



## **AFTER-ACTION REPORT**

FEMA – 1735 – DR

December 2007 Ice Storm



February 11, 2008  
2-1-1 Helpline  
Tulsa, Oklahoma



**2-1-1 Helpline**

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2-1-1 Helpline is a program of  
the Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa,  
a United Way member agency.

## **Executive Summary**

2-1-1 Helpline played a key role in the community's response and recovery during the December 2007 ice storm. 2-1-1 served as the "front line" in providing needed information and resource referrals to individuals affected by the storm. In addition, the first response agencies working in Tulsa County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) looked to 2-1-1 as a valued information source in planning their response activities. 2-1-1 assisted in making vital connections for individuals with special needs and in turn, advocated for needed resources with local emergency response and social service officials.

2-1-1 Helpline set new records for call volume and assisted thousands of callers with locating disaster resources. For the period Sunday, December 9 through Monday, December 31, 2-1-1 responded to 12,839 calls, about three times the call volume for the same period last year.



When 2-1-1 lost power to its primary call center and two back-up sites, 2-1-1 Helpline worked with the City of Tulsa and AT&T to set up a special phone bank in the Tulsa Area Emergency Management Agency's Emergency Operations Center, where service specialists operated around the clock for three days before returning to the primary call center. 2-1-1 more than doubled its service specialist staffing to handle the massive influx of calls, including the loan of two service specialists from Houston's 2-1-1. LIFE Senior Services, the Community Service Council, Child Care Resource Center and Babyline also loaned staff members.

As the disaster response progressed, types of services requested evolved, but primary resource requests included: power outage reporting, downed lines, downed limbs in public thoroughfares, shelter locations, special needs transportation to shelters, food safety and food replacement, damage assessment reports, weatherhead repair through Operation Power Up, special needs debris removal, debris pick-up/drop-off information and minor home repair assistance.

2-1-1 was widely recognized within the community for the vital service the organization provided, including recognition from Mayor Taylor and her staff, from Public Service Company of Oklahoma and from the Tulsa Fire Department.

## **Agency Description**

2-1-1 is a free and easy-to-remember phone number that streamlines the process of matching critical health and human services with the people who need them. Dialing 2-1-1 connects callers to trained specialists with access to multi-lingual translations. With a database of thousands of community and government services, the specialists can identify the right solution to the caller's problem.

Based in Tulsa, 2-1-1 Helpline serves a 12-county area, operates 24 hours a day and received over 92,000 calls in 2007. 2-1-1 Helpline is a member of the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) and the Oklahoma 2-1-1 Collaborative and is a program of the Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa, a United Way member agency.

2-1-1 Helpline's service area includes Adair, Cherokee, Creek, McIntosh, Muskogee, Okfuskee, Okmulgee, Osage, Rogers, Sequoyah, Tulsa and Wagoner Counties.

2-1-1 Helpline is committed to assisting the communities we serve in times of emergency and disaster. This includes:

- Collecting information on disaster resources.
- Serving as a community-wide hotline for disaster information.
- Making referrals to agencies coordinating volunteer response and/or donations.
- Developing internal tracking tools to support the disaster response.
- Submitting incident reports to the local emergency management agency and other response agencies.
- Ensuring that all 2-1-1 personnel have a basic understanding of emergency management.
- Designating 2-1-1 personnel to report to a community's emergency operations center when activated.

## **Event Summary**

On Sunday, December 9, 2007, 2-1-1 Helpline began receiving a gradual increase in calls as the effect of a large-scale ice storm created rolling power outages throughout 2-1-1's service area. Although the storm did not significantly impact roads, ice forming on power lines and tree limbs resulted in widespread power outages. At its peak, the storm left about 260,000 customers without power — about half of all American Electric Power-Public Service Company of Oklahoma's customers.

2-1-1 received its first call for participation in the Tulsa County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at 5:30 a.m. on Monday, December 10 as the size and scope of the disaster began to unfold to local authorities. Following pre-established protocols for response to community emergencies, an EOC policy group led by Tulsa Mayor Kathy Taylor was quickly formed and requested that 2-1-1 become the central point of contact for Tulsa residents requiring storm-related information and services.

