

State, federal officials take a look at damage

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Staff Writer

Gov. Kathleen Sebelius took an aerial tour of the tornado-stricken Miller Ranch area Thursday, then described it as looking like a "bomb had dropped." She called it a "miracle" that no deaths occurred in the county.

"When a storm hit Kansas University two years ago we put together federal, state, and local funds quickly," she said.

"Unfortunately we have a lot of practice in knowing how to respond to this in Kansas," she added.

According to Sebelius, there is money in the budget for rebuilding the affected areas. "There is \$10 million available to be spent when the legislature is not in session," she said.

"I talked to director David Paulson (of the Federal Emergency Management Agency) and he told me to let us know what we need," she added.

Sebelius said the next step in the process was to make a full assessment of the damage.

Joining Sebelius were K-State president Jon Wefald, Representative Sydney Carlin, Senator Roger Reitz, and Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, adjunct general for the Kansas National Guard.

Sens. Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts and Reps. Nancy Boyda and Jerry Moran, also toured the stricken area. Brownback talked about the need to provide federal assistance through FEMA, and added that he viewed addressing the problem of increased gas and food prices generally as a top priority. "We've got to start getting more supplies in this country," Brownback said. "We have to allow access to held off areas so we can produce more of our energy.

Brownback, and Roberts, said they were in meetings with the Commodities Futures Trading Commission, which has come under fire on Capitol Hill this week for not doing more to discourage large investors from speculating on future energy prices. "This should offset the public's fears that the rising costs are due to manipulations as opposed to supply and demand," Roberts said.
