

Site set up in Douglas County Fairgrounds for storm-damaged wood waste

Echo Press staff report
ALEXANDRIA — Pope/Douglas Solid Waste Management has set up a wood waste drop site for those in Pope and Douglas counties who experienced recent storm damage.

The temporary tree/wood waste stop site was created to provide additional capacity for locally generated wood waste caused from the rash of recent severe storms.

Solid waste management said the site was developed with swift action in partnership with Douglas County Land and Resource Management, Douglas County Public Works, Douglas County Ag Society and Douglas County Emergency Response.

The site is located on the southwest field of the Douglas County Fairgrounds property. Enter off County Road 82 and follow on-site signs and barricades.



Contributed

Tree branches that were damaged by the severe storms and tornadoes in Douglas County may be taken to a wood waste drop site on Fridays and Saturdays, starting this weekend, June 3-4.

The site will be open Fridays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

At this time, the site will only be open until July 30. It will only accept twigs, brush, branches and logs.

Materials that will not be accepted are leaves, grass clippings, stumps or root balls, soil and garbage. Items must be unbagged. The site will be staffed and monitored for compliance.

Rural finance authority clears way for disaster loans

DOUGLAS COUNTY — The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Rural Finance Authority Board determined that an emergency exists in parts of Minnesota due to recent severe weather, which makes zero-interest loans available for Minnesota farmers whose operations may be suffering from damage caused by storms.

The resolution declares an emergency for the following counties: Aitkin, Becker, Beltrami, Benton, Big Stone, Brown, Carlton, Chippewa, Chisago, Clay, Clearwater, Cook, Cottonwood, Douglas, Faribault, Grant, Isanti, Jackson, Kanabec, Kandiyohi, Kittson, Koochiching, Lac Qui Parle, Lake, Lake of the Woods, Lincoln, Lyon, Mahnomen, Marshall, Meeker, Morrison, Murray, Nobles, Norman, Otter Tail, Pennington, Pine, Pipestone, Polk, Pope, Red Lake, Renville, Rock, Roseau, Saint Louis, Sherburne, Stearns, Steele, Stevens, Swift, Todd, Traverse, Wadena, Wilkin, Yellow Medicine, and adjacent counties.

The Disaster Recovery Loan Program can be used to help

cover lost revenue or expenses not covered by insurance. The funds can be used to help clean up, repair, or replace farm structures and replace livestock.

The declaration applies to physical property damage and/or death of livestock taking place due to heavy rains and high winds in May 2022.

Eligible farmers must have received at least 50% of their annual gross income from farming for the past three years and will work through their bank to secure the loans from the RFA. Interest rates on the RFA portion of the loan are currently set at 0.0%.

The Minnesota Legislature this spring appropriated \$2.5 million in additional funds to replenish the revolving loan account that funds the Disaster Recovery Loan program, which has recently been used for highly pathogenic avian influenza poultry losses, drought, and COVID-19 expenses.

More information on the Disaster Recovery Loan is on the MDA website at www.mda.state.mn.us/disasterloan.

INJURIES

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As of Tuesday, May 31, Anderson said the American Red Cross was able to view 101 homes in the city of Forada and Hudson Township and that 29 were destroyed, 26 have major damage while the rest have minor damage.

Clean up continues in the city of Forada, Hudson Township, and is well underway across many areas of Douglas County. The National Weather Service toured the damaged areas on Tuesday, May 31.

Anderson said the Forada Fire Station has been staffed with volunteers, who spent Tuesday registering homeowners and entering the damage area to inspect their properties. More than 135 had registered as of 4 p.m. on May 31.

Contractors, insurance professionals and volunteers with a relationship to a resident, were allowed into the Forada area to remove trees from homes, clear debris and begin the clean-up process. All other people are being asked to stay away from the area.

According to the National Weather Service's Facebook page for the Twin Cities area, survey teams are assessing the damage across parts of Douglas and Todd counties. Nelson and Osakis areas were also hit hard and had extensive damage.

Stay away from downed power lines

During the storm, many trees and power poles were toppled and blocked roads in the Forada area. Authorities responded to several propane gas leaks and there were widespread reports of hail and

damaging winds as well.

The Runestone Electric Association reported that more than 6,000 of its service accounts were without power Monday. Crews worked through the night and will continue working to restore outages. As of Tuesday morning, about 2,000 accounts remained without power.

Power line workers spread out across REA's service territory Wednesday to repair broken poles and remove trees that brought down power lines. REA said that dozens of poles need to be replaced and this has slowed the restoration efforts.

REA stresses to stay away from any power lines that may be down and never assume the lines are de-energized. Those experiencing a power outage that have not called in to report their outage should call REA at 1-800-473-1722.



Buildings and houses along Forada Beach Road in Forada were damaged by a tornado on Monday.

Celeste Edenloff / Alexandria Echo Press

FUND

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funds and assist those affected via these partnerships.

A.J. Koewler, executive director of the AACF, stated in a press release, "Our thoughts and prayers are with those affected by these terrible storms. The community is ready to help our neighbors as they recover from the devastation and start to rebuild."

