning systems, and disaster recovery resources.	ESDA / Public Information Officers	Medium	Ongoing
Training & Exercises	Participant feedback identified opportunities to validate recovery procedures through future exercises.	Conduct a countywide tornado functional exercise emphasizing recovery operations, debris management, MARC activation, public information, and neighborhood access control.	ESDA / Whole Community Partners	High	Within 24 Months

Improvement Plan Management

Winnebago County ESDA should monitor implementation of this Improvement Plan through quarterly reviews with participating agencies. Progress should be documented and incorporated into future Emergency Management Committee meetings, training

initiatives, plan revisions, and Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) exercises. Completed corrective actions should be validated through future exercises or actual incidents to ensure improvements have been successfully integrated into county operations.

Successful implementation of this Improvement Plan will strengthen Winnebago County's ability to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the impacts of future severe weather events while reinforcing the strong partnerships that contributed to the successful response during the April 17, 2026 tornado incident.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Incident Timeline

The following timeline summarizes significant operational events associated with the April 2026 severe weather incident.

Date/Time	Event
April 12-17	National Weather Service issues daily severe weather briefings.
April 14	Tornado Warning issued; outdoor warning sirens activated.
April 15	Additional severe weather impacts county; continued monitoring.
April 16	ESDA distributes updated weather briefings and preparedness information.
April 17 (Morning)	Enhanced weather monitoring initiated.
April 17 – 12:40 hours	Tornado Watch issued for Winnebago County.
April 17 – 17:15 hours	Tornado Warning issued; outdoor warning sirens activated.
April 17 – 16:35 hours to 16:37 hours	First tornado (EF-U) touches down in western Winnebago County.
April 17 – 16:57 hours to 17:07 hours	Second tornado (EF-1) impacts unincorporated Harrison, IL. area damaging multiple trees, outbuildings and a home near Gummow Road.
April 17 – 19:03 hours to 19:17 hours	The third (EF-1) tornado struck near Freeport Rd. and

Date/Time	Event
	Bates Rd and travels southeast toward multiple subdivisions. Significant residential damage occurred to multiple homes in addition to tree and outbuilding damage.
April 17 – 17:15 hours	Search and rescue operations initiated.
April 17 – 22:45 hours	Emergency shelter opened by the American Red Cross.
April 17–18	Damage assessments begin.
April 18	Utility restoration operations continue.
April 18 – 13:00 hours	Press conference held at Roscoe Village Hall.
April 19 – 11:00 hours	Meeting with IEMA Director, Ted Berger, IEMA Operations Director Chris Dodd, IL. Senator Andrew Chesney, IL. State Representatives Cabello and LaHood, IEMA Officials, Winnebago County leaders and leaders from Rockton and Roscoe Village.
April 19 – 18:00 hours	County recovery coordination meetings continue.
April 24 – 14:00 hours	MARC established to assist affected residents.
May 29 – 09:00 hours	County After-Action Hot Wash conducted.

Appendix B – Participating Agencies

The following agencies participated in preparedness, response, recovery, or the After-Action Review.

County Government

- Winnebago County Emergency Services and Disaster Agency
- Winnebago County Sheriff's Office
- Winnebago County Highway Department
- Winnebago County Health Department
- Winnebago County GIS
- Winnebago County Administration

Municipal Governments

- City of Rockford
- Village of Roscoe
- Village of Rockton
- Village of Machesney Park
- Village of Winnebago
- Other participating municipalities

Fire & EMS

- Rockton Fire Protection District
- Harlem-Roscoe Fire Protection District
- City of Loves Park Fire Department
- North Park Fire Protection District
- Northwest Fire Protection District
- Rockford Fire Department
- MABAS Division 8 Agencies

Law Enforcement

- Winnebago County Sheriff's Office
- Roscoe Police Department
- Rockton Police Department
- Illinois State Police
- Additional municipal police agencies

Public Works

- County Highway Department
- Municipal Public Works Departments
- Township Highway Commissioners

- Illinois Department of Transportation

Healthcare

- Mercy Health
- OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center
- UW Health Hospital
- Northern Illinois Preparedness and Response Coalition
- Local dialysis providers
- Regional healthcare coalition

