

# Amish among groups building homes for local tornado survivors

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*Members of Disaster Aid Ohio, an Amish relief group from Holmes County, assemble exterior and interior walls for homes being constructed in Dayton.*

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Disaster Aid Ohio, an Amish disaster relief group, began construction last week on one of eight homes scheduled to be built throughout the Dayton region as part of the Tornado Survivor Pathway to Homeownership Program.

The initiative is meant to provide new homes for individuals who had their property damaged in the 2019 Memorial Day tornadoes.

Five of the homes to be constructed by the Amish group will be located in Harrison Twp., one in Trotwood, and two in the City of Dayton.

The group of houses is estimated to be finished during the months of March and April 2022, according to Laura Mercer, the executive director of the Miami Valley Long Term Recovery Operations Group.

Many of the members of Disaster Aid Ohio regularly travel from Holmes County, Ohio, which is between Columbus and Akron, to work on the affected tornado areas.

This sacrifice makes the group's willingness to contribute to Dayton's relief effort even more meaningful, said Adam Blake, the vice president of County Corp, a nonprofit that advocates for affordable housing and partners with the Tornado Survivor program.

"It's very heartening that the Amish have a culture of helping their neighbors in need," Blake said. "And it doesn't matter whether that neighbor is a mile away or three hours' drive away like we are."

While the Dayton area is recovering more than two years after its tornadoes, recovery work is just beginning in western Kentucky after Friday's devastating storms.

On Tuesday, residents continued to clear rubble and volunteers delivered water, food, diapers and other supplies. Utility workers replaced thousands of damaged power poles, and rescue crews continued to search for the dead.

The storm killed at least 88 people in five states — 74 of them in Kentucky — and officials said that like Dayton, it would take years the hardest-hit areas to fully recover.

The Dayton area's Tornado Survivor Pathway to Homeownership Program falls under the umbrella of the Long-Term Recovery group and is responsible for the ongoing construction of 16 total houses throughout the Dayton region.

The program especially targets first-time homebuyers.

It allows eligible tornado survivors whose residence was damaged in the 2019 storms and who have not owned a home in the past three years to apply for the opportunity to purchase one of the newly built or rehabilitated properties. To apply, visit [www.homeownershipdayton.org](http://www.homeownershipdayton.org).

The program works to increase the amount of affordable housing in areas of the Miami Valley.

"What we're trying to do with this program is provide the opportunity for equity and homeownership," Blake said.

Several groups work together to operate the program, including the Home-Ownership Center of Greater Dayton, County Corp and Montgomery County.

Funding for the program comes from the Dayton Foundation, local church groups, the City of Dayton and other grants and private donors. Such collaboration has allowed the program and relief effort in general to flourish, Mercer said.

"I think Dayton is a really special community in that not only are we all very interconnected and care about each other, but we're also very innovative," Mercer said. "I think that played out really well for our communities' benefit during the disaster recovery phase."

This story contains information from the Associated Press.