### *EOC Operations*

2-1-1's role in the EOC was to serve as the "front line" in providing needed information and resource referrals to individuals affected by the ice storm. In addition, 2-1-1 served as an information source regarding available services to the first response agencies working in the EOC. A 2-1-1 liaison was present in the EOC from Monday, December 10 through Thursday, December 20. The EOC was demobilized on Friday, December 21.



2-1-1 Director Jim Lyall participated in the policy group meetings, and Resource Specialist Jessica Hill served as the 2-1-1 liaison to the EOC, interacting with the Joint Information Center and the Operations, Planning and Logistics Groups.

It should be noted that this event marked the first instance that 2-1-1 participated in the community's response to a disaster at this level of involvement. 2-1-1's first exposure to Tulsa's emergency response efforts came in the June 2006 microburst response, during which an information hotline established in the EOC was transitioned to 2-1-1 after the first eight hours.

### *Agency Interactions*

Throughout this event, 2-1-1 operated 24 hours a day in close proximity to Mayor Taylor and her staff, the first response agencies and social service organizations to provide accurate storm-related resource information, identify and refer storm victims who required emergency assistance and make appropriate referrals to a wide range of health and social services. 2-1-1 also played the unique role of being the

central source for collecting and distributing storm-related information that was regularly updated (sometimes by the hour) and distributed not only to the 2-1-1 service specialists, but also to those working in the Emergency Operations Center and to the media. Uniformity in the collection, verification and distribution of such information reduced confusion in the community and helped to control rumors.

As with the 9-1-1 call center and the Mayor's Action Line, 2-1-1 also served as a conduit of information back to the EOC regarding caller requests, special needs and rumor reporting. In several instances, the 2-1-1 liaison was able to work with the Joint Information Center to correct misinformation that was broadcast through the media or via other sources.

Primary agencies that assisted 2-1-1 with resource gathering were:

American Red Cross – Tulsa Area Chapter	City of Tulsa Communications Department
City of Tulsa Public Works Department	City of Tulsa Security Department
City of Tulsa Telecommunications Department	EMSA/Metropolitan Medical Response System
Mayor's Action Center	Medical Emergency Response Center
Metropolitan Tulsa Transit Authority	Oklahoma 2-1-1 Collaborative
Oklahoma Dept. of Emergency Management	Oklahoma VOAD
Public Service Company of Oklahoma	The Salvation Army
Tulsa Area Emergency Management Agency	Tulsa County Social Services
Tulsa County Sheriff's Office	Tulsa Fire Department
Tulsa Health Department	Tulsa Police Department

In the first week of the storm response, the highest caller request was for shelter information. The Public Information Officer for the American Red Cross was especially accommodating in working to ensure that 2-1-1 had the most up-to-date shelter information at all times. In the second week, the highest caller request was for food replacement. 2-1-1 worked with the Salvation Army, Tulsa Human Response Coalition and other groups to facilitate a food distribution effort.

Two areas of particularly notable collaboration occurred between 2-1-1 and agencies in the EOC: special needs transportation and special medical needs assistance. The Fire Department, EMSA and MTTA were instrumental in getting 2-1-1 callers the assistance they needed through direct referrals between the 2-1-1 liaison and these agencies' representatives.



### *2-1-1 Internal Operations*

2-1-1's primary call center lost electric service on December 9, followed by a storm-related cable telephone failure later the same day at the program's primary back-up site. 2-1-1 operated at its secondary back-up site for approximately 24 hours but lost electric service at that location in the early hours of December 10. With the assistance of the City of Tulsa and AT&T, a fourth back-up site was created in the Tulsa EOC that afternoon.

2-1-1 operated from the EOC from 3 PM on Monday, December 10 until 5 PM on Wednesday, December 12 before returning to its primary call center. During this time, between one and four service specialists took calls on a 24-hour basis, with additional resource staff support. 2-1-1 took 1,500 calls from the EOC over this three-day period.