Utilities

- ComEd
- Nicor Gas
- Local telecommunications providers
- Public water systems

State Agencies

- Illinois Emergency Management Agency
- Illinois Department of Human Services
- Illinois Department of Insurance
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
- Illinois Department on Aging

Volunteer & Community Organizations

- American Red Cross
 - The Salvation Army
 - Lutheran Emergency Response Team (LERT)
 - Catholic Charities
 - Rock River Chaplain's Association
 - Regional Office of Education
 - Winnebago Farm Bureau
 - YWCA Child Care Resource & Referral
 - Illinois Realtors Relief Foundation
 - Life Church
 - Additional VOAD partners
-

Appendix C – Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC)

Purpose

Following the April 17, 2026 tornadoes, Winnebago County Emergency Services and Disaster Agency (ESDA), in partnership with the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office, the American Red Cross, and numerous governmental, nonprofit, faith-based, and private-sector organizations, established a Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) to assist residents affected by the severe weather event.

The MARC served as a centralized recovery resource, allowing disaster survivors to access multiple agencies and organizations at one location. By bringing together local, state, nonprofit, and volunteer partners, the County streamlined the recovery process, improved coordination among service providers, and ensured residents could obtain timely information regarding available assistance programs.

The Multi-Agency Resource Center was hosted at Life Church, 5910 Elevator Road, Roscoe, Illinois, and operated on Friday, April 24, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. The event was widely promoted through county social media platforms, local media outlets, municipal partners, and participating organizations to maximize community awareness.

Participating Organizations

The success of the Multi-Agency Resource Center was made possible through the collaborative efforts of governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based partners, healthcare organizations, and community service providers. The following organizations staffed or supported the MARC.

County Agencies

- Winnebago County Emergency Services and Disaster Agency (ESDA)
- Winnebago County Sheriff's Office
- Winnebago County Health Department

State of Illinois

- Illinois Department of Human Services
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Illinois Department of Insurance
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)
- Illinois Department on Aging

Healthcare Partners

- Mercyhealth at Home

Public Safety

- Roscoe Police Department

Volunteer and Faith-Based Organizations

- American Red Cross
- The Salvation Army
- Lutheran Emergency Response Team (LERT)
- Rock River Chaplain's Association
- Catholic Charities

Education and Community Organizations

- Regional Office of Education
- YWCA Child Care Resource & Referral
- Winnebago Farm Bureau
- Illinois REALTORS® Relief Foundation

Host Organization

- Life Church

Services Provided

Residents attending the Multi-Agency Resource Center were able to receive information, referrals, and assistance in numerous areas, including:

- Disaster recovery assistance
- Insurance guidance
- Health and human services information
- SNAP enrollment assistance
- Disability resources
- Aging services
- Emotional and spiritual support
- Crisis counseling referrals

- Housing and recovery referrals
- Tree debris cleanup assistance
- Volunteer assistance coordination
- Child care resources
- Agricultural assistance
- Pet assistance resources
- Disaster case management referrals

Participants were also encouraged to bring identification and insurance documentation to facilitate assistance and were provided educational materials regarding contractor fraud prevention and disaster-related scams.

Outcomes

The Multi-Agency Resource Center represented one of the County's most significant recovery initiatives following the April 17, 2026 tornadoes. By consolidating recovery services into a single location, affected residents were able to efficiently connect with organizations offering immediate assistance, recovery guidance, and long-term support.

The MARC also strengthened coordination among governmental agencies, volunteer organizations, healthcare providers, and community partners by improving communication, reducing duplication of effort, and promoting a unified approach to disaster recovery. Participant feedback and observations gathered during the After-Action Review identified the MARC as a highly successful recovery operation and an example of the County's commitment to a Whole Community approach to emergency management.



WINNEBAGO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

OPEN TO ALL WINNEBAGO COUNTY RESIDENTS

MULTI-AGENCY RESOURCE CENTER (MARC)



OPEN TOMORROW
FRIDAY, APRIL 24TH



**LIFE CHURCH
IN ROSCOE**
5910 Elevator Road
Roscoe, IL 61073

**2:00 PM –
7:00 PM**

A multi-agency team will be on-site to provide information, resources and assistance for storm recovery.

