

On Tuesday, February 28th, a deadly tornado ripped through the city of Ottawa, Illinois – leaving destruction and heartache in its wake.

The storm system killed one person in the state of Illinois, and at OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center in Ottawa, 14 people were treated in the Emergency Department at the height of the storm.

When news of a tornado touchdown reached OSF Saint Elizabeth, staff was ready and waiting for an influx of patients.

CG: Megan Brennan/Director of Emergency Services, OSF Saint Elizabeth

(“Even though we had an influx and a large population that came to the department in a short time, there was no lapse in the services we provided. All of our surrounding OSF facilities were really able to reach out and say what do you need, how can we help – whether it was from supply, to staff, to physicians.”)

A hospital has to be ready – and have a plan of action in place before a natural disaster strikes, and that means regular emergency drills to test communications and to gage the hospital’s ability to process and care for a large influx of patients - while still providing community support.

CG: Don Damron/VP of Ambulatory Services, OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center

(:18 “We’ve done a lot of work around our community response processes and procedures, even more so over the past couple months. So it’s great to really see them in action, and see all the recent work we’ve done, to do a deep dive into all of it and make sure we really are prepared.”)

At OSF Saint Elizabeth – that preparation brought calm during the storm.

CG: Ken Beutke/President, OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center

(:16 “It was also very calm. People knew their roles and responsibilities, there were a lot of people coming and wanting to as and see if there was anything they could do additionally, Mission Partners were staying and making sure all the needs were being met.”)

The community response to a natural disaster marries several different agencies – from health care providers to fire, police and EMS crews. All work as one to ensure the community’s safety.

CG: Maggi Thomas/Mgr of EMS and Emergency Mgt., OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center

(“We have a lot of local partners, including the LaSalle County Agency, or EMA, Ottawa Fire Department, and our surrounding EMS and fire departments that really were in constant communication with us, so we knew what to expect in the ER, were they still searching homes, where they were at in the field, and what we could expect here at the hospital.”)

And for those providing care – no matter what is happening outside the walls of the hospital – their number one priority remains the patient.

CG: Dr. Brian Rosborough/Chief Medical Officer, OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center

(“This is why we have health care. And I think the community expects help and needs help, all the providers and mission partners – that’s their job – to take care of these patients and families.”)

As Ottawa recovers from the storm, OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center is working to make both the physical and emotional wounds bearable. And according to mission partners there it’s something the community can count on.

CG: Ken Beutke/President, OSF Saint Elizabeth Medical Center

(:11 “We always have that feeling that ‘It’s not going to happen here,’ right? But when it does, you want to make sure that people are well prepared and I think that for our community, this was a good example that they can feel safe.”)

CG: Don Damron/VP of Ambulatory Services, OSF Saint Elizabeth

(:16 “Whether it was the emergency management system, fire department, and all those out putting their lives at risk, but really I think they should not only be proud of Saint Elizabeth’s but proud as a community and how we rallied together, everyone all at once.”)