

## After the Ice Storm: Assessing Kansas City's Response

### The Challenge

On January 29, 2002, the worst ice storm in 120 years hit Kansas City, Missouri. The storm caused numerous fires and power outages, damaged 80 percent of the city trees, and resulted in over 1 million cubic yards of debris. How does a city prepare so they can effectively respond to such a storm?

### The Solution

In 1990, following a series of tornadoes and severe storms in the Midwest, the Northeastern Area and the University of Illinois developed a handbook, "Storms Over the Urban Forest." This nationally recognized guide provides the information necessary for communities to reduce tree loss associated with natural disasters and deal with the aftermath in an efficient manner.

Staff at the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department read the handbook, used previous storm experience, and followed the guidelines suggested in the handbook. After the ice storm of 2002, the Department requested that the Northeastern Area assess their storm response and recovery.

### Resulting Benefits

The assessment validated that, as a result of their experience and preparation, Kansas City was able to accomplish the following:

- Quickly identify a team of high-ranking employees to function across departmental boundaries, make critical decisions, and delegate authority.



Effects of the 2002 ice storm were devastating.

- Enact existing emergency response contracts for immediate assistance with tree-related emergencies during the initial phase of the storm.
- Identify cleanup priorities and rapidly clear emergency routes, reduce the length of power outages, and open primary and secondary transportation routes.
- Dispose of debris efficiently since processing sites had been previously identified.
- Communicate proactively with the community through a public relations plan.
- Negotiate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for disaster assistance funding.
- Develop a plan to regreen Kansas City.

### Sharing Success

- The assessment of the Kansas City Park and Recreation Department's response to the Ice Storm of 2002 will be distributed to other city foresters so they can learn from Kansas City's experience.
- The handbook, "Storms Over the Urban Forest," continues to be distributed to communities and cities and to serve as the impetus for the development of storm response plans across the country.

*"Storms Over the Urban Forest"  
helps cities prepare so they can  
respond effectively to storms.*



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