The Alexandria Area Community Foundation attracts and administers charitable funds for the benefit of

the local Alexandria area. Since 1992, AACF has grown to more than \$7.6 million in assets and awarded more than \$6.6 million in grants to non-profits.

The AACF is governed by a local board of directors and is a partner of CommunityGiving, which is a collaborative of many community foundations united under a single framework to create efficiencies that maximize the impact of our donors.

Collectively, CommunityGiving administers more than 900 funds totaling nearly \$201 million.

Learn more at CommunityGiving.org/Alexandria.

TORNADO

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Joel Dahlheimer's house, which is next to his son's, was undamaged. He reported other damage to the farm site, including two concrete silos that were partially knocked down (the top halves), a larger silo damaged, the remodeled barn roof damaged, farm equipment overturned (trailers and an auger), a smaller shed was picked up and set down away from its foundation and lots of downed trees.

'It makes your stomach drop'

One of the first reports of the tornado hitting Forada came into the Douglas County Dispatch Center at 4:34 p.m. According to the Douglas County sheriff's blotter, a resident along South Maple Lake Road SE reported their house had been destroyed.

The EF-2 tornado hit about a two-mile stretch around the Forada area, causing severe damage to homes not only along Maple Lake Road SE, but more so along Forada Beach Road SE.

More than 100 homes and buildings were hit by the tornado, said VanLuik.

"It makes your stomach drop," said VanLuik, whose own house was not damaged. "But it was unbelievable how much they cleaned up today (Tuesday, May

31). I drove around the area at about 9:30 a.m. and it was worse than I thought. But when I drove back around at about 1:30 p.m., a lot had already been cleaned up. A little while ago (around 8:45 p.m. Tuesday), I drove around again and I was like, 'Wow! They really got it cleaned up.' Some people were even raking their lawns."

Driving right into it

While out weather spotting on Monday afternoon, VanLuik said he was called away for a family emergency in Glenwood. While driving back, he said he was in contact with his firefighters and told them to get prepared as it was coming their way.

"I was driving right into it on my way back to Forada," he said. "I didn't realize it was a tornado because it was raining so hard. I could hear this roar and thought the radio was making noise so I shut it off but the noise was still going."

Don Peschel, former Brandon-Evansville superintendent who lives on Maple Lake, said he saw and heard the tornado.

"It was coming right for our neighborhood and hit the water and went east," he said. "The places right across the lake from me are destroyed and it looks like a war zone. The sound was so crazy, I had to cover my ears."

'This is for real'

Long-time Forada

resident and city council member, Scott Erickson, was outside in his yard keeping an eye on the weather when the winds picked up.

"I didn't see the tornado, but it got so windy that there was stuff blowing around," said Erickson, who has lived in Forada for about 50 years. "I decided to go in and went into the garage and boom, a tree hit the house. I thought, 'This is for real.'"

Erickson said he then made it to the last step going down to his basement when all the noise and racket stopped and it got super quiet. He thought it was the calm before the storm, but when he went back upstairs and outside to check, it was all over. "It didn't take but about 15 seconds and it was done," he said, adding that a second blast of wind did blow through a short time later.

This was the first time

ever, Erickson said, that he had storm damage like this to his property. His house was damaged, along with his shop and a lot of trees are down, too.

"It was pretty wild," he said.

Fund set up to help Forada residents

Forada Mayor David Reller said a fund has been set up to help Forada residents. People who want to donate, can do so at the Hometown Community Bank in Forada. Cash or checks can be dropped off or mailed to the bank, c/o Forada Tornado Relief Fund, at 10635 Toby's Avenue SE, Alexandria MN, 56308. The bank is actually located at the corner of County Road 4 SE and Toby's Avenue SE in Forada.

In addition, there has been a designated spot for residents of Forada to bring their tree and brush waste. They can go

on County Road 4 east to Pine Tree Lane South to the designated area.

Despite the devastation of his town, Reller said things are good because there has been "spectacular and timely help and support."

"We have community support, support from the DNR, support from the county, it's been good," he said, noting that they have yet to get support from the state but he's hopeful that it will come.

From a city standpoint, he said they are working on getting a site set up for people to bring their trash and that he and the council members are trying to be there as much as possible for the residents. The hard part, he said, is that all of them are dealing with

their own damage.

He said the city clerk/treasurer, Jo Kliver, lost her house and that other council members, Bob Verkinderen, Mitch Critz and Scott Erickson, all had lots of damage, too.

"We are all a part of this community and all in this together, too," he said.

Reller said his own house and property were damaged and that he lost a lot of trees.

His four grandkids lost their climbing tree, he said.

"They are going to be very disappointed about losing that tree," he said.

Echo Press photographer Lowell Anderson contributed to this article.

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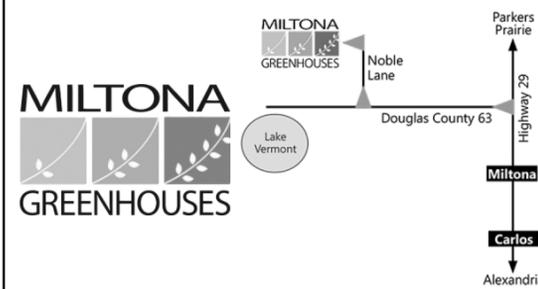


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