

11 miles of destruction...

Riggs Cat aids in Mena clean up effort

The population of Mena, Arkansas will not soon forget the evening of April 9, 2009. That Thursday evening an EF-3 tornado tore an 11 mile long path of destruction through this small west Arkansas community. By the time the almost mile wide tornado dissipated, three people were killed, dozens injured and hundreds were left homeless. Within hours, as shocked residents were evaluating the damage, Tad Agolia and his team – The First Response Team of America (FRTA) arrived on the scene and began to provide invaluable assistance during the first critical hours after the storm.

Riggs Rental Store managers, Gina Goodhue from the Ft. Smith store and Marc Wake from the Texarkana facility, were there to assist FRTA with their Cat equipment needs. Riggs Cat and the Ft. Smith Rental Store donated the use of a Cat 297 with grapple bucket to aid in the clean up efforts. The First Response team began by first clearing roads then, once the roads were clear and passable, Tad and his crew began meeting with the mayor of Mena to determine which households were in need of assistance. The FRTA assists homeowners who do not have insurance or cannot afford the deductible. According to Tad, the group averaged 8 to 10 houses a day for two weeks. Approximately 35% of the homes that were damaged were not covered by insurance. Over 100 homes were completely destroyed and another 600 were damaged.

Although other on-site crews aiding with the clean-up effort were delayed by the constant rain, the First Response Team was able to keep working. The CAT 297 MTL continued to perform even in the worst conditions, and was even

able to construct temporary bridges to properties that were water logged. According to Tad, “The tracks on the MTL made the storm sites accessible, nothing got in the way, whereas a wheeled machine would have had limitations and not have been as big a help.”

Tad also praised Gina Goodhue and Marc Wake and the efforts they put forth to ensure the team was well taken care of. Tad commented, “They took a personal interest in the community and in the job being done. Whatever was needed, they made sure our requests were fulfilled. Riggs Cat was in a position to help this devastated community and they did something about it, they went above and beyond to help our First Response Team and the city of Mena. For that we continue to be grateful.”

To learn more about Tad Agolia and the First Response Team of America, visit their website: www.firstresponseteam.org.

Tad Agolia is the founder and CEO of The First Response Team of America. This self-funded, nonprofit, nomadic, four-man cleanup crew provides immediate, emergency aid to areas hit by disaster. Tad was recently named by CNN as one of the top ten hero's for 2008.

Since May 2007, the team has helped thousands of victims at 15 disaster sites across the United States and has rapidly become a recognized name in first responder aid.

First Response Team of America deploys nationwide to assist communities in the first critical hours when safety is of premium importance. Using heavy equipment and advanced technology, the team identifies and accesses disaster sites throughout the U. S., bringing help and hope to neighbors in need.

Riggs Cat and the Ft. Smith Rental Store donated the use of a Cat 297 with grapple bucket to aid in the clean-up effort in Mena, AR after the April 9th tornado.

