

EF-1 tornado leaves trail of destruction following wild weekend weather

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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GODFREY - An EF-1 tornado struck the Riverbend just after 4 p.m. Saturday afternoon, as confirmed by the National Weather Service (NWS).

The tornado, with winds exceeding 90 m.p.h. continued for two and a half miles and was as wide as 50 yards. One of the most heavily-affected areas was Piasa Harbor, located between Godfrey and Elsah in Jersey County. Lots of damage was done to the building's roof and boat marina, but it could have been much worse.

"The bizarre part, originally, the Earth Day Festival is held every year here, but they moved it because of the rain," Great Rivers Land Trust Executive Director Alley Ringhausen said. "In theory, we could have had hundreds of people on site. We are grateful no one was hurt."

Ringhausen said his staff was working all weekend on the cleanup following the relatively small, but very unexpected tornado. He said trees were felled on both sides of the adjacent Highway 100, saying as many as 50 had fallen alongside utility poles, which he said were "snapped off." He said the highway was closed for as long as eight hours for debris cleanup following that touchdown.

"It was a tiny, but powerful, storm," he said.

Altonian Joe Hanahan said his son's property, located near Lageman Lane between Godfrey and Brighton, was struck by that whirlwind as well. A large tree fell on a back tool shed during Saturday afternoon's severe storms.

"We were thinking it was straight line winds, but if that were the case, the tree would have fallen west, not north," Hanahan said.

Nothing else was damaged in the storm, he added. He said the tree smashed into the shed, lifting it from its foundation and severely damaging the roof. He said the roof received a temporary fix from a floor jack and a two by four, but ultimately Hanahan thinks the entire thing may have to be destroyed, saying it is still partially off its foundation. He said his family is lucky, though, considering what some neighbors received.

"Some other places, like Stoneybrook in Brighton got hit hard," Hanahan said. "One place out there got the roof lifted up and set right back down."

DRONE FOOTAGE courtesy of 1st MidAmerica Sky Cam



