

At 5 p.m. today, a F3 category tornado hit the downtown area of Craver Wood. Damages are expected to cost over \$1 million and recovery may take up to 6 months.

Mayor of Craver Wood, Ella Cox, said that there have been hundreds of buildings damaged and multiple power lines have fallen, causing power to be out in the downtown area.

Cox asks that citizens stay away from the damaged roads and try to avoid traveling to the downtown area as much as possible. If transportation is needed, buses will be provided. She explains because the tornado has no signs of circling back, road recovery will take up to 4 days

“The tornado has dissipated at this time,” said Cox. “There is no active threat.”

Mayor Cox said the damages cannot be evaluated due to multiple thunderstorms passing through the area making it difficult for services to remove debris. Assessments have been halted until further notice.

“I have also been in contact with the governor about getting more help here as far as law enforcement goes,” said Cox.

Two emergency shelters have been provided at the YMCA outside the downtown area. The Norm Elementary building is also being used as an emergency shelter. All essential resources will be provided for those in need. As of today, there are approximately 20 to 30 citizens who were mildly injured and are currently residing in the shelters.

FEMA representative Aidan Mccollick also adds that FEMA is currently arriving at the scene and creating plans to help citizens who may not have access to the emergency shelters.

“I would recommend walking as safely as possible to the emergency shelters is the best way to travel,” said Mccollick.

Fire chief Ria Mark adds that the fire department is working with volunteers and neighboring departments to conduct a search and rescue team to aid those who may have been unaccounted for.

Mark also states two fire trucks and two firefighters are stuck at the downtown warehouse as a result of damages. She adds that there are plans in place to call the neighboring Colvardville fire department to help rescue those who are trapped.

Fires also erupted at the warehouse due to fallen power lines. Mark states that her team has contained the fire and that they are now focused on aiding those who are currently stuck.

Izzy Espolie, director of transportation services, says that progress to clear the blocked roads has been slow due to ongoing weather and safety concerns. She also adds that public

transportation services will be suspended until further notice and buses have been redirected to aid in evacuation efforts.

“We encourage those who live in the outskirts of downtown to stay put if their shelters are unharmed,” said Espolie. “If shelter is needed, we recommend heading to one of the three emergency shelters.”

Espolie also adds that roads such as Trade and Tryon have been closed off until further notice.

Cox states that the Bank of America and the warehouse located in downtown Craver Wood has been severely damaged, with broken windows and fallen trees surrounding the area. Both buildings will be closed for repairs as of today.

It is also said that upcoming thunderstorms are moving towards the downtown area but the duration for them is unknown. These storms are predicted to flood the downtown area as well as parts of the uptown area.

“Thunderstorms tend to move pretty fast,” said McCollick. “We expected them to hit the town within the next few hours.”

Power is down all throughout the downtown area. Mayor Cox announces that there is no set time for when power will be restored, and any updates will be released to the public as soon as possible. If power is needed, authorities suggest going to the shelters or using a generator.

Bradle announces that there have been 3 reported fatalities, and they are awaiting for any updates.

Mark states that there will be a memorial piece built to commemorate those who lost their lives in the tornado.

“We plan on constructing a memorial piece at the center of downtown to commemorate the lives lost during this tragedy,” she said. “We also hope to have community members involved with the construction.”

Departments across the state have offered their assistance to Craver Wood through volunteer sign ups and donations.

“As we’ve been in contact with departments in other parts of the state, they have mentioned they will do anything they can to help us,” said Bradle. “That also includes opening donations from neighboring cities being ideas for the plan.”

Cox states that many of the older buildings collapsed due to fragile infrastructure and there are plans for stronger materials to be used to prevent future damages.

Norm Elementary School will be closed for emergency sheltering until further notice.

“As for other elementary, middle and high schools, we will keep them open as long as it is safe to do so,” said Bradle. “Damaged schools will be closed until the roads are cleared.”

Once roads are safe for use, Norm Elementary School students will attend Cotswold Elementary School for the time being.

The hospital located directly outside of downtown Craver Wood is at its maximum capacity. Mark states that there is one other hospital located uptown that citizens can call if needed.

“We are also asking neighboring towns such as Colvardville about their capacity and their hospitals to see if patients can be sent over,” she said.

Bradle states that due to 911 dispatches having a large sum of calls to answer, that citizens should only call if absolutely necessary.