SOME OF THE SERVICES AND SUPPORT AVAILABLE:



Disaster Assistance



Tree Clean Up Assistance



Health & Human Services
Information



Emotional & Spiritual Support



Insurance Guidance



Pet Assistance Resources



**PLEASE
REMEMBER TO BRING:**



IDENTIFICATION



**INSURANCE
PAPERWORK**



**BEWARE
OF SCAMS**

Be cautious of anyone asking for payment, personal information, or offering unsolicited repair services.
*If you think you are being scammed,
contact the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office.*



**NON-EMERGENCY:
815-282-2600**



IN AN EMERGENCY, CALL 911

TOGETHER, WE CAN RECOVER. TOGETHER, WE ARE WINNEBAGO COUNTY.

Figure C-1. Public information flyer distributed by Winnebago County ESDA, the Winnebago County Sheriff's Office, and the American Red Cross announcing the Multi-Agency Resource Center. The flyer informed residents of available recovery services, event location, operating hours, and precautions regarding contractor fraud and disaster-related scams.

Appendix D – Federal Recovery Assistance

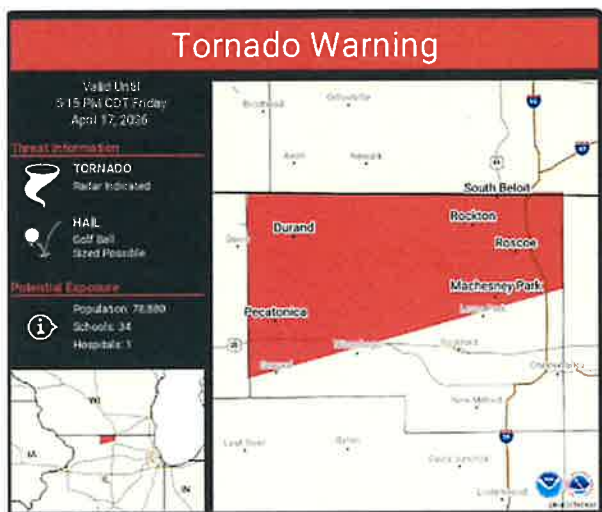
SBA Administrative Disaster Declaration IL-20025

Declaration Date	May 18, 2026
Primary County	Stephenson County
Contiguous County	Winnebago County
Physical Damage Loan Deadline	July 17, 2026
EIDL Deadline	February 18, 2027
Illinois Applications (6/29/26)	62
Winnebago County Applications	14
Approved for Winnebago County	\$117,000+
Disbursed to Winnebago County	\$86,000+
Statewide Approved	\$1 million+
Statewide Disbursed	Nearly \$210,000

Appendix E – National Weather Service Overview

(Tornado #1)

Tornado Warning - 4:09 PM CDT



BULLETIN - EAS ACTIVATION REQUESTED

Tornado Warning
National Weather Service Chicago/Romeoville
4:09 PM CDT Fri Apr 17 2026

The National Weather Service in Chicago has issued a

* Tornado Warning for...
Winnebago County in north central Illinois...

* Until 5:15 PM CDT.

* At 4:09 PM CDT, a severe thunderstorm capable of producing a tornado was located over Dakota, or near Freeport, moving east at 40 mph.

HAZARD...Tornado and golf ball size hail

SOURCE...Radar indicated rotation.

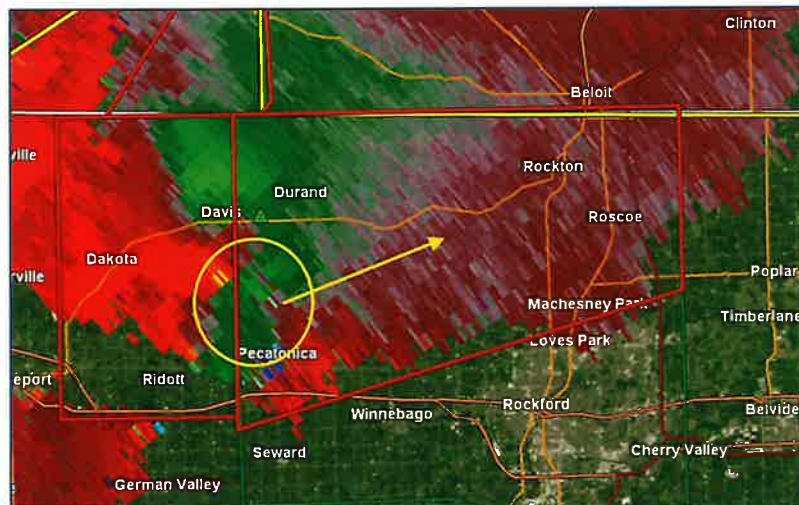
IMPACT...Flying debris will be dangerous to those caught without shelter. Mobile homes will be damaged or destroyed. Damage to roofs, windows, and vehicles will occur. Tree damage is likely.

