

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE TALLAHASSEE FL
513 PM EST FRI FEB 20 2009

...PORTION OF THOMAS COUNTY GEORGIA TORNADO UPGRADED TO EF-3 NEAR BOSTON...

...STORM SURVEY CONDUCTED IN GRADY COUNTY GEORGIA THIS AFTERNOON CONFIRMS EF-2 TORNADO DAMAGE...

BASED ON ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE STORM SURVEY DATA IN EASTERN THOMAS COUNTY...THE TORNADO IN THIS AREA IS BEING UPGRADED TO AN EF-3 WITH MAXIMUM WINDS BETWEEN 140 AND 145 MPH. THIS IS BASED ON THE SEVERAL TREES ALONG THE EAST SIDE OF SALEM ROAD THAT WERE COMPLETELY DEBARKED. THIS UPGRADE IN RATING APPLIES ONLY TO THIS PORTION OF THE TORNADO TRACK NEAR THE COMMUNITY OF BOSTON...ABOUT 2 MILES NORTH OF U.S. HIGHWAY 84. NOTE THAT THIS TORNADO FIRST TOUCHED DOWN ALONG FIVE FORKS ROAD NORTH OF U.S. HIGHWAY 84 AND CONTINUED EASTWARD...LIFTING BEFORE REACHING GEORGIA STATE ROAD 33 IN THOMAS COUNTY.

INFORMATION ON THE FIRST TORNADO THAT STARTED IN GRADY COUNTY AND CONTINUED THROUGH MUCH OF THOMAS COUNTY IS PROVIDED BELOW.

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN TALLAHASSEE CONDUCTED A STORM SURVEY IN GRADY COUNTY TO DETERMINE THE INTENSITY OF A TORNADO THAT TRACKED ACROSS THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN PORTIONS OF THE COUNTY EARLY THURSDAY MORNING.

THIS SURVEY FOUND THE INITIAL TOUCHDOWN OF THE TORNADO OCCURRED NEAR RAWLS ROAD TO THE WEST OF GEORGIA STATE ROAD 93 IN THE VICINITY OF LEWIS DRIVE. THIS WAS THE FIRST TOUCH DOWN OF A LONG TRACK TORNADO THAT CONTINUED INTO THOMAS COUNTY. DAMAGE ALONG RAWLS ROAD WAS LIMITED TO TREES BEING SNAPPED OR UPROOTED. ONE TRAVEL TRAILER FOR HORSES WAS TIPPED OVER. WIND SPEEDS IN THIS AREA WERE ESTIMATED TO BE 60 TO 70 MPH...WHICH CORRESPONDS TO AN EF-0 RATING.

THE TORNADO CONTINUED EASTWARD AND MOVED ONE DOUBLE WIDE MODULAR HOME OFF ITS FOUNDATION ON THE WEST SIDE OF HOLSTEIN LANE. THE DECKING AND TWO SMALL OUTBUILDINGS WERE DESTROYED AROUND THIS MODULAR HOME. DAMAGE IN THIS AREA WAS RATED AS A STRONG EF-1 WITH MAXIMUM WINDS OF 105 MPH.

ON THE EAST SIDE OF HOLSTEIN LANE...ONE LARGE CINDER-BLOCK BUILDING WAS SIGNIFICANTLY DAMAGED. THE TOP LEVEL OF THE STRUCTURE WAS TOTALLY DESTROYED WITH THE LOWER LEVEL EXTERIOR WALLS PARTIALLY COLLAPSED ON THE WEST AND SOUTH SIDES OF THE STRUCTURE. THREE LARGE CONCRETE GRAIN SILOS TO THE SOUTH OF THIS BUILDING WERE SIGNIFICANTLY DAMAGED OR DESTROYED. ABOUT 50 YARDS TO THE EAST OF THE SILOS WERE TWO LARGE BARNs WHICH WERE BOTH COMPLETELY DESTROYED. DAMAGE IN THIS AREA WAS RATED AS AN EF-2 WITH MAXIMUM WINDS OF 120 MPH. DAMAGE WIDTH OF THE TORNADO IN THIS AREA WAS APPROACHING 100 YARDS. FROM THIS POINT EASTWARD INTO THOMAS COUNTY...IT APPEARS THAT THE TORNADO REMAINED ON THE GROUND.

THE TORNADO CROSSED GEORGIA STATE ROAD 93 JUST NORTH OF LEWIS LANE AND CONTINUED EASTWARD INTO A PINE FOREST ALONG THE NORTH SIDE OF LOWER CAIRO ROAD. AS IN THOMAS COUNTY...NUMEROUS PINE TREES ALONG THE CENTRAL PATH OF THE VORTEX WERE SNAPPED. NEAR PLANTATION DRIVE 331 ADJACENT TO LOWER CAIRO ROAD...DAMAGE CONSISTENT WITH THAT SEEN IN WESTERN THOMAS COUNTY WAS OBSERVED WITH OVER 95 PERCENT OF THE PINE TREES ALONG THE PATH SNAPPED. DAMAGE WIDTH AT THIS POINT HAD INCREASED TO 250 YARDS. WIND SPEEDS IN THIS AREA WERE ESTIMATED TO

BE NEAR 125 MPH...WHICH CORRESPONDS TO AN EF-2.

