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# KC pilots ready to take off with relief for Iowa derecho victims

Betsy Webster

Updated 14 hrs ago



OLATHE, KS (KCTV) – Parts of Iowa are still trying to recover after a massive storm ripped through with hurricane force winds, and now a KC area group is using its special skills to get supplies to those folks quickly.

It was just one week ago when a derecho, a massive and sustained straight-line windstorm, created chaos with winds between 90-110 mph for up to 45 minutes across eastern Iowa. The storm caused both widespread and significant damage, and multiple people have died.

Andrew Willey said he did not realize the scope of the destruction until he spoke with a friend in Cear Rapids on Friday.

“I was like, ‘How’s it going?’ He’s like, ‘We still don’t have power.’ I was like, ‘I’m sorry, what?!’” Willey told KCTV5 News.

That’s when he started seeking out info on the straight-line winds that traveled at least 800 miles. He said he soon realized the images of a tree on a house, or tighter shots of limbs down, are deceiving, withholding the true scope of destruction.

“You zoom out and it’s everywhere,” Willey said. “It is devastation on a scale that I don’t think people can really wrap their heads around.”

His friend says stores are wiped out of hygiene supplies, charcoal to help fix hot food and coolers much needed by people who need to put their insulin on ice.



US & WORLD NEWS

Derecho with 100 mph winds moves across the Midwest, bringing down trees and power lines in Chicago

By Theresa Waldrop and Judson Jones, CNN Meteorologist

Willey brought his community here in the Kansas City area together to see how they could help.

“I emailed my pastor at 9:30 on Saturday and said, ‘Hey, can we bring this up in church?’ And he said, ‘Yeah,’” he recalled, noting that the congregation had gathered loads of supplies like paper towels, diapers, wipes, charcoal and tarps in just 24 hours.

However, after gathering all of these items to take to Iowa, Willey realized he couldn’t spare 11 hours needed to make the round trip. His solution, though, was to turn to another of his interests - flying.

Willey is part of a tight-knit group of aviation enthusiasts, so he put his airlift idea on his social media groups.

“Yeah sure, it would be more efficient maybe to throw all this into a U-Haul and go north, and people are doing that,” he admitted. “We’re not trying to do a big post-World War II airlift effort here. This is really about raising awareness and doing something that we love.”

Many of these folks are hobbyists who fly for the fun of it, so why not do good while doing what you love? The idea took off, garnering interest not just in Kansas City but also in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

“We’re not just up there turning money into noise. You can participate in a meaningful way doing something that you enjoy doing as well,” Willey said. “I know there’s a lot going on in the world right now, and that’s one of the reasons why this event has been so hard for people to pay attention to.”

His plane may be small and have just a 350-pound weight limit, but his goal is far bigger - get the true level of devastation from the derecho on people’s radar.

So far Willey has three local pilots, including himself, committed to ferrying the load up to the Marion, Iowa, airport. He’ll gladly take more aviation volunteers and asks that anyone looking to help **just drop him and email**.

There are also **many Facebook groups** started to connect people who want to help with groups they can send support to in Iowa.

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**Betsy Webster**  
Reporter