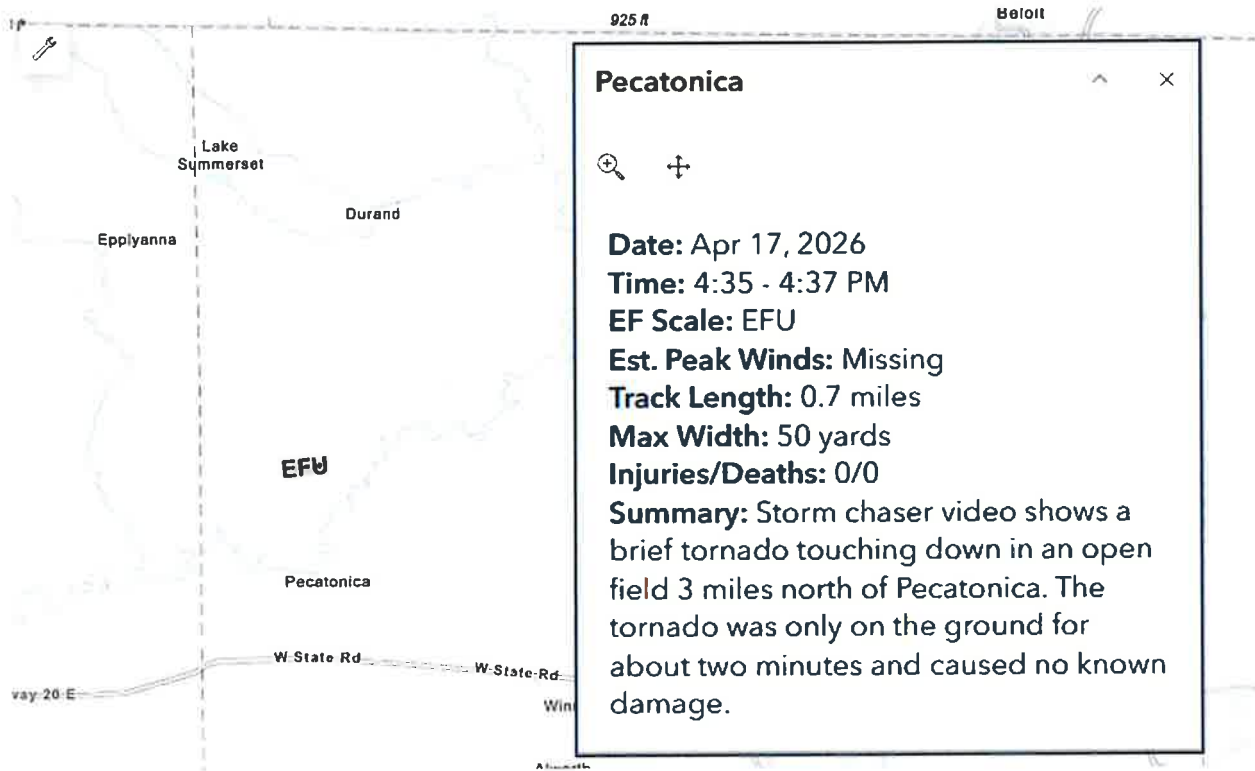
* This dangerous storm will be near...
Durand around 4:25 PM CDT.

Other locations in the path of this tornadic thunderstorm include Machesney Park, Roscoe, Rockton and South Beloit.

NWS Chat - 4:41 PM CDT

New low-level meso developing on southern flank of storm - just north of Pecatonica. Tornado threat continues from there northeast. ALSO - wind-driven very large hail (up to baseball) possible!!!

