

Okeechobee Storm

August 1, 2003



Photo courtesy of Jeff Gammons

ON FRIDAY EVENING...A NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE DAMAGE SURVEY TEAM INVESTIGATED WIND DAMAGE WHICH OCCURRED APPROXIMATELY BETWEEN 2:30 AND 2:40 PM IN AND NEAR THE TAYLOR CREEK ESTATES ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE.

THE SURVEY TEAM FOUND A DAMAGE PATH THAT BEGAN JUST EAST OF TAYLOR CREEK AND JUST NORTH OF U.S. HIGHWAY 98. SEVERAL TREES IN VARIOUS STATES OF DECAY WERE BLOWN DOWN TOWARD THE SOUTHWEST IN A SWATH FROM SOUTHEAST 35TH COURT THROUGH SOUTHEAST 33RD COURT. ALSO, CARPORT DEBRIS OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN WAS FOUND IN A YARD AND WAS PRESUMED TO HAVE COME FROM A MOBILE HOME ON THE OTHER SIDE OF A SMALLER CREEK AND WOODED AREA JUST TO THE EAST.

THE STORM CONTINUED MOVING WEST-NORTHWEST ACROSS SOUTHEAST 30TH TERRACE INTO A SMALL TRAILER PARK...WHERE ONE LARGE TREE WAS BLOWN DOWN TOWARD THE SOUTHWEST AND THE TOP OF AN OLDER WOODEN POWER POLE WAS ALSO SNAPPED OFF IN THAT DIRECTION. THE STORM THEN CROSSED TAYLOR CREEK AND AN EXPANSE OF FLAT, OPEN AREA FREE OF RESIDENCES. NUMEROUS SMALL ITEMS; PALM FRONDS AND TREE BRANCHES WERE OBSERVED TO BE BLOWN ABOUT, MAINLY TOWARD THE SOUTHWEST AND WEST.

THE DAMAGE TRAIL WAS PICKED UP AT THE CORNER OF SOUTHEAST 18TH TERRACE AND SOUTHEAST 30TH STREET...WHERE AN EAST-FACING CARPORT AND ADJACENT PORCH WAS TORN FROM A RESIDENCE AND BLOWN WESTWARD ACROSS SOUTHEAST 18TH STREET INTO A CONSTRUCTION SITE...WITH SOME ALUMINUM DEBRIS BEING WRAPPED AROUND ELECTRICAL POLES AND WIRES.

TO THE EAST-NORTHEAST OF THIS DAMAGE ON SOUTHEAST 29TH STREET A CARPORT AND TRAMPOLINE WERE DAMAGED, BLOWN TOWARD THE EAST. TREES AND MARSH GRASS WERE OBSERVED TO BE BLOWN DOWN TOWARD THE NORTHEAST. ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF SOUTHEAST 27TH STREET A PORCH AND A SECTION OF ROOF AND SHEATHING WAS PICKED UP AND CARRIED OVER TO THE NORTH SIDE OF THE HOUSE, WITH A PIECE OF THE ROOF SHEATHING CARRIED OVER THE TOP OF A HOUSE ACROSS THE STREET; A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 30 YARDS. SOME OF THE ALUMINUM PORCH WAS BLOWN TO THE NORTHEAST. ON THE SOUTH SIDE THE HOUSE IMMEDIATELY TO THE EAST AN OUTBUILDING SECURED WITH TIE DOWNS SLID ABOUT ONE FOOT OFF IT'S BLOCKS.

