



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: News Media

From: Bamberg County Administration

Date: January 10, 2024

Re: A Rainbow of HOPE After the Storm: Bamberg County Officials Convene to Assess Damage from Tuesday's Category EF2 Tornado

Bamberg, South Carolina (January 2024) – A rainbow of HOPE after the storm.

City, County, and State officials convened Wednesday afternoon to assess the damage of Tuesday's Category EF2 tornado that reduced downtown area buildings and small businesses to rubble. During a press conference, representatives from Bamberg County and City Council, the National Weather Service, the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) and Emergency Management Division (SCEMD), and the Bamberg Board of Public Works (BBPW) briefed the media and concerned citizens with the most current storm-related information.

John Quagliariello from the National Weather Service expressed his gratitude to Bamberg leaders, citizens, business owners, and the media for taking their forecast regarding the pending storm seriously, which prevented possible "injuries and fatalities...that was good news." He also confirmed the tornado was a category EF2 with approximately 125 mph winds 300-400 yards wide.

Additionally, SCEMD Director Ken Stenson emphasized that the SCEMD exists to "support local authorities when events like [Tuesday's tornado] take place," and they will have their "people on the ground in Bamberg as long as they are needed." Stenson commended Bamberg County for having an "excellent team that is highly trained and effective," expressing his confidence that they will be successful in their efforts to rebuild. He also explained that once SCEMD has a clear and final understanding of the damage (which could take weeks), they will request federal assistance on behalf of Bamberg County.

BBPW General Manager Greg Griffin noted that as many as 600 power outages occurred Tuesday, but that number had been reduced to 100 at the press conference with hopes of being reduced further to 50 by the end of the day. Griffin cautioned citizens who may encounter downed power lines to assume they are "hot" and to report them immediately.

Aside from the logistics of dealing with such devastating effects of the storm exists a palpable human element. Mayor Nancy Foster said she was "broken-hearted" and that the downtown area is her "passion," making it "difficult to see buildings that have existed since the late 1800s

destroyed.” She also acknowledged the property loss of a young investor from Charleston but hopes he and other potential business owners “don’t leave Bamberg and stick with us.”

Bamberg City Councilman Corey Ramsey reminded attendees that while many may see this as a “gloomy day in Bamberg, there is still HOPE.” He continued, “The rainbow that appeared after the storm was a reminder of God’s covenant and His promise to be with us. We will stand tall in Bamberg County, making this perhaps our finest hour. It is STILL a great day in Bamberg.”

Finally, before the question and answer period, Bamberg County Councilwoman Sharon Hammond said that although there has been a great loss of property, “God is good to us and to Bamberg...no one was hurt, and we were prepared...this tragedy may open more doors for us.”

Assessing the storm damage, seeking federal assistance, and rebuilding will be ongoing, and updates will be posted on Bamberg County’s social media and website. Again, local and state officials continue to caution Bamberg citizens to respect the street barriers in place and to stay away from the damaged areas. Eight SCDOT crews are on the ground, in addition to SCEMD representatives. They are working as expeditiously as possible to restore a sense of normalcy to Bamberg, SC...one of the most resilient communities in the state.

County Administrator Joey Preston said he has been so “moved by how the community has come together during this difficult time” and asks for patience but is confident Bamberg will come back “stronger than ever.”

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For more information on this press release, email info@bambergcounty.sc.gov.