

TREES FALL ON HOMES

Strong Wind Peels Roof Off Shallotte Video Store

BY DOUG RUTTER

Strong winds associated with thunderstorms were blamed for tearing the roof off a Shallotte video store and knocking trees over onto two homes in western Brunswick County last Thursday.

Wind peeled the roof off Video Voltage in Shallotte and left it upside down in the front parking lot. Two mobile homes in the Ocean Isle Beach and Ash areas sustained minor damage when trees fell on them early Thursday.

An outdoor shelter at Lloyd's Oyster House at Shallotte Point was blown about 30 yards along the bank of the Shallotte River, said Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan.

"We came out of it pretty good I think. I haven't heard of any damage at the beaches," Logan said. "That was just a little freak storm that came

through. It was a weird storm."

Meteorologist Jackson Canady said the storm dumped 1.44 inches of rain at his Shallotte Point home. He estimated that sustained winds ranged from 20 mph to 35 mph during the storm.

The National Weather Service office in Wilmington recorded gusts up to 47 mph Thursday morning at New Hanover County Airport.

Besides the property damage, some residences and businesses in and around Shallotte were without power for a couple of hours.

Based on a description of the damage at Video Voltage, Canady said it was likely caused by a strong downburst of wind, not a tornado.

"There were some strong, gusty winds," he said. "This was probably a very isolated downburst of wind associated with a thunderstorm. It

could have been hurricane force in an isolated spot."

Video Voltage owner Susan Stewart said the flat roof was ripped from the building around 5:50 a.m. Another roof underneath prevented the storm from causing any damage inside.

"911 called and told us our roof was in the front parking lot," Stewart said. "I thought the worst. I thought all the movies would be gone. I thought for sure I'd come in and everything would be muddy and all blown around."

The business owner was pleasantly surprised when she arrived at the Main Street shop and found no damage inside. With the roof lying flat in the parking lot, Stewart said she was lucky her business wasn't destroyed.

"This just amazed me how it could just flip off in one piece," Stewart said. "It's so strange because it's not pieces scattered everywhere, just one big block."

The roof was constructed following Hurricane Hugo in 1989, when the original roof was damaged. Stewart said the building is owned by JoAnn Simmons and repairs would be made as soon as possible.

When the roof blew off, Stewart said it pulled down power lines and knocked out electricity at the north end of Shallotte. The roof also damaged a sign in front of the business as it crashed to the ground.

Canady said a downburst, also called microburst, probably peeled



VIDEO VOLTAGE lost its roof in last Thursday's storm. Officials believe a downburst of wind lifted the roof off the building and left it upside down in the front parking lot. STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

the roof from the back of the building, flipped it over and dropped it in the front parking lot.

"I doubt that it was a tornado," Canady said. "If you don't have debris that was laid out in a circular

debris field, it probably wasn't a tornado."

The meteorologist said a typical roof structure should be able to withstand winds up to hurricane force. "This was probably above

hurricane force."

Downbursts aren't unusual during storms. "It's almost hard to imagine it happening in such a small area, but it's not infrequent," Canady said.



THIS MOBILE HOME at the corner of Beach Drive and Spruce Lane at Ocean Isle Beach sustained minor damage when a tree fell on it last Thursday morning. STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

Civietown Trailer Fire Blamed On Smoking

Careless smoking was blamed for an early morning fire that swept through an unoccupied small storage trailer in Civietown Tuesday.

Responding to a 911 dispatch at about 2 a.m., Civietown volunteer firefighters arrived at the trailer on Fletcher-Hewett Road within about ten minutes, Chief Al Nord said. They quickly brought the fire under control with the help of a tanker from Shallotte Volunteer Fire Department.

Nord said the owner, Rhonda Mooney, had been working in the trailer earlier that night and may have left an unattended cigarette inside. She was preparing to move it to another lot, he said.

Much of the trailer remained standing, but most of the personal belongings stored there were de-

stroyed. Nord estimated the value of the 8-by-40-foot trailer at about \$5,000.

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