

Want to help? Plans in place for donations, volunteers

BY CAITLIN HERRINGTON
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SENECA — Volunteers began showing up to clear tornado debris in Seneca before the sun rose Monday morning and haven't stopped since.

City administrator Scott Moulder said more than 100 people showed up to help coordinate and deliver meals, cut trees, haul limbs and fill in the gaps on day one after the EF3 tornado that struck Seneca, and systems are now in place to ensure the helpers make it to the most helpful places.

"During an event like this, all of your good-hearted people — which we couldn't manage something like this without them — want to

volunteer to help," Moulder said. "You wouldn't believe the work they're doing. They're piling stuff up so

TO DONATE

Prepared meals: Set up at meal times at Shaver Recreation Complex or Oconee Community Theatre

Food, drinks, paper products for victims: Golden Corner Food Pantry

Food, drinks for workers: Shaver Recreation Complex

Money: Oconee Federal "Seneca Tornado Relief Fund"

Labor: Groups to Seneca High, individuals to Samaritan's Purse at LifePoint Church

Clothing: Salvation Army, Collins Children's Home

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quickly that we can't get it off the roads quick enough, and they're running out of room.

"Trying to manage that type of pool of volunteers

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A truck hauling a dump trailer arrives at the future Seneca Middle School site on Lancaster Road, which the School District of Oconee County volunteered as a brush and limb mulching area in the wake of Monday's tornado. Contractors and citizens are welcome to drop off debris from the access point on Wells Highway near BorgWarner.

HELP: Between 500 and 750 volunteers

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can be very difficult. A lot of the volunteer work is eligible for FEMA reimbursement for the hours they put in. We've got to make sure we have proper and clear documentation of those hours for them to be eligible for reimbursement."

Seneca Police Department investigator Mike Teramano is coordinating groups of volunteers at Seneca High School, where group leaders should check in and out to log their hours. He's seen between 500 and 750 volunteers on the ground so far, he said, and that number is fuzzy because not everything was streamlined the day of the tornado.

Food and drink donation and distribution — with main sites at the Oconee Community Theatre and the Shaver Recreation Complex — are pretty well handled, Teramano said, though they're "grassroots" operations. Groups should bring meals at mealtimes, he said, but any donation during daylight hours will be accepted.

"Both of those locations are just outside the containment area, so we don't have to try to funnel everybody into the containment area causing more gridlock, but it's close enough to the affected communities that people can get to those locations," Teramano said, reminding donors to follow food

safety and COVID-19 protocol. "We've got food delivery going, and we're going to add clothing delivery to that once we can match up the need with what's provided."

The biggest need now, he said, is getting brush and limbs off the roads.

"We need people who have dump trucks and dump trailers and the equipment to load brush — front-end loaders, skid steers and things like that," Teramano said. "We also need all of our volunteers to be mindful that debris removal is a huge priority. As volunteers cut down trees or cut them up in yards, we need to make it accessible for our other crews, and we

on the ground so far

need those crews to come in and donate their time and resources to lift that debris up off the side of the road and haul it out of there."

In addition to the Oconee County landfill, a secondary mulching site has been set up off Lancaster Road, where the future Seneca Middle School will sit. It's accessible to commercial businesses and citizens from Wells Highway near the devastated BorgWarner plant, Teramano said, and traffic is being flowed in one direction.

Those wanting to get involved outside an organized group have options through Samaritan's Purse, which is set up at LifePoint Church on Blue Ridge

Boulevard, with orientations hosted daily at 7:20 a.m. and 12:20 p.m.

With the weekend coming and more volunteers likely to show up, getting resources to the right places — and recording it — is important to make the most of donated time, food and equipment.

"We're able to keep track of all of those logs and all of those hours, which reduces the financial impact on the local area," Teramano said. "That decreases how much this is ultimately going to cost the city and county."

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