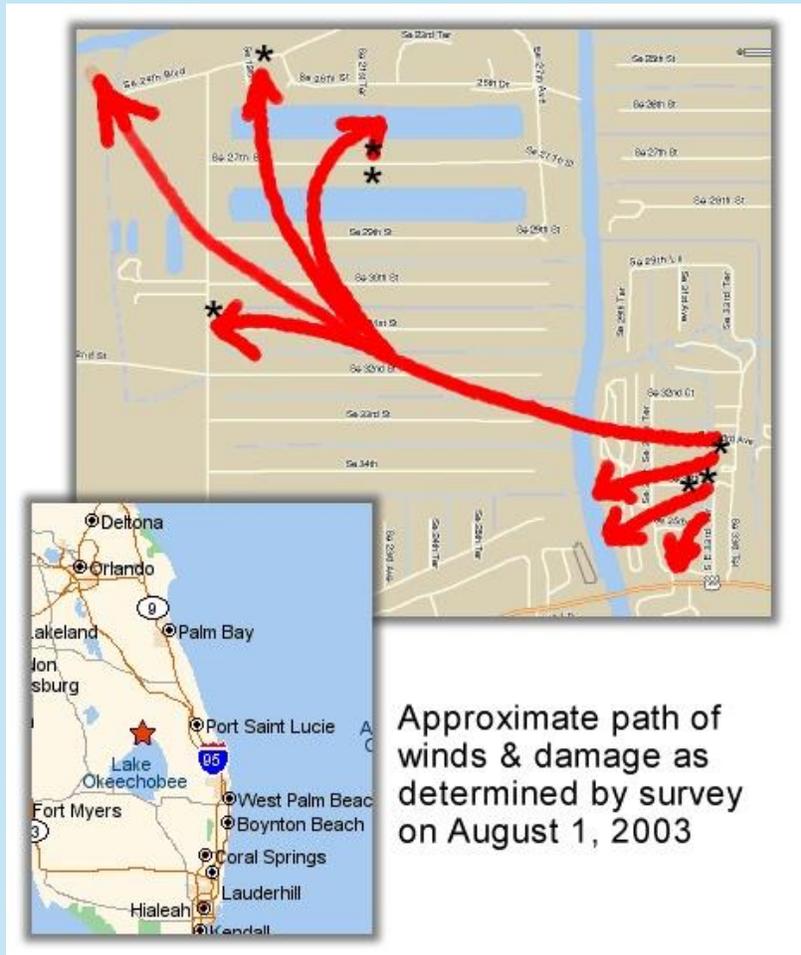
FINALLY, ANOTHER HOUSE ON THE NORTH SIDE OF SOUTHEAST 24TH BLVD HAD A LARGE SECTION OF IT'S CORRUGATED ALUMINUM ROOF WAS PEELED OFF AND DEPOSITED IN AN ADJACENT YARD, WITH ALUMINUM DEBRIS AND FIBERGLASS INSULATION SCATTERED TOWARD THE NORTHEAST.

SPORADIC DAMAGE WAS OBSERVED TO THE NORTHWEST OF TAYLOR CREEK ESTATES MAINLY TO TREES AND TARPS.

THE DAMAGE PATTERN, WHICH WAS DIVERGENT ALONG THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE STORM TRACK, FITS FUJITA'S MODEL OF A TRAVELING MICROBURST. MUCH OF THE DAMAGE WAS DONE BY WIND SPEEDS ESTIMATED BETWEEN 55 AND 65 MPH WHILE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE WAS ASSUMED TO HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY WIND SPEEDS AS HIGH AS 75 TO 85 MPH.

IT IS NOTABLE THAT EXTENT OF DAMAGE WAS HIGHLY DEPENDENT UPON THE ANGLE AT WHICH THE WIND BLEW INTO THE RELATIVELY WEAK STRUCTURES (PORCHES AND CARPORTS). DAMAGE TO ADJACENT

ROOFING MATERIAL WAS ALSO DEPENDENT UPON HOW WELL THE ADJACENT WEAKER STRUCTURE WAS ATTACHED TO THE ROOF. FINALLY, THE EAST-WEST ORIENTATION OF CANALS UPWIND FROM THE DAMAGE AREAS SEEMED TO HAVE ALLOWED THE MICROBURST WINDS TO ACCELERATE AND FOCUS THE MORE SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE DOWNWIND FROM THEM.

