

Tuesday marks 20th anniversary of SE VA tornado outbreak

Posted on: 2:28 pm, August 5, 2013, by [Becca Mitchell](#)

On August 6, 1993, an outbreak of 18 tornadoes struck southeastern Virginia. This was the biggest tornado outbreak in Virginia history up to that point.

The strongest one in the state impacted Petersburg, and was rated an F-4 on the tornado intensity scale.

The National Weather Service in Sterling, Virginia, [released a comprehensive report](#) on the tornado outbreak. Here are portions of that report (damage amounts are listed in dollars, based on 1993 prices):

Southampton:

At about 2:20 pm, a cooperative observer sighted a tornado about 4 miles west of Courtland. At that time it was seen throwing trees into his barn. Trees were uprooted and a shed was destroyed. The tornado moved over open fields with little else in its path to damage. The tornado was an F-0 to a low F-1 with a path length of about a mile. Estimated path width is 75 yards.

Sussex:

At 2:27 pm a State Trooper sighted a tornado northwest of the town of Sussex. Trees were knocked down. At about 2:32 pm a tornado was sighted near the town of Waverly. The tornado crossed Route 40 just south of the town and moved east-northeast through a residential section. Most of the damage was to trees. Numerous pine trees were broken off at rooftop level. Some hardwoods were blown over with their roots exposed. A couple of houses had chimneys knocked off. One home had a small branch driven into its siding. All trees were blown to the left of the path of the storm indicating tornadic circulation. It crossed U.S. Route 460 and destroyed a

peanut warehouse. The peanut warehouse was a metal building without much in the way of supports.

The tornado was classified as an F-1 when it moved through Waverly. The length of the damage path through Waverly was about 4 miles. The total path length from the State Trooper sighting through Waverly was 14 miles, but much of this area is remote and it is uncertain how much of the time the tornado was on the ground. The path width through Waverly was 100 yards. No damage estimates were obtained.

Surry:

A tornado touched down near the intersection of Route 601 and 614 in the southwest part of the county. It was likely the same storm that struck Waverly. The tornado moved to the northeast across Route 615. The track was about 2.5 miles long and 150 yards wide. Numerous trees were broken off about 15 feet up. A chimney was knocked off a two-story house. Metal roofing was torn off a shed and outbuildings were damaged. Near Route 615, two houses and two cars were damaged and several trees uprooted. Tornado began as an F-0 and possibly reached the low end of an F-1 near Route 615.

Surry:

The storm produced another tornado struck near the town of Surry. An apartment building on Route 626 west of Surry was damaged. The roof over three units was blown off and an in-wall was pulled away from the frame. A lot of siding was also pulled off. One car had its windows shattered. The tornado moved northeast causing moderate damage to trees along Route 641 just west of Route 31. Trees were also reported down near Scotland Wharf Ferry Terminal. The tornado was seen around 3:00 pm headed across the James River toward James City County. The tornado was rated an F-1. The path length was about 5 miles. The path width averaged 100 yards. Damage estimates for Surry County (from both tornado 8 and 9) were 20,000 dollars.

James City-York:

Fishermen spotted the tornado moving along the banks of the James River and onto land at approximately 2:50 pm. The tornado destroyed a recreation building owned by the employees on the BASF corporation grounds. Debris was scattered through the woods. A bathhouse was completely gone. Pine trees were snapped off.

The tornado moved into a trailer park at Blow Flats Road. Five mobile homes were rolled over. It continued into Innovative Marine Products where a storage trailer was thrown into a large metal manufacturing building which was flattened. It then moved across U.S. Highway 60 taking down many trees which blocked the interstate for hours. The tornado was rated at the high end of an F-1.

The tornado moved into York County and onto the southern section of the Naval Weapons Station entering a housing area. Many trees were down damaging the recreation center and a corner of a housing unit. Here the tornado was rated an F-0. HAM radio reported through the SKYWARN Network that a funnel spotted near the Naval Station and Yorktown at 3:07 pm.

Total tornado path length was about 7 to 8 miles. Path width narrowed from 150 yards as the tornado came off the river to 75 yards near the end of its trail. Damages to James City County were about 750,000 dollars. No dollar estimate of damages were provided by the Naval Weapons Station.

Isle of Wight:

At about 3:00 pm, a tornado was sighted at the Franklin Airport. This is open area and no damages were reported to county officials or the National Weather Service (NWS). About 5 miles northeast of the airport, a man reported observing rotation within the thunderstorm but he did not see a funnel.

Newport News-Hampton:

At 3:10 pm, a man on the James River Bridge reported seeing three funnel clouds over the river. He said two dissipated and the other became a tornado moving into the woods on the Newport News side of the river. The tornado moved northeast across Villa Road and through a Flea Market on Jefferson Avenue. Extensive damage occurred to expensive homes along Villa Road. Most damage was from trees falling onto homes. The Flea Market was a poorly constructed metal building. The tornado blew off the roof and some of the side walls. Pieces of metal could be seen wrapped around tree tops to the left of the buildings and for several blocks downwind.

