

Colby tornado big surprise

By Patty Decker
Colby Free Press

A tornado Monday took everyone from the National Weather Service to people swimming at Colby's Comfort Inn by surprise, but injuries were minor and most of the damage was confined to the Southwind Plaza and the hotel's pool.

Both locations are near the Interstate 70 and Highway 25 intersection, where the tornado touched down about 6:50 p.m.

The tornado stayed on the ground for about 10 minutes, said the National Weather Service office in Goodland. Four injuries were from flying debris and broken glass in the pool at the Comfort Inn. A hotel spokesperson said all were taken to Citizens Medical Center with minor injuries.

Tuffy Taylor, co-owner of Southwind Plaza and Taylor Motors, said he had looked at the sky about five minutes before the funnel actually touched down.

"My son-in-law, Brandan (Booi), yelled to me 'tornado!' and I said, 'where?'," he said. "The next thing I saw was flying debris."

"It happened so fast and then it was gone. The whole situation didn't really sink in until 10 p.m. that night."

Taylor and his wife Linda said they were grateful the only damage was to material things and no people were hurt badly.

An estimated 15 to 20 vehicles on Taylor's lot had broken windows or windshields and body dents. The storm flattened a directory sign at the corner of Southwind's lot, bending its big I-beams like pretzels.

"We figure the sign alone will be over \$50,000 to replace," Taylor said.

Shelley Barton said was shopping with her daughter, Shanna Cooksey of Colby, and two of grandchildren, Brooklyn and Nichelle, at Wal-Mart, which is north of I-70 and east of the interchange.

"We had been shopping for about 30 minutes in Wal-Mart when over the loudspeaker we were told there was a Code Black," she said. "We

knew it was a tornado, but that was about it."

Everyone was asked to go to the center of the store, she said, but within 30 minutes customers were allowed to leave.

Barton said it was frustrating she couldn't see what was going on, but she was thankful her family was safe.

"We had just gotten done eating at about 6:40 p.m.," said Jaylea Black, 14, a freshman at Colby High School. "I was in the back yard, at 680 North Riddle, and looked to the south and there was the tornado."

Black said she remembers a bigger twister years ago, the first she had witnessed.

"I was really surprised to see it," she said of the storm Monday. "In fact, I had seen it before the sirens started to go off."

"I went in and told my mom and grandfather, and about that time the sirens went off, so they went downstairs and my dad and I went outside. I grabbed the camera and snapped it."

Jaylea said she and her dad, Jay, stood outside and watched the twister go west, then disappear back into the clouds.

"We watched the clouds for a while," she said. "A little funnel started to form again but quickly broke apart — and then the clouds just broke up."

Judi Feldt, who lives on Pine Street, said she was making scrambled eggs for dinner.

"I went outside to get a pepper from the garden for the eggs and I saw a cloud that looked unsettled," she said.

Feldt said she saw the cloud start spinning, so she ran back in to get her camera. She said she and her husband, Chuck, were worried the twister would be near the airport where they have their plane, but it missed that area.

Nick Howard said he saw the tornado while on Webster Street with his girlfriend and younger brother.

"I saw the clouds twisting," he said. "It was something neat to see since it's not every day that we are able to see a tornado."



Michelle Morris of Fotogirl Photography shot the tornado from Southwind Plaza, K-25 and I-70 (top). The National Weather Service graded the tornado an F1, which is a weak tornado. Southwind

Plaza's 45-foot sign was bent to the ground (above). Photos by Michelle Morris and Patty Decker/The Colby Free Press

Thunderstorm warning issued as tornado lands

By John Van Nostrand
Colby Free Press

It was just few moments after the National Weather Service in Goodland issued a severe thunderstorm warning on Monday that a tornado landed on Colby's south side.

"There was almost no warning," said Thomas County Emergency Management Director Jim Engel.

The National Weather Service was warning Thomas County residents of a thunderstorm. No tornado was expected.

"We issued a severe thunderstorm warning about 6:45 p.m.," said Scott Mentzer, meteorologist in charge at the weather station.

"We had an idea there would be large hail. Then we were told about the tornado about 6:50."

