

**John C. Ackerman**

Tazewell County Board

*Continuing a Family Tradition of Community Service*

May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009

## **\*\*\* Position Update \*\*\***

### **Tazewell County** **Tremont Facility Storm Shelters**

For the past several months since my appointment to the Tazewell County Property Committee, I have been discussing the need for Storm Shelters to be installed at the Tazewell County Tremont Facilities. Currently, we do not have "take cover" facilities for our employees and guest at any of our facilities at the Tremont Location. That means that around 130+ people a day are left to chance whether or not a storm is going to affect that location. While we have been very fortunate in the past that severe weather has not directly hit these buildings, I find it unacceptable for us as a County Board to allow this to continue into the future.

As a member of the Property Committee, I have pointed out the potential personal liability we assume by not providing these facilities for our employees and by not making this a priority. I understand there is expense involved, but the actual work could be done over a few annual budget periods, which would relieve some of the financial burden. Just having a plan in place would go a long ways to relieving liability. I have recommended the need for a sub-committee to research what options we have to accomplish this goal and have pointed out the need for this sub-committee to be formed as soon as possible. To date, nothing has been done. As we are now in the midst of another violent storm season, this important life safety concern can no longer be ignored. The legal ramifications for the county and moral obligation we owe to our employees to provide safe working conditions must move this project forward.

Currently, the Transportation Committee, which I am also a member of, is looking into the possibility of making a new Service Bay Building also serve as a storm shelter facility. While this could be sufficient enough for the Highway Department, this will not adequately serve as a solution to the Storm Shelter problem faced by the Health Department, Veteran's Affairs Offices, Animal Control Department, ESDA, TCRC and others at this facility. Some of these buildings are more than 100 yards from the proposed site of this future Service Bay Building. Also, we currently do not have a timetable on construction of this new building. It could be later this year, maybe next year, maybe longer, maybe never. With or without this new transportation building, a sub-committee needs to be formed to research and recommend solutions to this immediate issue.

Parsons Custom Manufacturing in Metamora, Illinois, should have served as an example to all of the difference these facilities can provide between life and death. Please remember that the storm that produced the tornadoes that damaged South Pekin, Pekin, Morton, and other parts of Tazewell County just a few years ago was less than five miles from this facility. After the Parsons example and with a tornado passing so close to our facilities recently, I find it disturbing that we have not looked at this issue sooner.

Now that it has been pointed out and discussed, further delay in taking action to correct this important life safety concern will only further dishearten our employees. We must immediately form a sub-committee and start formulating a plan to provide adequate and convenient storm shelter facilities for the peace of mind of our valuable employees, their families and our visitors. Based on the example of Parsons and of other companies I have work for that utilize multiple small shelters, I would request we explore this option rather than one large shelter due to the distance needed to be covered from one building to another.

If you have any questions or comments concerning this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me.

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