

Storms bring tornadoes, floods, power outages across the US

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Fallen trees ripped down power lines and crashed into buildings along a line from Texas to Alabama overnight and into Thursday morning, the national Storm Prediction Center reported. (File photo)

Atlanta: Storms were blamed for two deaths and left hundreds of thousands of people without power across the southern United States, forecasters said.

Fallen trees ripped down power lines and crashed into buildings along a line from Texas to Alabama overnight and into Thursday morning, the national Storm Prediction Center reported. Similar damage continued later in the day in parts of Georgia, the Carolinas and southeast Virginia.

Straight-line winds of up to 85 mph (137 kph) damaged roofs Wednesday in the northeast Texas city of Greenville, the National Weather Service reported Thursday.

Local officials had initially suspected a tornado. In Mississippi, Jackson Salter, 19, died when a tree fell on his home Wednesday night, Washington County Coroner Methel Johnson told The Delta Democrat-Times .

A fallen tree was also blamed for the Thursday afternoon death of a person in Columbia, South Carolina, the Richland County Coroner's Office said.

A wind gust of 79 mph (127 kph) was recorded in the city that afternoon. Across the Carolinas, there were dozens of reports of trees down, some landing on houses in North Carolina and others landing in the middle of Interstate 20 in South Carolina.

Utilities reported more than 200,000 customers without power Thursday evening across Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. More than 50,000 remained without power in Arkansas on Thursday evening, long after storms exited.

Downburst winds " strong winds that descend from a thunderstorms and spread out when they hit the ground " appeared to be the greatest threat, said Dan Miller, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Columbia, South Carolina.

Such winds hold the potential for serious damage, such as bringing trees and powerlines down and tearing into the shingles and siding on homes, he said.

Tornados and hail had been listed as possibilities for flood-weary residents of the Missouri River Valley in the Midwest, but were slow to materialize Thursday.

In Ohio, heavy rains led to landslides and flooded highways. The Riverbend Music Center along the Ohio River east of Cincinnati postponed a Thursday evening show that was to feature country star Brantley Gilbert. The venue cited heavy rainfall and the rising river.

Flooding caused travel problems, flooding commuter train stations and forcing service to be suspended between Philadelphia and New Jersey. The Delaware River was overflowing its banks in places, and people were rescued from high water.

A supermarket roof collapsed in suburban Philadelphia, causing sprinkler system pipes to break and send water gushing down.

- AP