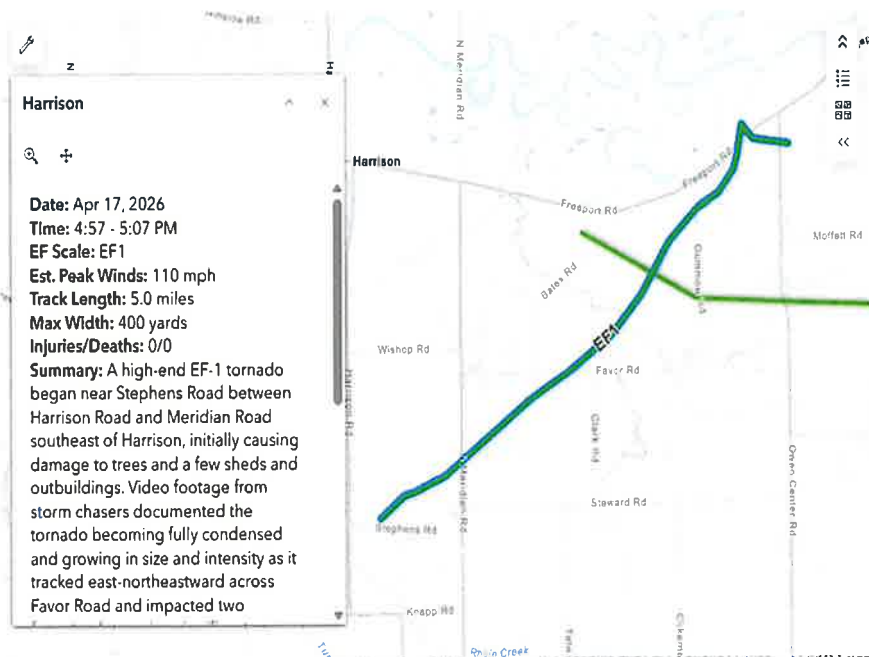




(Tornado #2)

Tornado Warning - 507 PM CDT





farmsteads, causing significant damage to a few outbuildings and snapping and uprooting multiple trees. Additional storm chaser footage showed the tornado intensifying again as it tracked northeastward across Gummow Road and then reaching peak intensity as it impacted a property along Freeport Road. At this property, the majority of an older two-story house's roof was removed, several trees were snapped, and an old barn was destroyed. The footage then captured the tornado making a sharp turn to the southeast and crossing Freeport Road once again before roping out and eventually dissipating in open fields near Owen Center Road.

NWS Chat - Reports



NWS - Chicago - Mark Ratzer 5:16 PM
 Near Rockton from storm chaser.



MEDIA - WREX Rockford IL - John Jurgens 5:52 PM
 Delayed hail report from Lake Summerset
 997506c43b2e23acb26ae0e4ec1a4236 ▼



(Tornado #3)

