

What You Practice Is What You Do: Joplin Tornado Rescue/Recovery

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Oologah-Talala emergency medical services (OTEMS) responded to the Joplin, MO, EF5 tornado (May 22, 2011) through an Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) request between the states of Missouri and Oklahoma. OTEMS was part of a multiagency EMS strike team consisting of 5 advanced life support ambulances and 2 command vehicles. The strike team transported more than 20 patients during their 24-hour deployment in Joplin. The team was able to provide assets for the EMAC.



The cover photograph was taken at 5:22 PM on May 23, 2011, from St John's Hospital, looking to the west. Much of what is in the foreground is debris from medical office buildings that were destroyed by the tornado. The EMAC allowed rapid ingress to the disaster area and ensured that crews had access to what they needed to perform the duties necessary to complete the tasks at hand.

A total of 183 patients were evacuated from St John's Hospital under some of the harshest conditions imaginable. The staff completed the evacuation using only a few EMS units, but mainly sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks.

One of many lessons learned was for all levels of the organization to participate in training and exercising: "What you practice is what you do."

Have your photograph of a disaster event/response effort considered for the cover of *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*. See the Instructions for Authors at www.dmphp.org for details.