

MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY



# NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE APRIL 15, 1999 4:00 P.M.**  
**SUBJECT: TORNADO PROMPTS GOVERNOR'S EMERGENCY DECLARATION**

(JACKSON) – Gov. Kirk Fordice this morning issued a State of Emergency for Covington, Jasper and Jones counties following a tornado that claimed the life of a Jones County man, and injuring several others.

The declaration also covers any other part of the state that may have been impacted by the storm.

Ranked an F3 tornado by National Weather Service officials, the storm initially touched down in Northeast Covington County, continuing northeastwardly through the Hebron community in Jones County, passing north of Soso and entering Jasper County at Moss. A F3 ranking means tornado winds were between 158 and 206 miles per hour and is characterized as being a “severe” tornado; relating in wind speeds and effects on structure an F3 tornado is about equal to a Category 5 hurricane.

Local officials and Red Cross damage survey teams were still in the field at press time, although early indications say as many as 40 homes in Jones County alone may have sustained major damage.

In Covington County, initial emergency management reports indicate one home was destroyed, four homes and one mobile home sustaining major damage. Covington officials had no reports of deaths or injuries.

In Jasper County, the Board of Supervisors issued a proclamation of the existence of a local emergency. Preliminary reports indicate two homes and three mobile homes were destroyed; and four homes sustained major damage. Most of the damages occurred in the Moss community, where the volunteer fire department sustained a direct hit and was destroyed by the tornado. Local officials also report five injuries and eight people left homeless after the storm.

Jones County was the hardest hit in the tri-county area. At least two homes and four mobiles were destroyed by the tornado. Damage assessment continues there. One fatality occurred in the Hebron community and numerous injuries – some of them major – were reported. Some farm impact was also noted in the county with 5 commercial chicken houses destroyed, a number of farm buildings and cattle also impacted. Agencies responding to incident in Jones County were: The Laurel-Jones Civil Defense Office, Jones County Sheriff's Dept., Jones County Board of Supervisors, Jones County Volunteer Fire Depts., EMServe Ambulance Service, ASAP Ambulance Service, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Soso Police Dept., the Jones County Coroner and others.

Assistance is being provided by the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross. Persons who might need assistance as a result of the tornado are directed to their local American Red Cross chapters or their local emergency management/civil defense offices.

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