

# First Response Team of America Partners with Altorfer Rents in Derecho Relief

On Monday, August 10, over 100 mph winds swept through eastern Iowa. Trees blew over with many ripped from the ground, power lines littered the streets, and buildings had anywhere from minor shingle and siding damage to being totally demolished. This storm - called a derecho - devastated eastern Iowa and caused over \$10 million in agricultural damage alone.

In true midwestern fashion, people rolled up their sleeves and got to work clearing their homes and checking on their neighbors. However, it quickly became apparent that due to the large scale of the disaster, they couldn't do it alone. Many nonprofit organizations throughout the country answered the call and traveled to eastern Iowa to help where they could. One was the First Response Team of America (FRTA).

Tad Agoglia founded FRTA in 2007 when he realized the need for efficient disaster relief. Before, he utilized operators from his contracting business to assist in storm clean-up efforts throughout the nation. The organization partners with top meteorologists to study weather patterns and anticipate where the next disaster will be and arrive quickly to assist the communities affected.

"I wanted to help and as a contractor, it was what I could do to help," Tad said. "FRTA provides an opportunity to be in touch with your fellow man. I can put everything aside and help someone who's right there and struggling."

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*Tad Agoglia, First Response Team of America*

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**Above:** A 299D3 with a grapple bucket cleans fallen trees in Springville, IA. The First Response Team of America (FRTA) used donated equipment from Altorfer Rents to clean up the community after Iowa's derecho on August 10.

In 2008, \$250,000 was granted by Caterpillar to help take FRTA to the next level. Since then, over \$300,000 in equipment was donated by Caterpillar. Additionally, Cat dealerships provide temporary machine rentals free of charge when FRTA is clearing storm damage. The rental fleet is used to provide power to essential entities like hospitals, clear roads of debris, and anything the community needs. Tad has been a loyal Cat equipment customer since 1999 making a corporate partnership easy.

"Cat is a trusted brand and we want people to feel like they can rely on us," Tad said. "When communities see us come in with Cat equipment, it's comforting to them to know that they can rely on us. I also know that my team is going in with equipment that won't let us down and will get the job done."

John Cult is an operations manager from York, PA. He takes some of his vacation days each year to volunteer with FRTA and has done so for the last three years. Like Tad, John has participated in storm relief for several years before that. When he heard about the derecho, he reached out to FRTA volunteering to assist in the clean-up. On Sunday, August 23, he drove over 900 miles to Springville, IA - a small town about 30 miles northeast of



**Above:** John Cult (left) smiles for a photo with Springville natives after clearing the trees from their property with machines from Altorfer Rents.

Cedar Rapids. There, he spent five days in the community doing what he could to help clear the damage.

"John is a long-time volunteer firefighter and involved with multiple charities, so he really has a heart for people," Tad said. "He also has the experience of running equipment and is aware of safety. Using his management experience, he can effectively oversee volunteers - so the skills he brings are really valuable."

John contacted Altorfer Rents and arranged for a 420FL backhoe with a 24" bucket, and a 299D3 compact track loader with an 86" smooth bucket and 86" root rake grapple to be delivered to Springville. The equipment proved to be crucial as their efforts were focused toward helping several families throughout the community clear trees and debris off their homes.

"With Cat, everything is always familiar and it's comfortable," John said. "In storm clean up, my favorite pieces are compact track loaders and skid steer loaders. They're small, versatile, and you can make a long job go quickly."

Along with machine rentals, Altorfer Rents was on-call to help with whatever FRTA needed. When a hose blew on the grapple bucket, all John had to do was contact Altorfer to get it fixed.

"We lost maybe 45 minutes in downtime," John said. "Monday morning, I was at Altorfer Rents and within 15 minutes, the hose was made and I was back out the door."

After the storm hit, Altorfer Rents was dedicated to serving the community, and recognized the contributions that nonprofit organizations like FRTA were able to provide the people of eastern Iowa.

"With so many people impacted by this recent storm and with the damage left behind at historical levels, Tad and his team jumped right in and got to work," Vice President of Altorfer Rents **Marty Hart** said. "I was impressed with their obvious commitment to helping communities in need where the aftermath was most obvious."

FRTA realized the need for relief was strong in the smaller Iowa communities. While larger cities like Cedar Rapids were also affected by the derecho, places like Springville



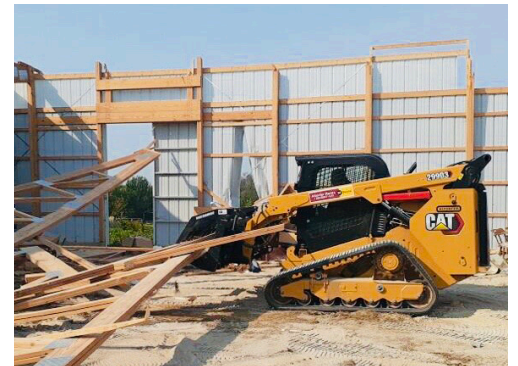
**Above:** A 420FL backhoe takes on a damaged tree in Springville, IA. First Response Team of America (FRTA) was in Iowa for five days clearing storm damage.

were overlooked in terms of resources and storm relief. This made targeting their efforts easy.

"The best part is you're helping somebody - ones who would most likely not get the help," John said. "One gentleman we helped had trees that would have laid there forever before he could afford to have them removed or clean them up himself."

Tad and the team at FRTA recognize that without the continued partnership with Caterpillar, storm relief at this level would not be possible.

"We couldn't do the work we do without the support of Cat dealerships. Everyone was so selflessly willing to lend a hand and support our work and the people of Iowa," Tad said. "I



**Above:** The 299D3 compact track loader clears the remains of Hercules' Haven sanctuary - a farm animal rescue.

think the Cat dealer network has always been extremely sincere and heartfelt. They truly care about their communities."

Although there is still a lot of work to be done, Altorfer and the Springville community are grateful for what FRTA did to clear the damage after the derecho.

"The debris clean-up is an initial step in a long recovery process, but the comfort found from this act has a truly positive impact on the healing process for our neighborhoods, communities and residents of eastern Iowa," Marty said. "It has been nothing short of an honor for Altorfer Inc and the Altorfer Rents team to have been able to contribute to Tad's goal of helping those in need."



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