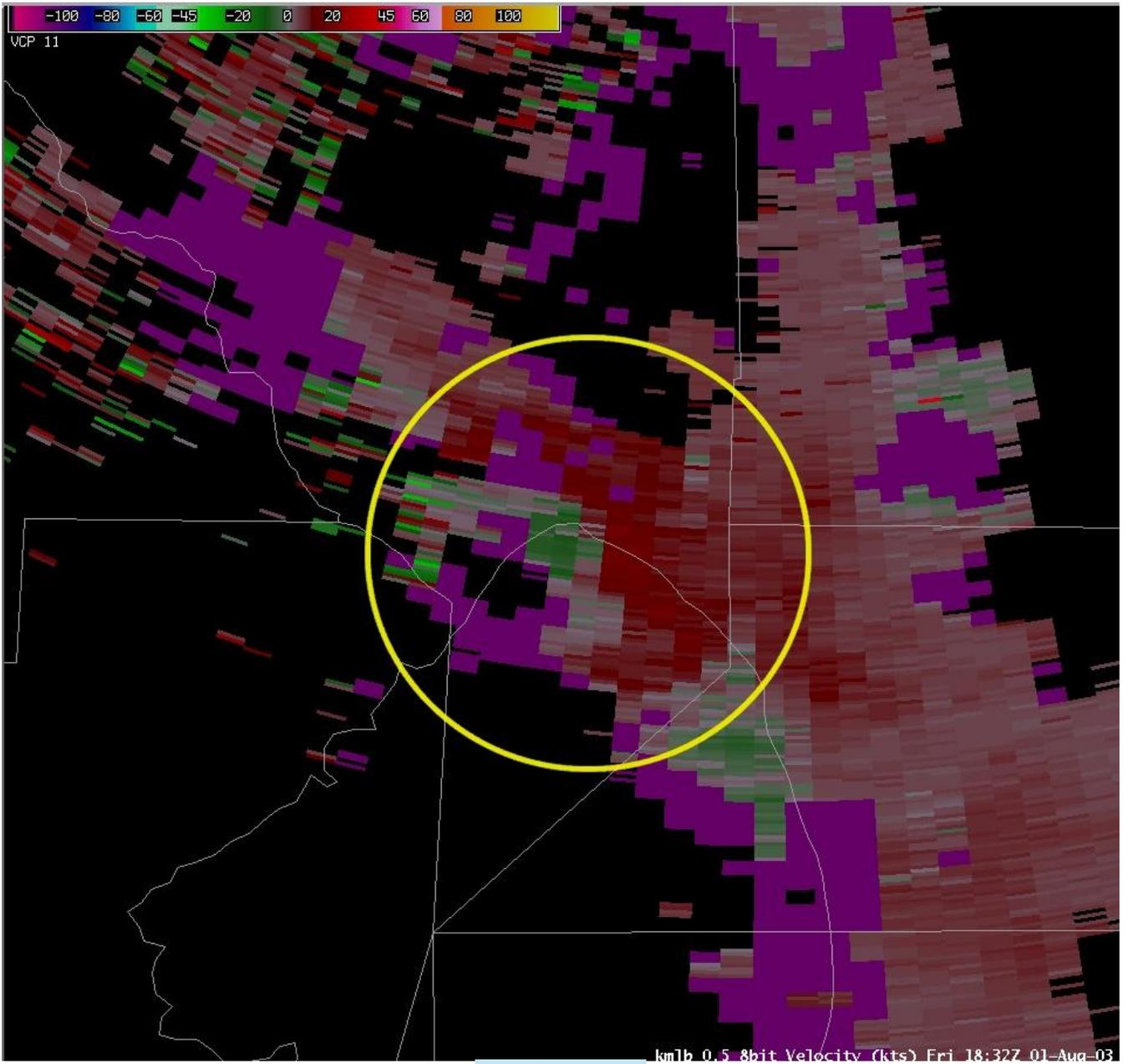


Damage photos:

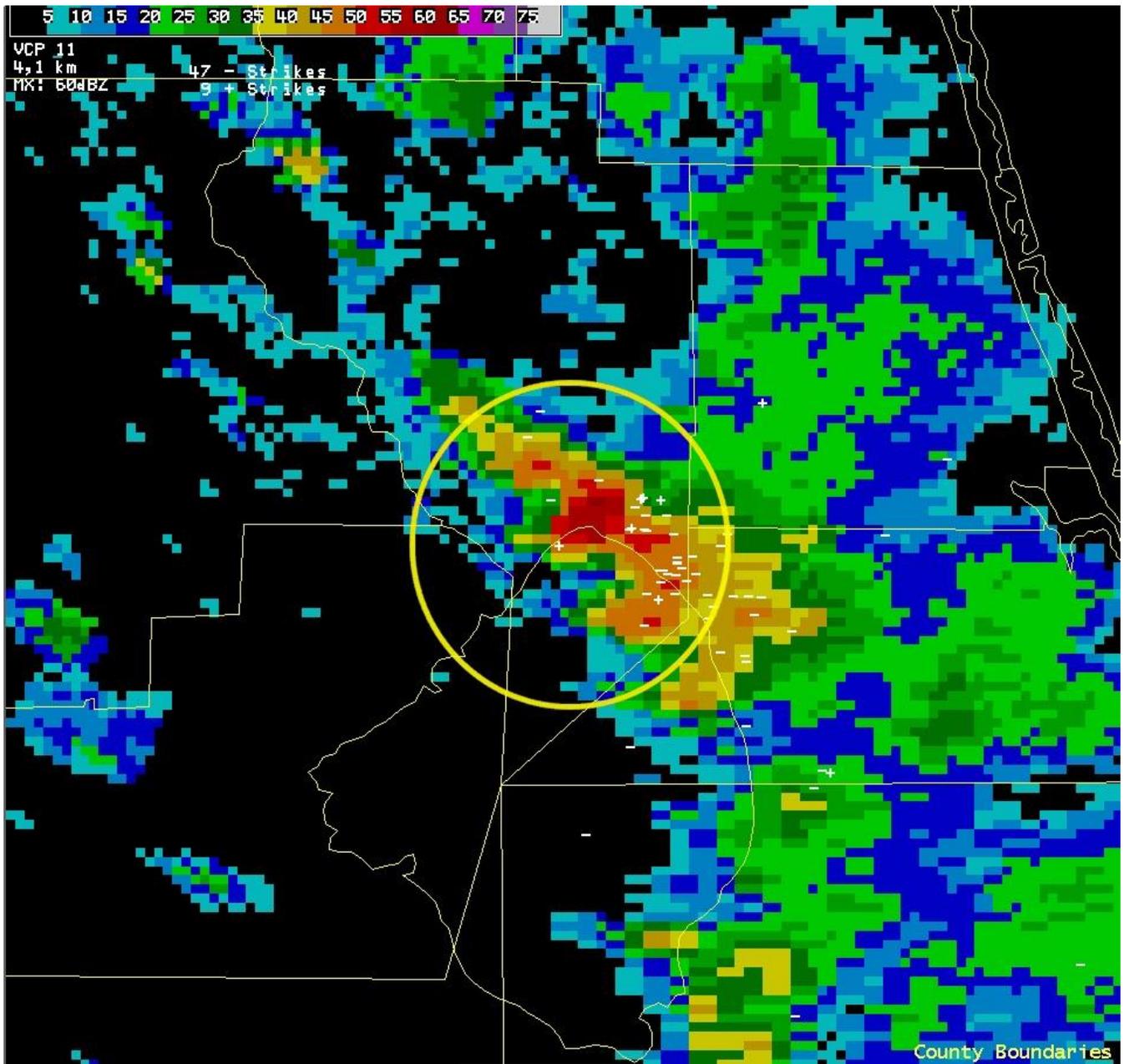




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