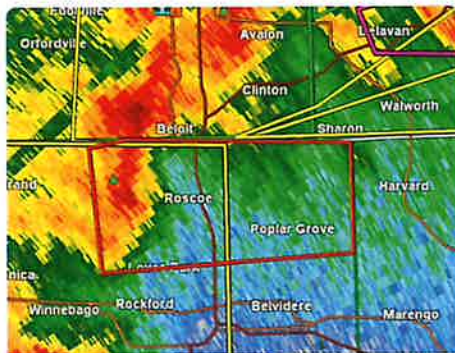
NWSChat - 7:11 PM - Tornado Warning



NWS - Chicago - Mark Ratzer 7:11 PM

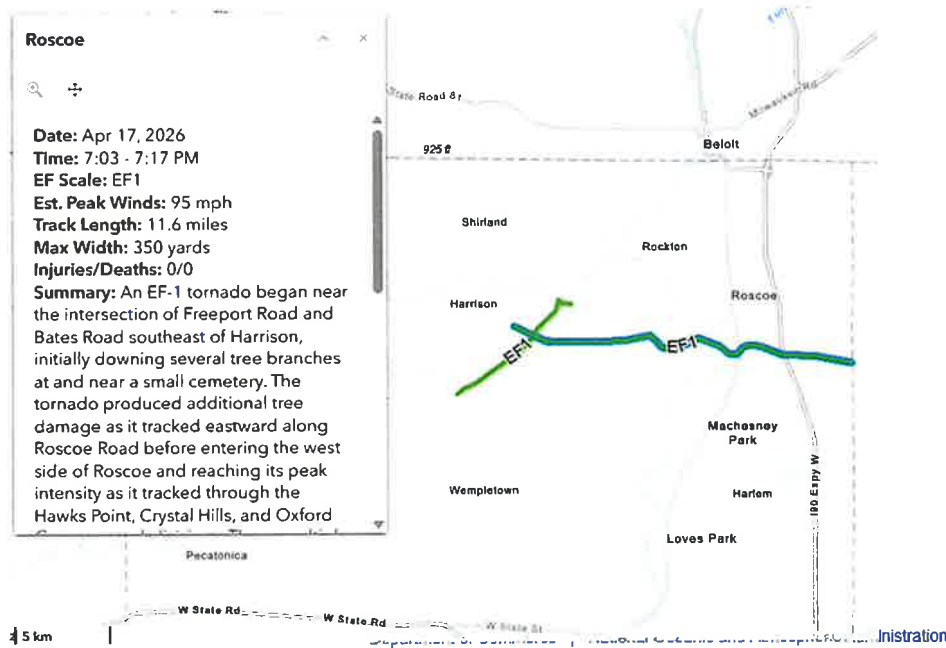
This tornado warning in association with the cell noted earlier. Imminent threat would be about to cross the Rock River about half way between Rockton and Roscoe.

Image.png



In between these two chats

At 7:08 PM A chat came through to indicate a Tornado Warning coming shortly for Winnebago and Boone Counties



Commons subdivisions. There, multiple homes had portions of their roofs torn off or damaged and had sections of siding and fascia peeled off. A few homes also had their garage doors blown in, leading to parts of their garage walls getting blown out. Numerous trees were also uprooted or damaged in these subdivisions. The tornado then continued eastward, knocking down several power poles along Gleasman Road and damaging a nearby farm outbuilding before crossing the Rock River. East of the Rock River, the tornado continued to cause extensive tree damage. Multiple additional houses sustained roof and fascia damage from the tornado as well. The tornado appeared to dissipate just as it reached the Winnebago-Boone county line. Extensive straight-line wind damage was also observed in close proximity to the tornadic circulation, particularly along its southern flank.

Appendix F – Menti Survey Results from After Action Review

🗨️ In one or two words, what was your main role the night of the tornado response? 👤 20 / 20 🗨️ 29

Most popular

none 3

Also prominent

clear roads 2 incident command - police 2 public works 2

Other responses

all others calls for hrfd 1 change of quarters 1 clearing roads 1 coad in future 1
drone 1 ema 1 eoc 1 eoc head 1 fd incident response 1 fire 1
fire apparatus engineer 1 i did not hear anything 1 i was in lake village in 1
i was out of town 1 law enforcement 1 municipal operations 1
my property was involved 1 scene review 1 situational awareness 1 support 1

📊 Do you feel like you were prepared for the tornado response? 👤 19 / 20

Yes! Locked-in and confident!

6

No idea- just followed along.

4

I had a good idea of what to do.

9

20%

40%

60%

80%

100%

Which statement(s) are true?

19 / 20

> Tornado sirens provided clear warning of impending danger.



> My weather radio provided clear warning of impending danger.



> NWS wireless emergency alerts provided clear warning of impending danger.



> NWS weather briefings, SLACK channel and internet intelligence provided clear warning of danger.



> Weather apps on my phone provided clear warning of impending danger.



What went well the night of the tornado response?

19 / 20 22

Working Together

First responders, fire dept.

Fire /Ems response

Agency collaboration.

Different departments coming together and working as one

First Responders

The different departments working together.

unsure

Police/sheriff traffic restriction to effected areas

Comed prompt replacement of power line poles

Response of my crew

Good teamwork. Good cooperate between agencies.
Rapid deployment of resources.

Once IC was established, seemed to follow better

Communications with responders and other resources went well. The response was an excellent bright spot.

Working together / communication

Coordinated effort Security of affected areas

Response by police, fire, public works. Fire command set up, unified command, quick response by emergency agencies

Responders working in unison

Rockford and Chicago TV were accurate sources of information

Fire/police/pw/township

RFD dispatcher calling and providing information about pending calls, especially when the CAD system went down, allowing me to handle all other calls

Timing of the storms

What tools or training would have helped you?

19 / 20 24

CAD working.

