







It was a quiet night in Oak Park last night, but less than 10 miles away, Chicago got hammered with 2-inch hail (that damaged cars/police cars) and up to 800 lightning strikes in 10 minutes! This storm caused 94mph in a harbor on Lake Michigan just north of the city and a funnel cloud was spotted. It was a strange night since t-storms were not really in the forecast (20-30% chance I think), especially such severe ones!

I wanted to share a few of the pics I took last night from the safety of my place in Oak Park of the amazing lightning from these severe t-storms that traveled across downtown from north to south. The rain shaft illuminated by lightning engulfing the Chicago skyline is my favorite!

**Now this is what I call nature's fireworks... Happy 4th!
John**

Severe storms sweep off Lake Michigan late Thursday with downpours, dazzling lightning, 2-inch diameter hail and at least one gust to 94 mph

**July 1, 2011 12:37 AM
By Meteorologist Tom Skilling**

A volatile mix of heat, humidity and a powerful overhead jet stream erupted into violent thunderstorms late Thursday which swept sections of the Chicago area. The storms hit in waves and roared into lakeside counties from southeast Wisconsin into northeast Illinois bringing blinding downpours and hurricane-force gusts clocked as high as 94 mph at Waukegan Harbor and 81 mph just off Chicago's shoreline at the Harrison-Dever crib.

Doppler scans revealed cloud tops towering as high as 57,000 ft. into the atmosphere. Fueling the storm eruption were mid to upper 90-degree temperatures west of Chicago across Iowa into the Plains. Ground level southwest winds channelled heat and humidity directly into the storms. Exceedingly humid mid to upper 70-degree dew point air there--comparable to the muggy environment of a tropical rain forest--had generated afternoon heat indexes as high as 128 degrees in western Iowa.

More than one observer of Thursday night's storms ranked them among the most dramatic lightning-producers to occur in

this area in recent times. At the height of the storm outbreak, lightning data put the number of cloud to ground strokes at more than 800 in a single 10 minute period.

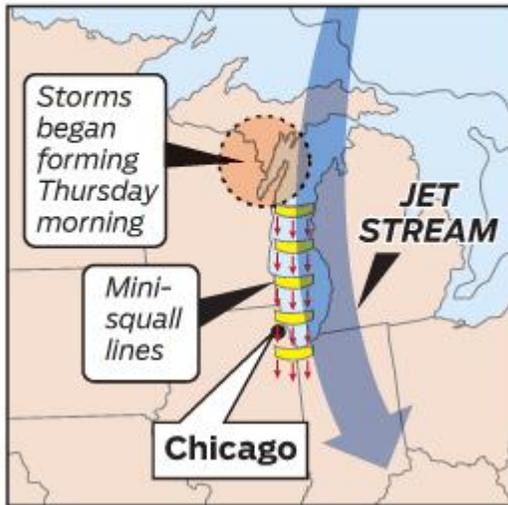
The first storms to reach Chicago arrived with a history of high wind production across southeast Wisconsin. Gusts topped 66 mph at Racine and 75 mph at Kenosha, snapping trees and downing power lines.

Waterspout reported off Winthrop Harbor even as storm gusts hit 94 mph at Waukegan Harbor and 81 mph at Harrison-Dever Crib off Chicago shoreline

A trained spotter reported a waterspout--a tornado over water--8 miles southeast of Winthrop Harbor Thursday evening as the storms made their move toward Chicago. Hail the size of ping pong and golf balls (up to 2 inches in diameter) pelted a number of areas, among them Wrigleyville, Cicero and Evergreen Park. The repetitive nature of the storms which rolled into northwest Indiana and southwest Lower Michigan produced rainfalls heavy enough to generate flooding.

STORMS SWIPE ILLINOIS AND WISCONSIN SHORELINE

Series of mini-squall lines race south at 40+ miles per hour



Storms race south at 40 mph

The storms were embedded in a 75 mph jet stream oriented from north of Lake Superior south the length of Lake Michigan just into the central Appalachians. It was these powerful upper winds which helped push the storms along at a healthy 40 mph.

Cap to build shutting storm production down while allowing blazing heat to expand into the Chicago area

While some clouds may linger in the wake of the storms into Friday morning, computer models continue to indicate the dome of hot air shifting into the region from the Plains is to re-introduce an atmospheric "cap"--a layer of warm air aloft which impedes cloud and thunderstorm development.

Thunderstorms mix cooler air to the surface in their "outflows". This may initially check or slow normal daytime warming Friday. But a suite of computer forecast models insists a formidable prod of warm air is likely to take hold Friday afternoon pushing temperatures well into the 90s and heat indexes to dangerous 100 to 108 degree levels.