



Jeff Piotrowski making his frantic call to a 911 operator during the Joplin tornado.

Many in Joplin spotted the giant gray cloud moving across the sky. Few understood what they were seeing. Jeff Piotrowski quickly called 911, shouting into his cell phone that there was a massive tornado heading right into southern Joplin. On the side of the road, a policeman sat in his cruiser. Jeff stopped the truck and leaped out.

"That's a dangerous tornado!" he cried, pointing up at the approaching gray cloud. "Get the sirens going! Get the sirens going!"

By then, weather forecasters throughout the region realized that Joplin was in grave danger. Jeff had been right all along. Two violent super-

cells had crashed together to create a storm of unimaginable power. And now it was about to devour the city of Joplin.

Thanks to Jeff Piotrowski's warning to the policeman, Joplin's sirens sounded again at 5:31 p.m. It was extremely unusual for the city's sirens to sound twice in such a short period of time. Most people understood: This was no false alarm.

VICIOUS ATTACK

Throughout Joplin, people rushed for shelter. The lucky ones headed for storm cellars dug into their backyards. These small underground rooms are the only truly safe places in a strong tornado. Others ran to their basements or huddled in closets. They pulled pillows from beds and climbed into bathtubs.

Along Joplin's busy shopping streets, people left their cars and hustled into stores like Walmart and Home Depot. At fast-food restaurants, managers