



[Weathering The Storm Together](#)

Patients, Referring Physicians and Hospital Partners Rely on Local and National Teamwork to Respond to One of Kentucky's Largest Natural Disasters

On December 10 and 11, 2021, the National Weather Service recorded more than 40 tornadoes across the Southeast. In Western Kentucky, tornadoes swept across 170 miles in eleven counties, causing devastating loss of life and catastrophic property damage. At least 80 people were killed and 500 were injured in Kentucky alone.

Before, during and after the storms, patients, referring physicians and hospital partners relied on Radiology Partners (RP) to provide emergent care. RP Kentucky comprises 17 radiologists and provides onsite and remote service for six hospitals in Western and Central Kentucky. As tornadoes barreled toward Baptist Health Deaconess in Madisonville and Owensboro Health-Muhlenberg Community Hospital in Greenville, RP Kentucky responded, immediately coordinating comprehensive resources to weather the disaster. Through local and national collaboration and teamwork, RP

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Kentucky was able to quickly mobilize and respond to one of Kentucky's largest natural disasters and mass casualty events.

December 11, 2021 | 2 a.m. | We need a radiologist

Baptist Health Deaconess Radiology Director, Amanda Wagoner, monitored storms and tornado warnings across Kentucky. "We learned pretty early that that a tornado touched down in Mayfield. Then we heard one touched down in Dawson, which is in our area. It kept going and hit the surrounding county of Muhlenberg. As I headed to the hospital, I received a call that disaster protocol was in place, and we needed a radiologist onsite as soon as possible."

At 3 a.m., Dr. Neal Rosner, a radiologist with RP Kentucky, rushed to the hospital amid active tornado warnings. He arrived safely and immediately began working through trauma cases. "We are a mass casualty unit at Baptist Health Deaconess, and we needed all hands on deck. I read 104 cases between 3-10:30 a.m.," Rosner described. "The exams were unusual trauma exams. I saw all kinds of fractures and an X-ray of a person with a metal bar stuck in their back."

Meanwhile, nearly 30 miles southeast of Baptist Health Deaconess, teams at Owensboro Health-Muhlenberg Community Hospital watched as tornadoes approached their community. Donald Givens, Radiology Director at Owensboro Health-Muhlenberg Community Hospital, headed to the hospital to ensure teams were alert and ready to respond. "I called people who lived nearby and could do general X-ray and CT. I knew that would be the majority of cases," Givens said. "When I arrived at the hospital and started getting patients scanned, we quickly realized we couldn't send images. The internet was completely down. There was nothing anyone could do. I called Candice."

Candice Stevens, RP Kentucky Practice Manager, along with Dane Johnston, RP Kentucky Practice Director, worked quickly to form a plan. "With the internet down, the team could not send images through PACS, and there were patients everywhere," Stevens described. "The volume of trauma cases coming through was indescribable," Johnston added. "With no access to PACS, the Muhlenberg team needed a radiologist onsite for wet reads."

Dane called RP Kentucky radiologist, Dr. William Tagg, and without question, Dr. Tagg left his home and headed to the hospital. "He didn't ask any questions. He didn't know what he was driving into. He left his family at home to help serve our community," Stevens said.

"I was frightened," Tagg said. "I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know if there were more tornadoes. But I went. I saw and heard heartbreaking stories all night." With internet down, Dr. Tagg and the hospital care team worked together to create emergency efficiencies for patients in need. "When the team would bring someone to scan, I would go to the X-ray and read the scan. Then, when they were X-raying patients, I would go back to CT and read the CTs. I guess I just knew I was doing

the right thing. I was doing my duty as a radiologist, and I felt like that's what I had to do to help my patients."

December 11, 2021 | 3:30 a.m. | Help from afar

To help manage the spike in volumes, the care teams were able to utilize RP Matrix, RP's internal teleradiology practice. Using its high demand escalation process, the Matrix team covered three times its normal volumes for Kentucky.

"We are a team, and in this type of event, every need is needed *stat*," said Dr. Charlie Sandoz, radiologist for RP Matrix. "Throughout the night, there was so much trauma. That is all I saw on the films. RP Kentucky needed help, and RP Matrix was there."

The relief was felt at Baptist Health Deaconess. "It was great to have the RP Matrix doctors jump on the worklist and help," Wagoner said. "Everyone—orthopedic surgeons, general surgeons, *everyone*—was asking Dr. Rosner about their patients. Because the other radiologists stepped in to help from afar, Dr. Rosner was able to focus on the patients who needed extra care while RP Matrix doctors were catching up the worklist."

While RP Matrix teams read exams for both hospitals, RP's national Center of Radiology Excellence (CORE) Team actively communicated timely results to referring physicians to ensure each care team could quickly determine next steps in patient care.

"With Dr. Rosner and Dr. Tagg onsite and RP Matrix radiologists reading remotely, our CORE Team was able to communicate with incredible efficiency. Their work was critical to ensuring patients received the care they needed that night," Johnston said.

Christina Ho, Supervisor for RP's CORE Team credits RP Kentucky, RP Matrix and the operations teams for pulling together during a time of intense need. "RP Kentucky did a great job coordinating onsite radiologists. The added advantage of RP is that we have so many radiologists all over the nation who can pitch in to help at any moment, anytime, 24/7."

As Dr. Bruce Burton, Practice President for RP Kentucky, reflected on the events of that night and the teamwork needed to serve patients, referring physicians and client partners. "If RP Kentucky was one local practice trying to handle this, we would not have been able to get timely results for patients and other providers. We were able to work collectively through RP, which speaks to the benefits of the scale and breadth of RP."

December 11, 2021 | 3 p.m. | A humbling experience

By mid-afternoon, the radiology worklists were caught up, but many Kentucky communities were

forever changed. Dozens of lives were lost, hundreds were injured, and the damage caused by tornadoes left neighborhoods unrecognizable.

As the radiology teams at Baptist Health Deaconess and Owensboro Health-Muhlenberg Community Hospital reflected on the experience, the demonstration of local and national teamwork offered optimism during an otherwise devastating time.

“Our clients obviously appreciated the onsite service, and our entire team was willing to jump in to help,” Burton said. “RP Kentucky radiologists came onsite, stayed extra hours to accommodate the volume and spent the day (a Saturday) helping the team catch up on the worklist. It was truly a demonstration of teamwork and service. Everyone stood out.”

“As I remember that night, I am reminded of our practice values—integrity, teamwork, excellence, service and accountability,” Burton said. “I think RP Kentucky and all of RP personified our values that night.”

“It is a humbling experience to know that RP practices and teams across the nation helped our little community,” Johnston said. “I think that’s one of the things that speaks volumes about RP. We are able to come together and help smaller communities that might not have radiology coverage otherwise.”

Combined, RP Kentucky and RP Matrix read nearly 650 trauma exams, not including onsite wet reads completed at the height of the disaster.

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