

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENZI). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, not to extend beyond the hour of 12 noon, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 5 minutes each.

The Senator from Georgia [Mr. COVERDELL] is to be recognized to speak for up to 60 minutes; the Democratic leader is to be recognized to speak for up to 30 minutes; the Senator from Illinois [Mr. DURBIN] is to be recognized to speak for up to 10 minutes; the Senator from North Dakota [Mr. CONRAD] is to be recognized to speak for up to 20 minutes; and the Senator from Nebraska [Mr. HAGEL] is to be recognized to speak for up to 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from North Dakota [Mr. CONRAD].

#### THE DISASTER IN NORTH DAKOTA

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, just for the information of my colleague, Senator BREAUX is here. I have 20 minutes allocated. I will not take 20 minutes. I hope to be closer to 10 minutes. So the Senator from Louisiana will have an opportunity as well.

Mr. President, I have just returned from another trip to my home State of North Dakota to see firsthand the developing slow-motion disaster that is occurring there. I call it a slow-motion disaster, Mr. President, because it is not one of those things that happens and then is over with. We have a slow-motion disaster. We have had the worst winter on record in North Dakota. Then we were hit at the end by the most powerful winter storm in 50 years, on top of the greatest flood threat in 150 years.

Mr. President, you can imagine, people of my State are beginning to wonder what happened, what could have led to a series of events as extreme as these. I don't think anyone has the answer at this point. We are truly coping with an unprecedented series of disasters. We have just had a visit from the Vice President of the United States, Vice President GORE, the Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater, and the head of FEMA, James Lee Witt, all in the State of North Dakota last Thursday and Friday. We deeply appreciated the Federal response. We got a Presidentially declared major disaster and we got it in very short order. We have also received unprecedented assistance from the Corps of Engineers, in terms of advanced measures, to hold down the catastrophe that could have occurred without the really heroic efforts by the Corps of Engineers, by FEMA, and by

local agencies, local leadership and, of course, the extraordinary efforts of volunteers.

We had people go 300 miles, from western North Dakota to eastern North Dakota, to help sandbag because they knew we were faced with an imminent disaster in eastern North Dakota. My own cousin, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, heard that Fargo, ND, was about to flood and they needed sandbaggers. He drove all night from Madison and arrived at 3 in the morning and sandbagged from the time he got there all day and into the next evening. That is the kind of attitude North Dakota has brought to this disaster.

I tell you, out of all this, the thing I am most proud of is the response of the people of our State, which has truly been extraordinary. Not only have all of the Federal agencies and State agencies pulled together, along with the volunteers, literally thousands of them across the State that helped out, but we also want to thank the Red Cross for their outstanding assistance across North Dakota. We should also thank all of the other agencies. The mental health hotline tells me they are taking a dramatically increased level of calls.

I have been asked, "What did you see out there, Senator CONRAD?" This picture shows the power lines that are down. You can see that power pole after power pole snapped. They went down like tinker toys. We had this massive ice storm, after we already had 100 inches of snow in North Dakota, the heaviest snowfall we have ever experienced. Then we get this storm that dumped another 2 feet in parts of North Dakota. It was combined with ice. Ice formed on the lines, and there were 70-mile-an-hour winds that came through. Those winds just took down these structures all across North Dakota. Over 4,000 power poles were taken down.

Mr. President, it didn't end there. This is a picture of one of the most stunning events that occurred during this disaster. This is one of the largest structures in North America. This is a 2,000-foot television tower for KXJB television; it all went down, all 2,000 feet. You can see that this structure is laid out just as if somebody came and knocked it over and laid it out perfectly across the snow. That, of course, took a lot of television stations and radio stations off the air in the midst of this crisis. So not only did you have horrible weather, you also had a communications problem.

Mr. President, this picture shows a farmer on his tractor. As you can see, these are his silos in the back. His tractor is up to its wheel rims in water. He is just getting across the farm trying to move into a position to rescue grain that would otherwise be destroyed by the rising flood waters.

Mr. President, we have another chart that tells the extent of this disaster. We had 80,000 homes without power. From a week ago Saturday, on into the week, many homes were not restored until last Friday. This is in the midst

of zero temperatures with 40-degree-below-zero wind chill factors, people without heat—80,000 people without power. There were over 600 people at emergency shelters, and that is as of Friday. Many more than that were in shelters during the peak. And 4,000 power poles were destroyed. Over 9½ feet of snow fell since November. That really is an extraordinary set of circumstances, with not only the most snowfall we have ever experienced, but they had the most powerful winter storm in 50 years on top of the greatest flood threat in 150 years.

The Red River to the north—I hear some of the national news media talking about it as though it flows south. Of course, anyone that knows geography knows the Red River flows north. The Red River has exceeded the highest flood levels ever in four different locations. In the northern part of the State, it is still rising. We have had the crest in the southern part of the State, although we expect the second crest to come later when this snow that has just fallen melts. Nonetheless, the peak crest has now hit the southern part of the State and is moving north. In the north, the river is still rising.

The livestock losses were running 60 percent above normal before this latest storm hit. Because of the very severe weather conditions we have had, we have had tens of thousands of cattle killed across the State of North Dakota. In fact, this shows losses of more than 70,000. As of this morning, I have been notified that cattle losses, they now believe, are running well over 100,000 in the State of North Dakota. The occupant of the chair, who is from the neighboring State of Wyoming, understands what cattle losses mean in a State like ours. I think even the occupant of the chair would find it hard to fully appreciate the loss of 100,000 head. That is a tremendous economic blow to the State of North Dakota. As the occupant of the Chair knows well, we have been hurt by very low cattle prices as it is, and that industry is certainly struggling. To have piled on top a 100,000 loss of cattle across the State—in fact, they tell us 112,000 head is perhaps the best estimate. But that is an enormous economic blow to the State of North Dakota.

Mr. President, I have come here this morning in order to share these circumstances with my colleagues so that they can appreciate and understand what is happening across the State. I can tell you that resilient North Dakotans continue to battle their disaster. In many places it is an uphill battle. But North Dakota has a can do attitude, and—as I saw in town after town as I traveled across the State on Thursday and Friday, the people are recovering. They understand what is at stake.

Mr. President, we very much appreciate the Federal assistance that the