

Storm Fails to Leave Track Twisting in the Wind

Challenge

Less than four months before hosting a major NASCAR event, Atlanta Motor Speedway was nearly destroyed when a devastating tornado ripped through the area, leaving the racetrack owner, Speedway Motorsports Inc. (SMI), a trail of seemingly irreparable property damage.

Solution

SMI turned to its business property insurer and loss prevention provider, FM Global for loss prevention engineering advice and coordination of the reconstruction effort to keep costs to a minimum and for rapid and fair claims settlement to help ensure their operations returned to normal as soon as possible.

Benefit

SMI successfully completed the project in time for its October race with a more improved facility and without any interruption to its business.

FM Global helps SMI rebuild, drive down costs to recover from wreckage—gets drivers back on track in record time for major racing event



It was, quite literally, a race against time.

You see, the people at Speedway Motorsports Inc. (SMI) know a thing or two about racing. They manage six auto racing tracks across the United States.

SMI is accustomed to working with automobiles, however, not construction vehicles, which they were forced to get acquainted with in July 2005. That's when a powerful tornado ripped through the state of Georgia, demolishing SMI's Atlanta Motor Speedway.

Following the storm, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution wrote: "Twisted metal hung from buildings all around the track. Trees and fences were strewn across the property. Ticket plazas were flattened. The track's credential office was gone. Trailers and trucks that had been parked neatly in rows in a lot off Turn One were overturned and jammed together amid a sea of trash cans, pieces of insulation and strips of aluminum. The giant scoring towers were on the ground. The road was littered with chunks of roofing and metal. Race car trailers were rolled over and smashed. The suite buildings atop the Weaver grandstands on the backstretch were little more than shells. The Earnhardt suites were gone."





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*– Wes Harris,
Vice President for Operations
and Development, SMI*



With AMS’s next NASCAR event only three and a half months away, prospects for waving the green flag (signifying the start of an auto race) seemed bleak...but not for long.

Among the first to arrive at the disaster scene was SMI’s business property insurer and loss-prevention advisor, FM Global. A representative from FM Global heard reports about the damaged speedway on the radio and immediately went to assess the situation.

“We partnered well with FM Global as soon as the tornado hit,” recalls Wes Harris, SMI’s Vice President for Operations and Development. “Missing October’s NASCAR race date was simply not an option. So, we had to streamline our approach to reconstruction, or else the interruption to our business would have been astronomical.”

In addition to guiding SMI through the claims process, Harris says FM Global was on site nearly every day helping with anything and everything. “FM Global helped us minimize additional damage when six and a half inches of rain fell a few days later. They also made sure we took care of damaged roofs right away, to avoid having them peel off further.”

This prevented wind, rain, and other weather elements from getting inside the structures that were left standing, avoiding even more damage. Plus, with 450 people at the construction site on any given day, SMI had its hands full overseeing everyone.

“FM Global was there every week during the process to advise us on the rebuilding process, and how to keep the costs to a minimum, but quality to a maximum. They were a second set of eyes and ears for us, helping us do a better job of keeping track of subcontractors and construction workers. FM Global provided valuable advice on construction management and methodology, helping us to meet our deadline.”

When race weekend arrived in late October, Atlanta Motor Speedway was more than ready. Racing team owner Bill Davis marveled to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, “Wow! What a phenomenal job in a short period of time. I remember all the talk about they might not even have a race, and here we are having a race with an improved facility...That’s pretty awesome.”

Harris agrees. “It was quite a learning experience. FM Global helped save us from a catastrophe.” ■