



The Disaster That Wasn't

These photos suggest a crushed business and crushed lives. The tornado that destroyed Caterpillar's Oxford, MS, plant February 5, 2008, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, "could have been the most severe crisis in Caterpillar's history" because the 1.1 million industrial couplings produced monthly at the plant were used in "nearly every bulldozer, dump truck and excavator" the company produced. And, Oxford was the only place those couplings were made. Companywide production was threatened.

In spite of the severe damage, couplers went back into production in a near-miraculous 13 days. Caterpillar's business recovery was the topic of an in-depth story in *The Wall Street Journal* May 19, 2008.

The recovery process began at 5:37pm — before the tornado hit — when AccuWeather issued a tornado warning for a storm 18 miles away. At that time, no other weather agency had a warning out for the plant's location.

As the story recounts, the warning was received via text message by Ms. Sherry Black, the plant's health and safety coordinator. She moved the 80 people at the plant into shelter.

At 5:59pm, the tornado struck.

With AccuWeather's warning people were moved proactively into shelters and no serious injuries occurred.

The Journal story recounts the efforts of the plant's employees to get production back up in just two weeks – a deadline they surpassed by one day. But, without the availability of those people and their expertise, this fortunate outcome would never have occurred.

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