

## RMCC Takes Major Hit from Tornado, but Works to Re-open As soon As Possible



Rich Mountain Community College in Mena took a direct hit from last week's tornado, but has made good progress in a short period of time as plans are made to re-open as soon as possible. Dr. Wayne Hatcher, RMCC President, stated, "The efforts to move forward on campus are amazing. Our staff and faculty jumped in and proved that organized team work makes an immediate positive impact. The College has some serious damage and we are in the process of assessing."

Dr. Hatcher continued, "We are also well aware that our community has been dealt a near-devastating blow by the storm and is hurting. Members of our RMCC family have also lost their homes along with scores of others in the area. We also know we have many students suffering from the storm's effects--and this is of great concern to us. This could be the thing that stops them from achieving their educational goals...and prevents our community from having the qualified workforce we need for our local economy."

Dr. Hatcher continued, "Despite our property damage, we have much to be thankful for when evaluating the situation. We had students and employees on campus when the storm struck, and all made it through with no serious injuries, and I appreciate the bravery exhibited by our faculty in protecting our students. Also, when surveying the rest of town, even though our damage is significant, we know it could have been much worse."

Dr. Hatcher shared, "We know our RMCC employees came to help us tend to the campus despite everything going on around them in their neighborhoods and in the lives of their friends and families. We now have professional cleanup crews to help and this gives members of our RMCC family the opportunity to get back to helping the community deal with the clean up throughout town."

The College is awaiting word from structural engineers to determine the damage to the buildings. For now, classes on the Mena campus, except for the LPN program, are canceled for the week of April 13-17. The LPN classes will maintain their normal schedule as of April 13--the relocation to the educational classroom at Mena Regional Health System Hospital being the only major change. The decision of when to return to classes will depend on the impending results of the engineer's damage assessment.

Students enrolled in online and hybrid courses need to contact their instructors as soon as possible for instructions on proceeding towards course completion. Classes offered at all locations excluding the Mena campus are continuing as normal beginning Monday, April 13.

Dr. Hatcher shared that he believes it is in the best interest of RMCC, the students, and the community to work diligently to get the College back up and running as soon as possible. "I know for some it may appear we might hold off due to the widespread destruction around us, but I also know we have students and employers counting on us to provide their education in order to move on with their plans for further education and/or pending employment opportunities." Dr. Hatcher went on to say, "I met with the academic division chairpersons on Saturday to look at the needs to complete the semester as close to normal as possible. Of course we all know it will be a challenge, but RMCC will not back down – we move forward. We will continue to educate the citizens of the area. Don't be surprised when RMCC and the community come out of this stronger than we were before."

In conclusion, Dr. Hatcher suggests everyone who can get to [www.rmcc.edu](http://www.rmcc.edu) do so to check as updates are posted dealing with the College's plans. Updates are also being provided to local media outlets on a regular basis. Faculty and staff have attended brief updates April 13 and 14 to keep them as up to date as possible with regard to issues facing the College.