I didn't have a role in response

Any and all

NWS chat

More training to optimize the EOC use would have been good

Mock exercise

N/A

Electricity detectors for responders

NWS Chat

More EOC backup training

More pre-disaster, multi agency training. More communication of available resources

Emergency Trailer Loaded With All The Necessary Tools

Multi-agency planning and training

More training and working together with multiple departments

Nws chat. Practice exercise.

More staffing.

Table top exercise

System/Tool alerting what specific tools/resources/personnel is needed at what location

More training for municipalities on disaster declaration process. Education on county EOP.

Public official emergency management training

County Wide disaster training on an annual basis. Have never done one in Winnebago count in my 13 years in this area. This was a consistent thing in other areas I've worked downstate.

Better command and coordination from County EOC. Activation of appropriate partners within jurisdiction. Clearly defined roles and expectations for community response and recovery partners.

A system to capture and share images of damage to help with triage efforts

What could we do better in the next disaster response?

17 / 20 19

Sharing of disaster data.

Prepared list of resources

Being better prepared. More training.

Additional back ups and training in EOC

Better planning to prepare for after the event

messaging

Scene management

Hard to say; this went as well as it could go

Establishing a Unified Command earlier.

Pre-identify roles & responsibilities.

Preparing beforehand

Having a volunteer list on hand to help with the smaller stuff.

Prepare and train. Improve the disaster infrastructure locally and throughout the county.

Pushing out messaging for public awareness

More EOC resources. Getting information signs out to residents.

Implement an anti-tornado device

Learn from this event so similar obstacles are avoided

This is a good step. After action meetings and trainings are necessary. More training before the incident. HR did a great job in calling for resources early.

Sheriffs mobile command unit on scene

How would you rate our impact on the public?

16 / 20

Public didn't need us.

0

We could have done more

2

We helped a good amount.

9

We made a huge difference.

5

20%

40%

60%

80%

100%

Appendix G – Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AAR	After-Action Report
ARC	American Red Cross
COP	Common Operating Picture
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
ESDA	Emergency Services and Disaster Agency
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HSEEP	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program
IAP	Incident Action Plan
ICS	Incident Command System
IEMA	Illinois Emergency Management Agency
IPAWS	Integrated Public Alert and Warning System
MARC	Multi-Agency Resource Center
MABAS	Mutual Aid Box Alarm System
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NWS	National Weather Service
PDA	Preliminary Damage Assessment
PIO	Public Information Officer
SitRep	Situation Report
VOAD	Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

Appendix H – Lessons Learned Summary

Strengths

- Outstanding interagency cooperation.
- Strong preparedness planning.
- Excellent weather monitoring.
- Effective Unified Command.
- Rapid public warning.
- Strong volunteer support.
- Successful shelter operations.
- Effective MARC coordination.

- Strong public works response.
- Excellent utility restoration.
- Positive relationships between county and municipal agencies.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Improve neighborhood access control.
 - Expand debris management planning.
 - Improve rumor control.
 - Improve recovery communications.
 - Strengthen disaster declaration knowledge.
 - Improve Common Operating Picture.
 - Expand EOC utilization.
 - Improve contractor credentialing.
 - Improve public messaging during recovery.
 - Continue annual preparedness meetings.
-

Appendix I – References

The following documents were used in preparation of this After-Action Report:

- Winnebago County April 2026 Severe Weather After-Action Report
 - Incident Chronology
 - National Weather Service Warning Timeline
 - Winnebago County Lessons Learned Summary
 - Rockton Fire Protection District After-Action Report
 - Menti Hot Wash Survey Results
 - Multi-Agency Resource Center Planning Documents
 - Illinois Emergency Management Agency Guidance
 - FEMA Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP)
 - National Incident Management System (NIMS)
 - National Preparedness Goal
-

Appendix J – Acknowledgements

Winnebago County extends its appreciation to the hundreds of responders, public servants, volunteers, nonprofit organizations, utilities, healthcare partners, businesses, elected officials, and community members who contributed to the successful response and recovery following the April 2026 severe weather event.

The professionalism, dedication, and collaboration demonstrated throughout the incident reflect the strength of Winnebago County's Whole Community approach to emergency management. The lessons documented within this report will continue to improve preparedness and resilience for future disasters.