

# Dealership reopens after tornado damage

BY JARED YOUNG  
Staff Reporter

Jim Robertson's Toyota and General Motors Dealership recently reopened for business following seven months of reconstruction after a tornado ransacked the north side of Kirksville in May.

The seven months of downtime consisted of cleanup work, insurance company assessments of the damage and contracted construction of the destroyed parts of the dealership.

Randy Henness, new car general sales manager, worked along with many of the employees at Jim Robertson's to clean up the debris and mess left by the tornado. It was an emotional time for many who came to work every day, not knowing what their job would be. Henness said the summer was difficult to bear at times.

"When [the dealership] got tore down, I got tore down," Henness said. "It was tough."

The group of employees stuck together through the summer, continuing to clean up. But Henness said that much of the work was out of the employees' hands after the cleanup was complete.

A total of 146 new and used vehicles were deemed complete losses and moved off the lot during cleanup. Other damaged vehicles were repaired. Henness said Toyota delivered 50 brand new vehicles to the dealership within the first 30 days, and GM soon followed suit.

The community also provided support during this difficult time. The Red Cross, as well as many churches in Kirksville, brought food and water

and were willing to help in any way they could.

Henness, who has worked at Jim Robertson's for 34 years, said emotions ran high among everyone, especially himself.

"Everybody pulled together and did an excellent job," Henness said. "It was tough coming to work every day and looking at the mess we had, and trying to figure out, 'What are you going to do today?' It's an experience I don't want to go through again."

After the cleanup was finished, some employees were laid off because there was not a place to work. However, Henness said that everyone was guaranteed a job once the dealership was back in shape.

Service Manager Charles Wheeler said it was a great feat to bring the business back into operation after only seven months since the storm.

"It took a lot of people and a lot of coordination to bring it back to what it was," Wheeler said.

During the reconstruction phase, Jim Robertson's continued to sell cars and perform small maintenance jobs in their shop. Like Henness, Wheeler said coming to work some days took a toll on emotions.

"There was a point in time when the building was tore up, that you walked in here on a rainy day and there was no roof above your head," Wheeler said. "It got pretty tough."

Jim Robertson's is close to being back to normal. Henness said there are still small things to be taken care of, but the building and the business are in good shape to begin moving forward again.



Amy Vicars/Index  
With help from the community, Jim Robertson's is back to operating at full speed after having to close because of tornado damage in May.

# Waiver aids farmers in grain transfer

A new declaration helps farmers transfer more crops to local grain supplier MFA

ALEX CLIPPINGER  
Staff Reporter

The Missouri Department of Transportation and the Department of Agriculture have extended a waiver intended to help grain farmers transport their crops to market.

MODOT spokesperson DeAnne Rickabaugh said the waiver, or declaration, allows trucks to weigh 10 percent more than their accepted legal weight of 88,000 pounds. Drivers of commercial motor vehicles also are permitted to operate beyond their normal limit of 10 to 11 hours per day.

The waiver expires one minute after midnight Dec. 22.

"We originally started with just farmers, and we covered their move from the field to the first bin, generally an elevator in town," Rickabaugh said. "And then it didn't take long for folks to call us and say, 'The bins are full. We have to move them to the next bin.' Well, OK. Alright then, let's throw the motor carriers into this mix too, and have them help get the product to market."

Michael Seipel, chair of Truman's agricultural science department, said that corn and soybeans are seasonal crops that usually are harvested between October and November.

"[In] a normal load, a truck can haul about 850 bushels, and this, the waiver, allows trucks to go up to about 1,000 bushels," Seipel said.

Some farmers don't think the program will be effective. Frank Moore, manager of the Kirksville-Lancaster MFA, said it's difficult to predict the weight of a truck's load before it reaches the scales.

"I know it sounds crazy, but we have drivers here who come in to load and come up on the scales and they'll be seven or eight thousand pounds short," Moore said.

Moore said even high-tech



Mayank Dughana/Index  
Due to a new declaration by MODOT and the Department of Agriculture, trucks can carry 10 percent more than their accepted legal weight until Dec. 22. The declaration could make it easier for farmers to transport their crops to the MFA, a local grain supplier.

equipment cannot guarantee an accurate weight measurement. Drivers have a legal obligation to check their load at the first set of scales they reach, but until then, there's no way of knowing how much weight they're carrying.

"I really don't know [if] very many of them do," Moore said. "It boils down to basic human nature, I guess. We're going to haul all we can and make fewer trips, so this is no dif-

ferent from any other year. I haven't seen an increase in it anyway."

The reason for the waiver was mostly weather related.

"It's the rain that caused the issue," Rickabaugh said. "If it's too muddy to get the tractors and the combines and the harvesters in the field, there's nothing you can do but sit and watch the rain fall. So, when it finally does stop, you've got

to get that produce out so it doesn't end up going to waste."

For those concerned that the combination of approaching winter weather and overweight vehicles might pose a safety hazard for other motorists, Rickabaugh said the worst of winter weather is yet to come, and the drivers know what they're doing. The overweight trucks also are not allowed to operate on interstates and must

follow strict safety guidelines when driving on bridges.

"It's actually the weight that's the issue," Rickabaugh said. "Interstate highways — we're not allowed to weigh on because they're federal. And while we take care of them and we build them, there's certain things we can't do. If you're overweight on the highway, you're going to be in trouble anyway."

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