

Twister Cuts Path Across County

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Lacy Hendrix' farm about four miles out on 401.

A shed was heavily damaged, a roof blew off and was dumped, and fencing was "tore up", Niven said.

The twister apparently headed for the Wayside and Puppy Creek areas, Niven said, and a mobile home located behind the Tanglewood Motel was wrecked. No one was living in the trailer, he said.

Several eyewitnesses living along 401 reported various damage, but escaped injuries as the tornado cut a path eastward.

Mrs. E.B. Newton of Wayside said a wooden storage building behind her home exploded outward and a large tree leaned toward her house, its roots and dirt raised.

"It was all white and foamy at the bottom and about twenty feet up it was just like a grey curtain," she said. "We could see things flying by the windows on all sides."

Mrs. Newton said the tree, located right at a corner of her house miraculously didn't topple over.

"Anyone who doubts the power of prayer can look at that tree," she said.

Paul Johnson, a volunteer fireman, was working at the Green Pines trailer park when the storm hit.

"We knew the storm was coming. We heard it on the fire radio monitors when it touched down in West Hoke and we could trace it by the reports as it came this way."

"We had just moved a trailer when I saw it coming. It was just like a curtain of grey closing in over everything. It came in and just wrapped around the trailers. I could only see half of the one nearest and normally I can see for another 1,000 feet."

Johnson said all the trailers leaned over, but none was damaged. A shed at his home about a mile away was raised from the ground and traveled backwards.

The twister snapped trees and damaged outbuildings along 401 to the county line.

WSHB radio reported the station was flooded with calls after the tornado warnings were broadcast and listeners were warned to evacuate mobile homes in the area.

A tornado watch was called at 12:31 for Hoke and surrounding counties by the National Severe Storms Forecast Center. A tornado warning for Moore County was received at 2:30 p.m., and an unofficial report of a tornado spotted at Hamlet was picked up over a police communication shortly before.

School Superintendent G. Raz Autry said classes were not dismissed and each school sounded the bell and began moving the children to the hallways.

"It went pretty smooth, we were lucky," he said. "Some of the littler ones were scared, but we didn't have any real problems."

"We just didn't have enough warning at all on this, it came so fast. We were lucky," he repeated.

Niven said Tuesday he had surveyed the damage area by plane, accompanied with SCS director Tom Burgess and county forest ranger Robert Jones.

"Our estimate of property damage would be around \$100,000, that is actual replacement cost," he said.

Niven said the tornado was narrow and it was not a large one and this helped save many buildings.

Four tobacco barns were completely destroyed and at least 12 others damaged. At least 12 bulk barns sustained damage, along with equipment shelters and a few livestock houses, he said.

Niven said it is hard to estimate the timber loss, but said he guessed it to be around \$1,000.

"There's quite a few around the edge of the city, and also the Puppy Creek vicinity," he said.

Carolina Power and Light officials said about ten or fifteen families in the Fulton Street area were affected by an outage, but power was restored within an hour.

Some electric customers were cut off near the area of Hoke High School when high winds blew wires together, causing fuses to blow, a spokesman said. All homes around Raeford had power restored by 5 p.m., the company reported.

There were no reports of injuries sustained by fallen power lines, but the West Hoke area was being checked closely.

Sheriff Barrington and deputies issued warnings to onlookers about the danger of the fallen lines as sightseers filled the area to view the wreckage in the aftermath of the storm.



FLIPPED - A mobile home in West Hoke is overturned by the tornado that touched down in a trailer park, smashing two other trailers and damaging several more.



REPAIR - CP&L workers remove downed power lines from North Fulton Street.



FALLEN GIANT - This large pine blew down in a yard on North Fulton, taking power lines with it.



HOMELESS - LaVerne Harris (rear) surveys the wreckage of his mobile home after the tornado. He was inside the trailer when the storm hit, but was not injured.



DAMAGED - While not demolished, this trailer at West Hoke was hard hit by wall of the neighboring mobile home.

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