Mentzer said the Weather Service heard of the tornado from amateur radio operator Mike Albers in Colby.

The tornado first touched down near Interstate 70 by the Oasis Travel Center, Southwind Plaza and Comfort Inn. Damage was reported at all of those locations. Some Comfort Inn guests were injured from flying debris.

Engel said Colby was fortunate damage and injuries were limited.

"It could have been much worse," he said. "We were extremely lucky."

Busy as the area around the I-70 interchange is, little damage was reported. A parked semi trailer truck was lifted into another rig. As the tornado moved to the northwest, it damaged vehicles at Taylor Motors and some highway signs.

The Weather Service, after checking the damage, rated the twister as F1 on the Fujita Scale. Mentzer said that was based on damaged to the Southwind Plaza sign, a 45-foot structure supported by three I-beams, which collapsed, plus other minor structural damage. An F1 tornado is considered weak but can produce winds of 100 mph, he said.

Engel said after the storm had

passed, there were some issues trying to assess the damage.

"Everybody wanted to get out and look," Engel said. "There were some traffic control problems."

Engel said people should stay home after a storm to allow emergency personnel better access to the sites.

"We had an ambulance run for some of the injuries," he noted.

According to the Weather Service, the tornado in Colby was July 21, 1996. That twister was spotted a few miles north of town in open fields.

Monday's tornado was on the ground for about 10 minutes, Mentzer said. Its path was traced for

about five miles. The tornado went in a northwest direction, dissipating about three miles west of Colby north of U.S. 24.

Mentzer said the storm formed as a warm front retreated across northern Kansas on Monday afternoon. Humidity levels and unstable air contributed to the formation of the thunderstorm cell.

"We knew it would be severe, but not a tornado," he said. "If there was not a warm front, there would probably be no tornado."

Rainfall amounts varied. Goodland did not receive any rain, but 1.8 inches was measured 10 miles north of Atwood. Colby received .10 of an inch. Rexford re-

ported 1.2 inches, while Hoxie had .64 of an inch.

"The rainfall was very localized," Mentzer said.

The Weather Service posted information and pictures from Monday's storm on its Web site at www.weather.gov/gld. Mentzer said he expects the information to be up for a couple of weeks.

corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

matters of record

District Traffic

The following fines were paid in the Sherman County District Court: **Oct. 9, 1997** — Anthony M. Bellantone, \$84 reinstated for speeding.

Aug. 6, 2005 — Dwight L. Bennett, \$120 reinstated for speeding.

Feb. 10 — Shannon W. Abram, \$155 reinstated for motor carrier safety rules and regulations.

May 17 — Shirley A. Bass, \$138

for speeding.

June 18 — Juan P. Arancibia, \$213 for speeding.

June 22 — Chad G. Atchley, \$108 for improper parking and \$10 for no seat belt.

June 25 — Harold Aandal, \$108 reinstated for speeding.

June 26 — Ralph Bennett Jr., \$150 for improper parking.

June 28 — Dominika M. Bandyk, \$120 for speeding.

June 29 — Samuel S. Alexander,

\$144 for improper parking.

Janine K. Baehler, \$96 for speeding.

July 2 — Mwafak Assaf, \$130

for no vehicle insurance.

July 3 — Bradley W. Barnhart, \$126 for not yielding at stop sign or yield sign.

July 5 — Katherine A. Baker, \$138 for speeding.

<p>Aug. 11 - 17 Will Ferrel Talladega Nights</p> <p>PG-13: Crude & sexual humor; language; drug references, brief comic violence</p>	<p>Bring this AD to the theatre for \$1 OFF on a large popcorn & 2 med. drinks EXP. 12/31/06</p>	<p>Nightly 7:00 Sunday Matinee 1:30 Movie Bucks Make Great Gifts! www.goodlandnet.com/movies</p> <p>Sherman 1203 Main - Phone 899-6103</p>
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Anniversary

Dr. Brown and Staff would like to invite you to their 5 year Anniversary Party on August 18, from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. CST. Come meet our new Hygienists Lisa House and Mikayla O'Dea. Appetizers, dessert and drinks provided.

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