To address the radically increased call volume 2-1-1 experienced during the ice storm response, the organization hired temporary service specialists and arranged for two service specialists from Houston 2-1-1 to assist the Tulsa call center for four days. Personnel from Community Service Council, Babyline,

the Child Care Resource Center and LIFE Senior Services contributed as both service and resource specialists. YWCA Intercultural Center's Tele-Ayuda program also offered assistance. Nineteen agency-loaned volunteers provided over 350 service hours to 2-1-1 Helpline during the peak of its response. 2-1-1 paid existing part-time employees to work 157 additional hours, and full-time professional staff worked an additional 300 hours to direct, manage and supervise 2-1-1's disaster response.

### *Call Volume and Type*

For the period Sunday, December 9 to Monday, December 31, 2-1-1 Helpline responded to 12,839 storm-related calls. The response to more than 12,000 calls in a 23-day period is unprecedented in 2-1-1 Helpline's history. 2-1-1 responded to a total of 15,073 calls for the month of December, which was 111% more than our anticipated monthly call volume of 7,114. For 2007, 2-1-1 received over 92,000 calls.

Note that the call volume includes brief service interruptions and use of a non-ACD [automated call distribution] system in the EOC. During that three-day period, if all lines were busy, callers received a busy signal instead of going into a queue to be answered by the next available specialist.



Since the EOC had only four available lines for 2-1-1 use, all lines were frequently busy; thus, it is safe to assume that the actual number of calls attempted to 2-1-1 during that time was substantially higher than the 1500 that were answered. Once 2-1-1 Helpline returned to its primary call center and expanded its specialist staff, this greatly increased our ability to answer more calls and reduced our abandoned call rate to below our standard threshold.

The majority of calls were for information and services for electric power restoration dates, rumor control, repair of downed power lines, removal of downed tree limbs and debris, emergency shelter locations, food safety, food replacement, outdoor electric weatherhead repairs and more.

Call types evolved over the course of the storm response, but included:

- Power, water, cable, phone outage reporting
- Downed line reporting
- Downed trees/limbs in a public thoroughfare reporting
- Debris removal information, including emergency removal for the elderly, disabled, single mothers or low-income households
- Debris dropoff sites/curbside pickup information
- Shelter locations
- Transportation to shelters
- Damage assessment reporting
- Food safety due to power outage
- Food replacement resources
- Weatherhead repair and Operation Power Up information
- Electrician list, licensure, etc.
- Well check requests [EMSA]
- Oxygen bottle refills
- Minor home repair assistance
- Price gouging reporting
- FEMA disaster declaration information

Unmet needs [caller requests/needs for which 2-1-1 had no immediate referral information] included:

- Lists of open gas stations, pharmacies, grocery stores, etc.
- Lists of generator suppliers, firewood suppliers, batteries/flashlights, etc.
- Provision of generators for homes and businesses
- Reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for weatherhead repair conducted prior to Operation Power Up
- Disaster food stamps, disaster unemployment, FEMA individual assistance requests
- Timing of PSO power restoration to individual homes
- Requests for special needs shelter

#### *Recovery Phase and the One-Stop Shop*

2-1-1 maintained a presence in the EOC through Thursday, December 20. The EOC was deactivated on Friday, December 21. During the EOC activation, 2-1-1 representatives attended two meetings of the Tulsa Human Response Coalition. The first meeting focused on the unmet needs of member agencies' clients, and 2-1-1 provided frequent caller request data to the THRC to assist in identifying unmet needs in the impacted areas. 2-1-1 reported increasing requests for emergency food assistance including replacement of food lost during the power outage and assistance with home repairs in addition to weatherhead repairs. The second meeting consisted of planning for the one-stop disaster recovery center to meet the identified needs.

2-1-1 continued to experience an elevated call volume as the community transitioned into the recovery phase of this disaster. At that time, frequent requests included reimbursement for weatherhead repairs, food replacement, damage assessment reporting, and continued need for holiday assistance, rent assistance and utility assistance.



