

CBS Mornings

10/06/62

7:00:55 a.m. [TEASE]

10 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: FEMA Failure?]

NATE BURLESON: We visit a Wisconsin town devastated by a tornado where some locals say politics are holding up FEMA relief.

PHIL JOHNSTON: Can't pay the rent, can't put food on the table.

(...)

7:02:38 a.m. [TEASE]

10 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: FEMA Failure]

BURLESON: And Dr. Jon LaPook visits a town devastated by a tornado. Three months later, it has received no federal aid. Could politics be at play? We will show you what he found.

(...)

7:20:52 a.m. [TEASE]

8 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; FEMA Failure?]

VLADIMIR DUTHIERS: Still ahead, is politics holding up federal disaster money for families in need? We will visit a hard-hit community that's organizing fundraisers while they wait for FEMA help.

(...)

7:32:04 a.m.

4 minutes and 34 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Tornado-Hit Community Still Desperate for FEMA Aid]

NORAH O'DONNELL: Now, the story of a Wisconsin community ravaged by a tornado back in July still waiting for help from FEMA. More than 1,000 homes and other buildings in Menasha were damaged or destroyed, but months later, the Trump administration still hasn't responded to requests for money to help rebuild. The agency is caught in the crosshairs of a political battle over FEMA's role. Chief medical correspondent Dr. Jon LaPook went to Menasha to see how it

affects people trying to pick up the pieces.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JON LAPOOK: Usually, music is a sign of celebration.

RALLY FOR THE VALLEY SPEAKER: We commend you for all of the ways that you are working together.

LAPOOK: This is a call to action, and musicians from Hollywood to New York City have answered that call. In a modest Wisconsin town, nestled along Lake Winnebago —

JOHNSTON: It's not a small endeavor, it turns out.

LAPOOK: — filmmaker Phil Johnston and a team of volunteers organized a fundraiser in response to the devastating tornado that struck Menasha on July 27.

JOHNSTON: It's benefitting charities locally that are helping directly with the rebuilding, and in some cases, just literally handing checks to people who can't pay their rent, who can't buy diapers, who can't put food on the table.

SOCIAL MEDIA USER @REAL_WOOKIE [in July]: This is the main street in Menasha.

LAPOOK: The tornado carved a 14-mile path through the town, with peak winds reaching 140 miles per hour. Miraculously, no one died. On August 26, Democratic Governor Tony Evers asked President Trump to grant federal aid. Menasha is still waiting for an answer.

JOHNSTON: People are upset that the government isn't helping out a whole lot. You know, it shouldn't have to be a fundraising concert that is giving you the basic needs to live your life. It's not — it's not right.

LAPOOK: An analysis of FEMA data shows Trump has approved 85 percent of requests from states that voted for him in 2024 and only 46 percent from states that voted for Harris. States with Democratic governors also have fared worse, like Wisconsin, which voted for Trump, but where Governor Evers has been an outspoken critic of the President.

CONGRESSMAN RICK LARSEN (D-WA): Should be 100 percent, or 99 percent, or 98 percent of all requests getting approved.

LAPOOK: Democratic Congressman Rick Larsen is co-sponsor of a bipartisan bill that would reform federal disaster response.

LARSEN: Politicizing disaster relief is a horrible approach to helping communities throughout the country.

LAPOOK: In a statement to CBS News, a White House spokesperson said, “there is no politicization to the President’s decisions on disaster relief,” and the President responds to each request with “great care and consideration.” Kelly Leery is hoping for more than consideration.

KELLY LEERY: I keep thinking it’s going to get easier, but it is not.

LAPOOK: Five years ago, she bought this dream house she shares with her daughter Addie. Leery received money from her insurance to rebuild, but it is \$125,000 short of builder estimates. Leery said she and so many of her neighbors have no plans to leave town. They’re sticking together, Menasha strong.

LEERY [CRYING]: I think there’s a lot of people in my position. We don’t know; we’re just living on a wing and literally a prayer. Like, I did everything right and I just want to rebuild my tiny little house, and I feel like we just need help.

LAPOOK: Now, you might be asking: What about state assistance? Wisconsin state disaster fund doesn’t provide money directly to residents to cover their losses. That help comes from local governments, which don’t have a lot to give. Now, if you want to find out more about this, about the Rally for the Valley, you go to rallyforthevalley — rallyforthevalleywi — that stands for Wisconsin — rallyforthevalleywi.com.

O’DONNELL: This is so infuriating.

GAYLE KING: Mmhmm.

O’DONNELL: People need help, and I think people are going to vote with their feet at the polls because they’re fed up with government. Why is it taking so long to get them help?

LAPOOK: That’s what the people I spoke to, they were furious about and really frustrated, so — and we mentioned that Congressman Larsen has a bill. It is a bipartisan committee that 13 months ago, passed a reform bill, that was going to reform FEMA, going to increase transparency. It passed 57-3 13 months ago. It’s stuck in the House. It hasn’t even been brought to full Congress for discussion, for debate, and for a vote. And so, you wonder why people are frustrated? That’s one reason.

KING: Well, it’s frustrating. You do everything right, as she said —

BURLESON: Right.

KING: — and you still feeling you’re getting screwed.

O’DONNELL: Yeah, I know.

KING: That’s what is so upsetting and painful.

O'DONNELL: Yeah.

BURLESON: Alright, Dr. Jon LaPook, thank you.