

TORNADO IN PERSON

■ F2 twister wallops northern part of county

By TIM CHANDLER
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"All things considered, I think we're extremely blessed."

Person County Emergency Services Director Michael Day spoke those words Tuesday while discussing the EF2 tornado that ripped through the northern portion of Person County Saturday afternoon.

While the storm, which packed winds estimated at between 111 and 135 miles per hour, caused widespread damage, there were no deaths or injuries reported in Person County.

Day was comparing Person County to areas of the state south and east where multiple injuries and deaths were associated with a host of twisters spawned by a powerful cold front passing through the state.

Day noted that Person County was placed under a severe thunderstorm warning by the National Weather Service (NWS) Saturday at 2:13 p.m. That warning was changed to a tornado warning at 2:31 p.m. when NWS radar indicated a tornado five miles southwest of Concord and seven miles west of Roxboro moving northeast at 65 miles per hour.

The warning indicated that the storm had the potential to impact the Bethel Hill community.

According to Day, 911 dispatched the Woodsdale Volunteer Fire Department, Person County Rescue Squad, Person County EMS and Emergency Management to the 9800 block of Boston Road and to North Pointe Drive "for houses struck by a tornado and people reported trapped on North Pointe Drive."

"Woodsdale Volunteer Fire Department arrived in the area and reported damage on Boston Road, North Pointe Drive and Bethel Hill School Road area," Day added. "Numerous trees and power lines were down on Boston Road near the Bethel Hill Ruritan Club, delaying access to addresses north of that location."

"There were also trees in the roadway on Bethel Hill School Road, but these were quickly cleared to allow access to the north," Day continued. "There were also trees in the roadway at Boston Road



Grey Pentecost / C-T

DESTROYED — This home on North Pointe Drive suffered heavy damage and was moved off its foundation when the EF2 tornado ripped through Bethel Hill Saturday afternoon.

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'I'm so glad that the tornado didn't come while children were here'

■ Thanks to an 'astonomical' number of volunteers, BHCS will open Monday

By GREY PENTECOST
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On Saturday, as tornados ripped through North Carolina, Bethel Hill Charter School Principal John Betterton and his wife Bonnie were taking shelter near Raleigh, where they had been visiting their grandchildren. After the storm passed in that area they got in the car to start for home and heard on the radio that Bethel Hill had been hit by a tornado.

The storm that hit parts of Person County Saturday afternoon caused substantial damage to BHCS, where the roof of the gym was ripped off, heating and air conditioning units were blown from the roof of the school building and numerous windows were broken, among other damages.

Around 6 p.m. that evening, when Betterton first saw the school and all the destruction in the storm's wake, he said his heart "dropped." But people had already begun cleanup and Betterton said when he found out that no one was hurt and all the damages could be repaired, he felt better.

"I'm so glad that the tornado didn't come while children were here," Betterton told *The Courier-Times* Monday afternoon, adding that it was a "miracle" that this week was spring break for the

school. While almost every building on campus sustained some form of damage, the gym was the hardest hit. The roof and floor tiles will have to be replaced, said Betterton, who said that he believed the building was structurally safe. However, he doesn't expect repairs to be completed before the end of this school year.

"But the rest of the campus will be back together by Monday," Betterton said, "and we'll be ready to operate."

Betterton credits the community and volunteers from surrounding areas for the quick recovery, and said the influx of volunteers was "astronomical." He estimated the number of volunteers at 40 on Saturday, 50 on Sunday and 30 on Monday.

They ranged from church groups to school faculty members and families of children who attend the school, with people offering not only their services, but equipment as well. In addition, local businesses donated food and supplies. A local farmer donated a pig, which volunteers helping at the school and in other areas of the Bethel Hill community enjoyed for lunch at Bethel Hill Baptist Church on Monday. And on Tuesday, a mission team from Vance County was scheduled to offer its assistance for a couple of days.

Betterton said that it would take some time to get "the little stuff" back, but that the main issues had been taken care of.



Tim Chandler / C-T

DEBRIS ALL AROUND — The tornado left a path of destruction at Bethel Hill Charter School, north of Roxboro.

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Tim Chandler / C-T

GYM DAMAGE — A portion of the roof at Bethel Hill Charter School was ripped off by the tornado.



Submitted by Kim Jacobs

CLEANING UP — Friends and family members worked this weekend to clean up the destruction left behind by the tornado at the home of Chris and Kim Jacobs on Bethel Hill School Road.

'Should I get Bailey up?'

■ Bethel Hill couple credits God with making sure entire family was safe during Saturday's ferocious weather

By GREY PENTECOST
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Chris and Kim Jacobs of Roxboro had heard a fairly significant storm was predicted to pass through the area on Saturday, but were not expecting anything like the one they experienced, especially not one that would imperil the lives of them and their children, and their 14-year-old daughter in particular.

"I don't know that anything could really prepare you for a hit like this," Kim told *The Courier-Times* Monday afternoon.

She and her husband Chris, along

with their two children, 11-year-old William and 14-year-old Bailey, were relaxing at their Bethel Hill School Road home Saturday when it began to rain.

Bailey was in the couple's bedroom asleep, having spent the previous night at a lock-in at Bethel Hill Baptist Church. When the wind speed began to increase and their power went out, Kim said she and Chris went outside to secure the items on their front porch. Chris then accessed Doppler radar images online that showed a storm heading in the direction of Person County.

Kim said she saw a look in her husband's eyes she had never seen before. She doesn't remember "feeling a nudge"

or thinking anything, but rather believes that God spoke through her to ask her husband, "Should I get Bailey up?"

Chris told her yes. Then, within seconds, said Chris, "it was as if someone turned a big fan on." When he heard the wind and saw the trees begin to bow and sway he told his wife, "and do it immediately."

Kim got her daughter up, and before they even made it to the small bathroom where they were planning to take shelter, she heard a crashing noise, which they later discovered was a tree limb

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