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City to help homeowners begin the next process of storm recovery -- the cleanup.

May. 27, 2013

MOORE (Okla.) — Over the Memorial Day weekend, hundreds of volunteers spread out across Moore and southwest Oklahoma City to help homeowners begin the next process of recovering from the major tornado that hit May 20: the cleanup.

With most salvageable personal items already carted away, families affected by the storm took advantage of the moderate weather and began sweeping their homes to the curb.

A spokesman for the Moore Police Department said the city will begin picking up debris from the curbs next week and will circulate forms for homeowners who want crews to come onto their property and take what's left.

"Right now we're just cleaning up, and that's pretty much not going to change for awhile," Sgt. Jeremy Lewis said. "We're seeing a lot of progress throughout the entire city."

New utility poles are going up alongside neighborhood streets that just a few days ago were impassable. Though traffic still is snarled at most intersections around the area directly hit by the storm, there is a sense of diligence and peace as the city moves from organized chaos to just organized.

Lewis said at least 1,200 homes across central Oklahoma were destroyed by Monday's tornado and at least another 12,000 were damaged. State insurance commissioner John Doak said insured property losses likely will exceed \$2 billion.

But for most families hard at work outdoors Saturday, the financial implications of the damage are just an afterthought.

“It’s really coming together quickly,” said Raquel Forde, who, alongside her

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Jeff Gorman, who hid from the tornado in a cellar underneath his garage on SW 147, said the days of shock and panic have come to an end.

“Everybody’s just doing what they gotta do,” he said. “It’s not new anymore; it’s just what we’re doing.”

Across the street, Rachel Dean and her 2-year-old son, Deacon, spent the day helping clean up the homes of fellow congregation members from Oakcrest Church of Christ in Oklahoma City.

The work and the evidence of progress, just a few short days after utter destruction, is enough to make most of the homeowners and volunteers remember how to smile, Dean said.

“It’s horrific, but today you see all the love,” she said. “It’s pretty cool just to see all the people reaching out and helping each other.”

Kelly Cain, spokeswoman for the state Department of Emergency Management, said more than 3,900 people have registered for disaster aid so far and nearly \$3 million in aid has been approved.

She said folks who experienced property loss or damage are asked to call (800) 621-FEMA or register online at www.disasterassistance.gov.

There are several other outlets for assistance, Cain said, ranging from the U.S. Small Business Administration to voluntary assistance agencies like the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

“There’s still a lot of, you know, trying to recover lost items and all that, and that’s still very important,” Cain said. “But from a state perspective we are working hard just to try and get the word out about the assistance.”

President Barack Obama is expected to tour some of the neighborhoods affected by

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