THE TORNADO CROSSED INTO THOMAS COUNTY ALONG LOWER CAIRO ROAD... WHERE DAMAGE WAS EXTENSIVE TO A PINE FOREST PLANTATION. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT OVER 95 PERCENT OF THE PINE TREES IN THE PATH OF THE TORNADO WERE SNAPPED. THREE HOMES WERE ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE TORNADO PATH AND RECEIVED MINOR TO MODERATE DAMAGE...WITH ONE HOUSE LOSING PART OF ITS ROOF. A BARN AND TWO GARAGES WERE SIGNIFICANTLY DAMAGED OR DESTROYED. WITHIN THIS AREA OF THOMAS COUNTY...THE PATH WIDTH OF THE TORNADO WAS ESTIMATED TO BE BETWEEN 300 AND 400 YARDS WIDE WITH A MAXIMUM INTENSITY OF 125 MPH...WHICH CORRESPONDS TO A RATING OF EF-2.

THE TORNADO CONTINUED EASTWARD AND BEGAN MAKING ONLY INTERMITTENT CONTACT WITH THE GROUND AS IT APPROACHED U.S. HIGHWAY 319 IN THE VICINITY OF CINDY ROAD. DAMAGE IN THE SURROUNDING SUBDIVISIONS WAS LARGELY LIMITED TO TREES SNAPPING OR UPROOTING AND LANDING ON HOMES. IN THIS AREA THE PATH WIDTH WAS ESTIMATED TO BE AROUND 200 YARDS WITH A MAXIMUM INTENSITY OF 90 MPH...MAKING THE TORNADO ON THIS PORTION OF THE TRACK AN EF-1.

THE TORNADO CROSSED U.S. 319 MOVING EAST NEAR METCALF ROAD AND MOVED TOWARD THE SOUTHWEST GEORGIA STATE HOSPITAL LOCATED JUST SOUTH OF PINE TREE BLVD. THE TORNADO SNAPPED MANY PINE TREES ALONG THE PATH THROUGH THIS AREA AND EVEN REMOVED TWO AIR CONDITIONING UNITS FROM THE ROOF OF ONE OF THE BUILDINGS WITHIN THE HOSPITAL COMPLEX. PATH WIDTH OF THE TORNADO AT THIS POINT IS ESTIMATED TO BE NEAR 200 YARDS WITH A MAXIMUM INTENSITY OF 105 MPH...WHICH IS STILL WITHIN THE EF-1 CATEGORY.

THE TORNADO BEGAN TO WEAKEN WHILE CONTINUING EASTWARD TOWARD U.S. 19 SOUTH OF THE GLEN ARVEN COUNTRY CLUB. THE TORNADO CROSSED U.S. 19 JUST SOUTH OF SUNSET DRIVE BEFORE LIFTING. DAMAGE IN THIS AREA WAS LIMITED TO POWER LINES AND A FEW TREES. PATH WIDTH DECREASED TO A MAXIMUM OF 75 YARDS AND THE INTENSITY WAS ONLY 70 MPH...WHICH CORRESPONDS TO AN EF-0 RATING.

A BRIEF TOUCHDOWN OF THE SAME TORNADO OCCURRED ALONG COUNTY FARM ROAD AT THE THOMAS COUNTY LANDFILL. A STORAGE BUILDING WAS SIGNIFICANTLY DAMAGED WITH DEBRIS BEING BLOWN SEVERAL HUNDRED YARDS FROM THE BUILDING SITE. INTENSITY IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE BEEN AROUND 100 MPH...WHICH IS AN EF-1 RATING.

NO FURTHER AREAS OF DAMAGE WERE REPORTED ALONG THE TRACK OF THIS SUPERCCELL THUNDERSTORM FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL MILES. THE PATH LENGTH OF THIS ENTIRE TORNADO FROM WHERE IT FIRST TOUCHED DOWN IN GRADY COUNTY TO WHERE IT LIFTED IN THOMAS COUNTY WAS NEARLY 17 MILES.

ACCORDING TO THOMAS COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT...9 MOBILE HOMES WERE CONSIDERED DESTROYED. 20 SINGLE FAMILY HOMES WERE CONSIDERED DESTROYED. A TOTAL OF 160 STRUCTURES WERE AFFECTED BY THIS TORNADO TO SOME DEGREE.

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN TALLAHASSEE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND ITS APPRECIATION TO THE THOMAS COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY FOR ASSISTING IN THE STORM SURVEY ON THURSDAY. WE ALSO WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE GRADY COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE WITH THE STORM SURVEY ON FRIDAY.

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GODSEY/MROCZKA