

## **Tornadoes rake 2 Oklahoma cities, killing 2 and injuring 29**

27/05/2019 17:15 by admin

Residents wandered around after sunrise to survey the damage, carefully avoiding fallen utility poles that blocked some streets.

***An historic railroad building owned by Farmers Feed Store was destroyed by a suspected tornado which hit Sapulpa, Okla., early Sunday. (AP)***

**Oklahoma:** A tornado leveled a motel and tore through a mobile home park near Oklahoma City overnight, killing two people and injuring at least 29 others before a second twister raked a suburb of Tulsa more than 100 miles (160 kilometers) away, authorities said Sunday.

The first tornado touched down in El Reno, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) west of Oklahoma City, late Saturday night. It crossed an interstate and walloped the American Budget Value Inn before ripping through the Skyview Estates trailer park, flipping and leveling homes, Mayor Matt White said at a news conference.

“It’s a tragic scene out there,” White said, adding later that, “People have absolutely lost everything.” He said the city established a GoFundMe site, the City of El Reno Tornado Relief Fund, for affected families. Several other businesses were also damaged, though not to the same extent as the motel.

The two people who were killed were in the mobile home park, White said. He did not provide additional details about them. The 29 people who were injured were taken to hospitals, where some were undergoing surgery. Some of the injuries were deemed critical, he said.

The National Weather Service gave the tornado an EF3 rating, meaning it had wind speeds of 136-165 mph (219-266 kph). Personnel who investigated the damage said the tornado began around 10:28 p.m. Saturday and lasted for four minutes. The tornado was about 75 yards wide at its widest point and was on the ground for 2.2 miles (3.5 kilometers).

The tornado was spawned by a powerful storm system that rolled through the state \_ the latest in a week of violent storms to hit the flood-weary Plains and Midwest that have been blamed for at least 11 deaths, including the two killed in El Reno.

Early Sunday, another tornado destroyed several buildings and downed trees and power lines in the Tulsa suburb of Sapulpa, which is 110 miles (177 kilometers) northeast of El Reno. Pete Snyder, a hydrometeorological technician with the weather service in Tulsa, said crews were assessing damage to determine the tornado’s rating. The area also experienced damage from strong straight-line winds, he said.

The Sapulpa Police Department said on its Facebook page that it hadn’t heard of any deaths and that only a few minor injuries had been reported.

Residents wandered around after sunrise to survey the damage, carefully avoiding fallen utility poles that blocked some streets. Among the buildings that were destroyed was a historic railroad building built in the early 1900s that the Farmers Feed Store had been using for storage. A furniture store’s warehouse was also destroyed.

In El Reno, emergency crews sifted through the rubble at the trailer park and motel, where the second story collapsed into a pile of debris strewn about the first floor and parking lot.

Tweety Garrison, 63, told The Associated Press that she was in her mobile home with her husband, two young grandchildren and a family friend when she heard the storm coming and immediately hit the ground. Moments later, she heard her neighbor's mobile home slam into hers before it flipped over and landed on her roof.

Garrison said the incident lasted five to 10 minutes and that she received a tornado warning on her phone but the sirens didn't go off until after the twister hit.

Her 32-year-old son, Elton Garrison, said he heard the wailing tornado sirens and had just laid down at home about a half-mile (1 kilometer) away when his phone rang. He recognized his mother's number, but there was no voice on the other end when he answered. "I thought, 'That's weird,'" he said.

Then his mother called back, and delivered a chilling message: "We're trapped."

He said when he arrived at his parents' home, he found it blocked by debris and sitting with another trailer on top of it. He began clearing a path to the home so that he could eventually lift a portion of an outside wall just enough so that all five occupants could slip beneath it and escape.

"My parents were in there and two of my kids, one 9 and the other 12. My main emotion was fear," said Elton Garrison, who has lived in El Reno for about 26 years. "I couldn't get them out of there quick enough."

He said he wasn't alarmed by the warning sirens when he first heard them at home.

"We hear them all the time here, so it didn't seem like a big deal. I heard a lot of rain with the wind. But when it kind of got calm all of a sudden, that's when it didn't feel right."

He said his parents had only recently recovered after losing their previous home to a fire a few years ago.

"Now this," he said, before expressing gratitude that everyone inside his parents' home had emerged without serious injury.

In the next breath, he added: "Items can be replaced. Lives can't."

The storm is the latest to hit the flood-weary central U.S. and dumped yet more rain in the region's already bloated waterways. In Tulsa, authorities advised residents of some neighborhoods on Sunday to consider leaving for higher ground because the Arkansas River is stressing the city's old levee system.

Downriver and about 100 miles (161 kilometers) southeast of Tulsa in Arkansas' second-largest city, Fort Smith, residents were preparing for what meteorologists are predicting will be the worst flooding in recorded history.

- AP