



**By Jan Schultz and Russ Pankonin
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Hail storms don't normally come this time of year, but Mother Nature didn't care as hail rained down in the Champion and Imperial areas early Monday afternoon.

Not only did the storm bring rain and hail, it was driven by winds that gusted to 45 m.p.h. mid-afternoon, according to the National Weather Service (NWS).

Steady winds between 20 and 35 m.p.h. persisted through the evening, as well. A spokesperson with the NWS said Wednesday the highest sustained wind speed was clocked at 35 m.p.h. early Monday afternoon. About one inch of rain accompanied the storm in the area.

Winds ripped through the Imperial area, destroying farm buildings, ripping the roof of several corn storage facilities and tipping over an irrigation pivot.

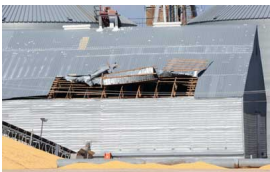
An outbuilding at the Frank Clements farm, southwest of Imperial, was destroyed by the southerly winds.

A portion of two metal roofs on flat corn storage facilities at Gavilon Grain, at 2nd and Broadway Sts., was peeled back from the high winds.

A pivot on the east edge of Imperial on a circle owned by Mike and Jane Moreland toppled over during the storm, as well.

Some of the worst hail damage occurred southwest of Champion, with numerous windows broken out and corn fields damaged.

The wind and hail wreaked havoc with standing corn fields, toppling corn stalks and knocking ears off the stalk.



A number of buildings in Champion and rural areas west of Champion lost windows to the hail.

County Emergency Manager Paul Kunnemann said several spotters were out Monday afternoon. There was rotation spotted on radar in the Champion area, but no tornadoes were confirmed, he said.

While pea-size hail fell a short time in Imperial, Kunnemann said he drove through ping-pong ball sized hail on the Spur 15A Highway, a few miles outside of Champion.

Electricity was off in Imperial about an hour and 15 minutes from 1 to 2:15 p.m.

Public Works Supt. Pat Davison said Wednesday either the high winds or lightning caused the outage, but city staff has been unable to confirm the cause yet.

One power pole was broken on West 5th Street after a metal carport roof was blown off, hit the house service and broke the pole.

However, other utility damage was limited, he said.

"It wasn't as bad as I thought it might be," Davison said.