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## **Anoka, Minnesota Tornado June 18, 1939**

Anoka Tornado Takes Nine Lives; 250 Homes Ruined.

200 Are Injured; State Sends Aid to Stricken Area

Gov. Stassen Makes Personal Survey of Tornado-devastated Area Pledging Full resources of State Will Be Made Available in Emergency

ANOKA, Minn. -- (UP) - Under the personal direction of **Gov. HAROLD E. STASSEN**, this Mississippi river town of 5,000 to-day began the task of rehabilitation in the wake of a roaring tornado which had claimed at least nine lives.

STASSEN came here within a few hours after the storm struck, and took full charge of caring for the injured and homeless, clearing the debris from the streets, and beginning the work of rebuilding. Early today he reported:

"The situation is now under control." He said all resources of the state would be made available in the emergency.

Authorities said the storm injured more than 200, perhaps a score seriously, and estimated property loss at about \$500,000.

Three hundred national guardsmen, under direction of **Adjutant-General ELLARD A. WALSH**, patrolled the streets. The town was, in effect under martial law. A drastic 9 p. m. curfew kept the streets cleared during the night.

Early resumption of normal water, electric and telephone services was promised. Utility companies kept large crews of men at work throughout the night.



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## FIVE MINUTES DEVASTATING FURY

The tornado struck with sudden fury at 3:28 p. m. yesterday. Moving from the southwest to northeast, the towering, black, funnel-shaped cloud first struck near Corcoran, a small village a few miles southwest of Anoka. It hit a car in which four Minneapolis persons were riding, tossed it 200 yards into a field, killing several of the occupants. It dipped again at [Champlin](#), killed one man, wrecked several buildings and swept on to Anoka where it cut a swath two to five blocks wide diagonally through the town. At least 50 square blocks felt the force of the storm. Five persons were killed.

With lessened force, the twister struck at Cedar, a few miles to the northeast, before dissolving. A farmer living near Cedar was plucked from his barnyard a dashed to death half a mile away.

## 250 ANOKA HOMES DESTROYED

In little more than five minutes the Tornado had run its course - but it left behind, in the heavy rain which followed, a scene of terrible confusion.

In Anoka, the armory, two churches, the Masonic temple, several business buildings and about 250 homes were destroyed or partially wrecked. Electric and telephone lines were a tangle of broken wires....

It was difficult to estimate the number of homeless. Many houses in the path of the twister were not completely wrecked and could be occupied.

**STASSEN** promised that money would be taken from state relief funds to care for those left homeless pending rehabilitation. The Red Cross was providing warm food and sleeping room for many.

## Name Emergency Committee

A special emergency committee was appointed to direct rehabilitation work. Its members are **E. J. BELL**, secretary of Anoka Commercial club, **ROBERT EHLEN**, **GEORGE GREEN**, and **GRAYDON COLBURN**, Anoka business men.

All eyewitnesses to the disaster emphasized the sudden fury with which the tornado struck. There was no time, they said, to seek the safety of cellars and basements.

## Saw Tornado Strike

**JOSEPHINE BRANT**, 18, Minneapolis, saw the twister strike. With her parents, she had been on a fishing trip, and was approaching Anoka on the return trip.

"I saw the funnel strike the edge of the town and then sweep on through. It moved with terrific speed. I could see timbers being thrown into the air, and buildings falling. Some timbers were carried as high as 300 feet into the air."

Entering the town, MISS BRANT saw druggists passing out first-aid kits without charge, men and women seeking frantically for missing relatives, the injured being taken to the hospital by dozens.

"The streets were full of broken glass, trees blown down, wires hanging in tangles," she said. "It was an awful sight an I'll never forget it."



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Cleaning Up After the Tornado, '39

### Draws Up Water

**J. T. SWISHER**, maintenance man out to repair a line, stopped 50 feet from the funnel of the tornado, and watched it draw up a half-mile column of water from the Mississippi river in a great steam-like cloud.

### List of Dead In Anoka Tornado

ANOKA, Minn. (U.P.) -- List of casualties in the Anoka tornado:

**H. G. GROAT**, 95, Anoka.

**EDWARD MORRISETTE**, 60, Anoka.

**G. SYRING**, Anoka.

**LEE KIDD**, 25, Osseo.

**FRED ZIMMERMAN**, 50, Champlin.

**EMIL JOHNSON**, 40, Cedar.

**MRS. ANNA FREEMAN**, 76, Minneapolis.

**JAMES BRADLEY**, her son-in-law, Minneapolis.

**MRS. JAMES BRADLEY**, daughter of MRS. FREEMAN.

**ELLEN FREEMAN**, another daughter.

**MRS. FREEMAN**, her son-in-law and daughter were the group killed near Corcoran when the tornado crushed their car.

*The Brainerd Daily Dispatch Minnesota 1939-06-19*

Submitted & transcribed by [Stu Beitler](#) Thank you, Stu!



More than 220 people were injured and nine killed in the Champlin area on June 18, 1939 (2PM).



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