The "One-Stop Shop" was hosted by the Salvation Army at their North Mabee Boys & Girls Club and was coordinated by the Metropolitan Tulsa Urban League. Opening the week of Christmas, the recovery center operated for 11 days and saw over 700 clients. The Urban League and its partner agencies continue to serve the case management needs of the disaster victims.

### **Successes, Challenges and Action Steps**

#### Successes

- 2-1-1 was recognized and utilized as a resource and key component of the disaster response.
- 2-1-1 built upon existing positive working relationships with Tulsa's emergency response agencies.
- 2-1-1 built upon the successful integration of the call center into the response/recovery from the June 2006 microburst in midtown Tulsa.
- 2-1-1 made vital connections for special needs individuals to EMSA/TFD/MTTA and advocated for unmet needs within the social services agencies and special needs populations.
- 2-1-1 acted as a liaison between social service and first response agencies; emphasized to policy makers/first responders that the disaster does not end when the EOC deactivates.
- 2-1-1 played an important part in rumor control efforts with the Joint Information Center.
- 2-1-1 participated in OKVOAD discussions in frequent conference calls in the two weeks following the storm.
- 2-1-1 coordinated effectively with 9-1-1 and the Mayor's Action Center.
- 2-1-1 was recognized and utilized as an authoritative resource for the following:

- First response officials and policy makers in the EOC
- Media outlets
- 2-1-1 partner agencies (over 700 who participate in the resource database)
- Tulsa Human Response Coalition organizations
- The general public
- 2-1-1 effectively used the web and email to distribute resource data.
- 2-1-1 “filled the gap” as the designated disaster hotline statewide so that OEM did not have to establish a call center.
- 2-1-1 personnel drew upon their disaster preparedness training, resulting in a flexible and resilient workforce and work environment.
- 2-1-1 service specialists’ fundamental information and referral skills such as active listening, knowledge of community resources and the ability to work with diverse populations enabled them to help callers cope with disaster associated stress and rapidly changing conditions.
- Partner agencies loaned their staff to assist 2-1-1 as service and resource specialists.

#### Challenges

- 2-1-1 needed to reach out more to the other county emergency operations centers in its service area, initiate contacts and increase communication.
- 2-1-1 needed an improved process for correcting misdirected calls due to media misinformation.
- 2-1-1 needed to develop a procedure for agencies to notify 2-1-1 and provide accurate referral data prior to listing 2-1-1 as their information source.
- For reporting purposes, 2-1-1 should have more diligently tracked the number and type of internal messages within the EOC, particularly with regard to special needs calls to TFD and EMSA.
- To *best* respond to the disaster, 2-1-1 would have required an expanded back-up site with enhanced technical capability and stability.



#### Follow-Up Actions

- Follow up with media outlets, news directors/news desks regarding corrections to inaccurate media reports.
- Advocate for a community-wide, web-based special needs/vulnerable populations registry.
- Inquire about the availability of grant funds to assist 2-1-1 with future emergency preparedness and planning activities, possibly to include additional facilities/capabilities for back-up call centers.
- Inquire about Tulsa Health Department’s backup planning with regard to phone and internet systems.
- Update emergency operations plan as needed based on the ice storm experience.
- Update emergency contacts using names/information gathered during response.
- Identify a volunteer base from the community and partner agencies and develop a training program to provide the staffing needed to expand 2-1-1 operations in future events.
- Update IRis resource database with additional permanent disaster resources gathered during response.
- Review data tracking procedures and protocols for disaster response during the response and recovery phases.
- Review data capturing and reporting procedures.
- Recommend technology upgrades to the EOC, particularly digital telephones with headset capabilities.

