

Case Study – Tornado Hardship Fund

Our Story: (copy of a letter received November 2005)

Yes, it may be a surprise to you but I still have the ‘tornado blues’. The builders only just started work this week and they’ve stopped again as there’s a delay with the scaffolding. When it rains we get water dripping in our bedroom, it’s already stained the wallpaper in two corners and damaged the ceiling, it makes our bed and carpet damp. I worry about the possibility of the ceiling coming through if it goes on much longer, it’s so frustrating as the tornado didn’t cause this damage it was the delays by the loss adjusters and builders.

We live in Birchwood Road, that’s the one that connects with Alder Road, the ghost street where nobody lives anymore. I find it difficult to look at our road and Alder Road as I do every day, it makes me feel easy with the thought of the possibility of another tornado (there has already been a second); or winter storms, we look at the weather differently now.

My partner and I have four children between us, 14, 10, 2 and 1 years old. I’m so glad we weren’t here when the tornado hit our house. We’re the type that would have been out there looking at the ‘interesting weather’, storm-chasers at heart I think. My brother-outlaw was, and he had to leg-it for cover back into our house and into the cupboard under the stairs after watching the swirling leaves change to tiles, trees and then the lifting roofs of the houses on the opposite side of the street. He made a split second decision the stairs or the cupboard under the stairs? Rightly he went into the cupboard as one of the glass-partitioned doors to the bedrooms was blown through blasting glass down the stairs. Mark thought the house was going to collapse as it was shaking so fiercely.

I’m writing this piece sitting in my front room looking at our boarded up front window, with torn net curtains and a dingy sight it is. The tornado blew out most of our windows scattering the house with shards of glass, fine glass dust and dirt. Most of our windows are boarded up and we have to unscrew about 10 screws just to get out of the back door this concerns me as it is a serious fire risk.

Our children’s bedroom was the worst hit, packed full of toys and with the cot facing the window it was a terrible shock to see large shards of glass all over the cot and on the beds. We’ve had to replace curtains, carpets, toys, clothes, shoes and mattresses. Everything that we haven’t replaced has had to be cleaned thoroughly, just incredible each book had to be dusted and hovered in the children’s bedroom as it was by the window. Our back door had been ripped in half and dented by a tree, our kitchen roof had holes all over it, the roof had lots of tiles off and now leaks after 3 months. There is still so much work to be done on the house and garden it is really

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depressing. We spent a number of weekends painting the outside of the house before the tornado. As comical as it sometimes seems now, we were/are trying to sell our house, four children in a two bedroom house is tricky. All of this hard work has been wasted with the tornado throwing debris all over the outside of the house leaving dents and gashes in the woodwork, guttering, paintwork and plasterwork.

We've had to replace fences and gates that weren't covered by our insurance. One of our greatest costs I feel our family have paid is in lost time that should have been spent with the children relaxing instead of chasing insurance claims etc. I also lost my car in the tornado and our back garden is wrecked, we'll have to replace the garden furniture, lawn, trees and plants. I could go on for pages and pages, well actually I already have done and this is the abridged version!

I can't think of anything else just now but I know there's been more and add to that all the phone calls, emails and letters. We were on holiday at the time the tornado hit, we heard only fifteen minutes after and we cut short our holiday to come home. I know many people lost their summer holidays due to the tornado. Our youngest daughter had her first Birthday a fortnight later, but we couldn't have the party we had planned for her. I'm sure many other people have similar stories to tell and many are much worse, I know I only have to look across the road. I really hope something can be done to help all who need assistance and that some of this help stretches to long term projects that make things better here than they were before.