The tornado moved northeast into the City of Hampton. Damage was slightly less. A portable classroom at Big Bethel High School was overturned and paneling was stripped off the end. Several air conditioners

were torn off the top of a grocery store near the intersection of Hampton Roads Center Parkway and Interstate 64.

The tornado was classified an F-1. The tornado path length was approximately 12 miles. The tornado's width was 400 yards as it came off the river and it gradually narrowed to 100 yards as it moved through Hampton. Newport News reported 163 homes damaged 12 condemned and damage costs at approximately 1.2 million. Approximately 85 homes were damaged in Hampton, 8 condemned and damage costs were 700,000 dollars. Eight people were injured in Newport News and two in Hampton. There were no fatalities.

The tornado moved onto Langley Air Force Base (AFB) mainly moving across open area and runways. Damage occurred to several F-15s parked at the end of a runway for an air show planned for the next day. There was also damage to a storage area. Langley AFB weather observations reported tornado sightings on two separate occasions at least an hour apart. The damaging tornado described was observed for approximately 20 minutes. A second tornado path was not found, but may have occurred over water or rural land or may have been a funnel that did not touch down.

Middlesex:

At around 3:00 pm a tornado moved through an area near Stormont. Trees were snapped off near the landfill. A barn was damaged along Route 629 and a travel trailer was blown over. The tornado moved across Route 673 between Christ Church School and Locust Hill. Estimated damage in Middlesex was 34,000 dollars. The tornado was rated an F-0 with a path length of about 3 miles and a width of 100 yards.

Lancaster:

At 3:15 pm, a tornado moved into White Stone from the Rappahannock River down Beach Road for about a mile. Residents saw the swirling debris. Trees were broken off and homes were damaged from the fallen trees. Estimated damage was 55,000 dollars and the tornado was classified an F-0. The width of the damage path was 100 yards and it was on the ground for at least a mile. The tornado was from the same storm that hit Middlesex County and it may have been the same tornado. Several vehicles were blown off the road into the ditch near Ottoman but there was no other damage reported in that neither area nor tornadoes

sighted. It was therefore credited to strong thunderstorm winds. Ottoman is located to the north of both this path and that of the Middlesex tornado.

Northampton:

At 3:50 pm, a tornado was sighted by several park personnel from Kiptopeke State Park. The tornado moved through trees breaking them off at about 15 feet up for about 100+ yards then moved over a cliff and tracked another 700 yards making a path about half a mile long. A second funnel was sighted over the water.

At least 105 trees were damaged or destroyed. Picnic tables were thrown. A 20 foot ornamental boat was thrown 120 feet. A construction trailer and another trailer were overturned. Damages ranged to 30,000 dollars. Park officials had received NWS warnings at 3:30 pm of the tornado threat and warned campers. Tornado was rated at the low end of an F-1. Path width was 150 yards. This tornado likely resulted from the same storm that struck Newport News, Hampton and Langley AFB.

Suffolk:

At approximately 3:30 pm, residents hear a tornado and saw trash and debris swirling up in their yards. Four homes were damaged. Several trees were knocked down. Two homes under construction were knocked off their foundation by several feet. Most of the area that the tornado passed over was open land. This storm was rated the low end of an F-1 with a path length of 2 miles with a width of 75 yards.

Chesapeake:

Around 4:00 pm, a tornado moved through the Great Bridge area of Chesapeake. It first struck along Hanbury Road near Great Bridge High School just west of Route 168 and moved east through Etheridge Manor and Etheridge Woods's neighbor-hoods. Many residents were not at home. Those that were heard a sound like a freight train; a few thought they saw the funnel cloud. At least 35 homes were damaged.

The area east of Route 168 appeared to have sustained the most damage. A brick two-car garage was flattened, several roofs were at least partially gone and numerous houses had the attic portion of the walls on the windward side of their house blown out. Most of the remaining damage along the path was due to trees being broken off and falling on houses. All

downed trees and the garage were blown to the left of the direction of the path of the tornado. Most of the trees in this area were pine and were broken off near the rooftop level.

The tornado was classified an F-2 and caused an estimated 1.8 million dollars in damage. No injuries or deaths occurred. The path length was 2.5 miles and its width was 200 yards.

Virginia Beach:

This tornado was produced by the same storm that produced the Chesapeake tornado. A tornado/waterspout was sighted moving east across the bay toward the southern end of Sandbridge. At around 4:45 pm a roof was reported blown off a house at Sandpiper and Whitecap Lane in the Sandbridge area. Two roofs were also damaged and a few trees were broken off. Damage was minimal since this is a narrow strip of land with only two streets along it. The tornado crossed the barrier island on a perpendicular (or easterly) trajectory. There were few homes and few trees with mostly beach and water in this area. A State Trooper and a few residents spotted the tornado. The tornado was rated at the lower end of an F-1 and the path length can only be estimated at 1.5 miles with a width of only 50 yards.

Five tornadoes were also reported in the Richmond/Petersburg area. [Click here for details on those.](#)

Totals for August 6 Outbreak:

- **18 Tornadoes**
- **4 Deaths**
- **256 Injuries**
- **52.5 Million Dollars Damage**