## **Testimonials**

- 2-1-1 began receiving calls from the Red Cross shelter at Asbury United Methodist Church, where it had been announced to call 2-1-1 to find out when individuals' power would be restored at their homes. The 2-1-1 liaison quickly notified the JIC and the Red Cross and a second announcement was made at the shelter with the correct information.
- During Operation Power Up's house-to-house checks, the fire department encountered a 90-year-old man who was blind, without power and without food. The fire department called the 2-1-1 liaison, and 2-1-1 made a connection with LIFE Senior Services to get an emergency home visit, food and other services for the individual.
- An elderly woman and her disabled husband called 2-1-1 for guidance when the power to all the homes around them had been restored and theirs had not, although they did not have a damaged weatherhead. The 2-1-1 liaison contacted the PSO representative, who discovered that the work order for their home had been inadvertently cancelled. Within hours, several PSO trucks had arrived at the home and restored power. When 2-1-1 called back to follow up with her, she said it was like the cavalry had arrived!
- A mother called 2-1-1 when she could not get assistance from her 3-year-old son's primary care physician, whose office was closed due to the power outage. Her son was waiting for a kidney transplant and needed dialysis 10 hours per day, but their facility was in Oklahoma City. 2-1-1 worked with the MERC to get her connected with the pediatric dialysis unit at Saint Francis Hospital.

## **Conclusion**

2-1-1 was widely recognized within the community for the vital service the organization provided, including recognition from Mayor Taylor and her staff, from Public Service Company of Oklahoma and from the Tulsa Fire Department. 2-1-1 Helpline participated in internal debriefing and after action activities as well as an Oklahoma 2-1-1 Collaborative "hot wash" on January 16 and the City of Tulsa's After Action meeting on January 30.



As a result of 2-1-1 Helpline's experience in the ice storm response and recovery process, Resource Specialist Jessica Hill has submitted a presentation proposal for the disaster management track of the National AIRS (Alliance for Information & Referral Systems) Conference in May 2008 and has applied to serve on the National AIRS Disaster Committee. Service Coordinator Janice Harris will be attending AIRS Disaster Team training in March 2008 designed to develop response teams that will be prepared to support disaster-affected call centers within the state and region and to mobilize in the event of a national disaster.

In the first two months of 2008, 2-1-1 continues to experience a higher-than-average call volume. In January, over 1,000 callers expressed disaster related requests. Higher caller volumes may also be a permanent result of the positive exposure 2-1-1 received during the response to the December 2007 ice storm.

