When disasters strike, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation is there to help. We understand that the loss of even one or two businesses in a small community can have a huge set-back effect. When natural disasters strike, it’s important to be able to get residents and businesses back on their feet as quickly as possible.

Time and again, our ability to funnel charitable contributions in the wake of natural disasters into the first line of support of small business owners has helped our small communities rebound. Since 2007, we’ve help re-invest nearly $1.5 million in charitable contributions into more than 330 businesses through disaster recovery grants.
**2007 Rushford Floods**

When the rain began falling on August 18, 2007, no one could envision the devastation to come. Over the next 48 hours, flash floods wreaked havoc across southeastern Minnesota. Business owners were greeted with surreal scenes such as bags of cereal floating in grocery aisles and bowling lanes curled like half-pipes. While people throughout Minnesota looked for ways to respond, SMIF developed an aid plan aligned with its mission of economic development. Over 110 businesses were aided through SMIF's efforts with our new program. “SMIF help us organize and quickly granted the first funds to Rushford area businesses to begin the rebuilding process. The day Tim Penny stood in our rebuilt store to recognize the effort was an important milestone for our company.” – Brad Hoiness, Rushford Foods.

**2010 Southern Minnesota Tornadoes**

June 17, 2010 will go down as the day with the greatest single day tornado total in Minnesota history as over 40 tornadoes rocked Minnesota residents. Over 90 businesses were either devastated or destroyed. SMIF funneled $100,000 in donations to local farm and business operations via $1,000 Tornado Recovery grants to help them get back to production as quickly as possible. “We recognize that our farmers and rural businesses are a huge economic engine here in southern Minnesota. We believed it was imperative that we do something to support their recovery efforts,” said Tim Penny, SMIF President and CEO. This effort underscores the ability of the Foundation and our partners to respond to disasters and economic situations to achieve its mission of building economic vitality throughout southern Minnesota.

**2010 & 2016 Southern Minnesota Floods**

While several small communities in SMIF's region were affected by the 2010 floods, those along the Zumbro River were particularly hard-hit; Zumbro Falls endured the greatest flooding in its city's history. On September 24, 2010 the Zumbro River flowed over the 28 foot level of the City dike and crested 8 feet above the dike. This wall of water flooded homes and businesses, city buildings, the city park, the U.S. Post Office, and state highways. These flood waters damaged or completely ruined scores of buildings and roads in the Zumbro Falls-Hammond area, and disrupted the lives of hundreds. Flooding in this region along the Cannon and Straight Rivers came again in 2010. Between these two floods, SMIF granted nearly 100 businesses grants from our Disaster Recovery Fund. Most opened their doors again just weeks after the flood waters receded.

**2016 Madelia Fire**

Early morning on February 3, 2016, a fire destroyed several buildings on Madelia’s main street, affecting 8 businesses. SMIF raised nearly $280,000 in grants to help the businesses restock inventory and pay bills until insurance kicked in, help the building owner start rebuilding, and to support Region Nine Development Commission in their role as rebuilding coordinator. “If it hadn't been for the assistance from Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation’s Disaster Recovery Fund, we would have had to close our doors for good. We had only been in business a year, and had used all of our savings to get it off the ground. We were looking forward to finally making some money this year when the fire hit.” – Nancy Vee, EZ Medical Wraps, Madelia.

*Ask about our “At the Heart of the Storm” Disaster Preparedness & Recovery Guidebook*