## Call Reporting

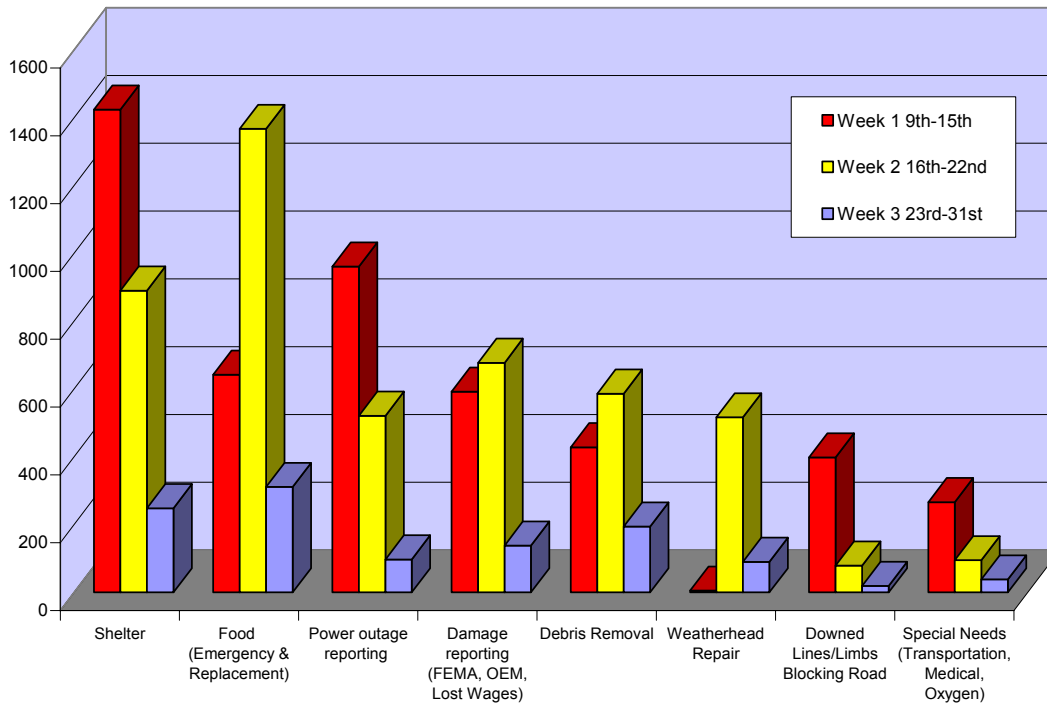
### 2-1-1 Helpline Call Statistics

Anticipated Call Volume – December 2007	7,114
Actual Call Volume – December 2007	15,073
Disaster Call Volume - December 9-31	12,839

Disaster-Related Caller Needs by Week*				December 9-31, 2007	
Caller Need/Request	Week1 12/9-12/15	Week 2 12/16-12/22	Week 3 12/23-12/31	Total	
Shelter	1424	890	248	2562	
Food ( Emergency & Replacement)	642	1367	311	2320	
Power outage reporting	961	521	97	1579	
Damage reporting (FEMA, OEM, Lost Wages)	592	677	138	1407	
Debris Removal	428	586	194	1208	
Weatherhead Repair	5	516	90	611	
Downed Lines/Limbs Blocking Road	398	79	19	496	
Special Needs (e.g., Transportation, Medical, Oxygen)	266	95	38	399	

\*Data source: 2-1-1 Helpline IRis 3.0 Call Management System

### 2-1-1 Callers Frequent Requests by Week during December 2007 Ice Storm



<b>CALLS BY COUNTY 12/9-31/07</b>		
County	# Calls	%
ADAIR	5	0.04%
CHEROKEE	18	0.14%
CREEK	328	2.55%
MC INTOSH	9	0.07%
MUSKOGEE	35	0.27%
OKFUSKEE	7	0.05%
OKMULGEE	33	0.26%
OSAGE	125	0.97%
ROGERS	188	1.46%
SEQUOYAH	1	0.01%
TULSA	9,694	75.50%
WAGONER	42	0.33%
Total 2-1-1 Service Area	10,485	
Other OK	108	0.84%
Not OK	18	0.14%
Unknown	2228	17.35%
<b>December 9-31, 2007</b>	<b>12,839</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

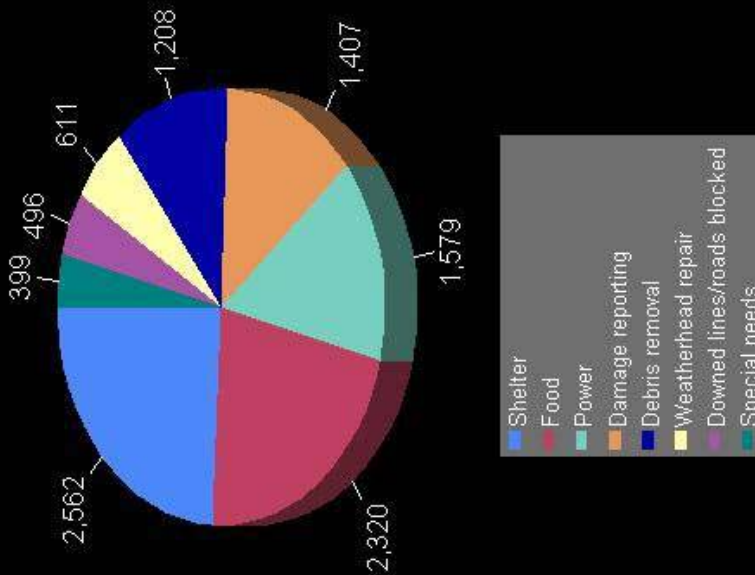
<b>Top 10 Disaster Call Zip Codes</b>	
<b>December 9-31, 2007</b>	
Zip	Count
74106	1233
74115	912
74110	737
74126	673
74112	667
74127	662
74107	594
74105	553
74136	460
74135	364

<b>Volunteers Assisting in 2-1-1 Call Response</b>		
Organization	# Staff	Total Hours
Community Service Council	5	65
Child Care Resource Center	8	102
Babyline	2	96
LIFE Senior Services	4	32
Houston 2-1-1	2	64
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>359</b>

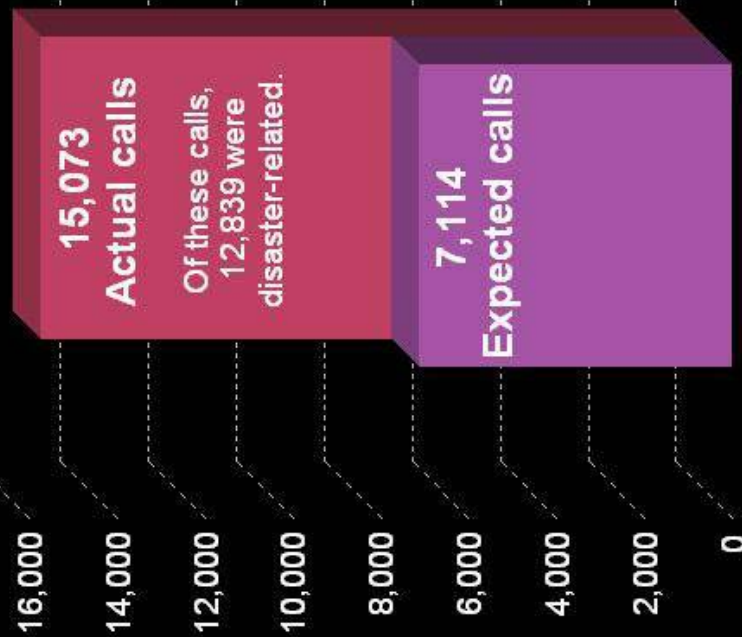
# 2-1-1 Helpline Disaster-Related Information and Recovery

## Ice Storm, December 2007

**Disaster-Related Caller Needs, December 9-31, 2007**



**December 2007 calls**



Notes: "Expected calls" represents an estimate of what the call volume in December would have been had the ice storm not occurred, based on trends in 2006 and prior months of 2007.

Source: Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa, 2-1-1 Helpline.

Prepared by the Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa



## **Oklahoma 2-1-1 Hot Wash**

January 16, 2008

### What Worked

- Move to local EOCs in Tulsa and Oklahoma City
- New group option on call attendant for disaster calls (allowed new specialists to take only disaster-related calls)
- IRis access even without Internet access
- Use of laptops for IRis, call-tracking
- Color-coded resource sheets in initial response
- Direct line into phone/fax in EOC; dedicated staff assigned to EOC
- Houston 2-1-1 assistance
- Sticking to 2-1-1's defined role (limiting activities beyond providing referral numbers)

### What Didn't Work

- Power, phone service, cable
- Alternate site reliability
- Understand tech requirements for call centers (ACD, headsets, auto call attendants, networked computers, call management accounting system)
- Initial routing to 2-1-1 in OKC EOC
- Phantom calls, busy signals
- Contact with outlying counties' EOCs
- Statewide 2-1-1 coordination challenges – communication
- Agencies closed over Christmas, weekend
- Media relationships

### What to Change for Next Time

- Alternate site with generator and redundant/backup phone system
- Explore resource assistance on-site from other OK 2-1-1 centers
- Explore use of volunteers at larger call center, possibly privately-owned
- Selected pre-recorded messages (i.e., shelter locations) through ACD
- Supply of laptops
- Hosted phone system, generator-powered (Texas statewide system)
- VISTA training team for new volunteers
- Daycare options 24/7 (hospitals)
- Disaster reimbursement
- Staffing plan prior to disaster
- Expedited uploads to JOIN during disaster