



By Staff Reports

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After getting battered by hail up to golf-ball size Thursday night, Imperial residents spent much of Saturday cleaning up from a Friday night storm accentuated by winds measured at nearly 80 mph.

Friday night's winds toppled trees of all sizes, including a number of the town's oldest and biggest ones.

Broken tree limbs littered yards and streets in the aftermath of Friday's storm that lasted about 15 minutes.

Fortunately, no personal injuries occurred from the falling trees but there was damage to vehicles and some homes from falling trees or large branches.

Imperial went without electricity for approximately two hours after winds toppled a pole on the main 69,000-volt transmission line into Imperial from the Athey substation, two miles south of Imperial.

After an inspection of the primary system was completed by utility crews, the system was re-energized with a feed from Highline Electric in Holyoke.

Wind damage also affected the Enders area, as well.

Lucille Dinnel said they lost a grain bin and one of their center pivots overturned, as well as lots of tree damage at their farmstead three miles northeast of Enders.

There was also spotted reports of various damage in the Champion area, including damage to grain bins and homes.

Imperial Public Works Superintendent Pat Davison said they began running electrical routes after the electricity went out.

On his way to the Athey substation, he found one of the transmission poles on the ground over the road.

That put the line out of service until Tuesday afternoon. Fortunately, that was the only pole lost.

Davison said they had to check all of the primary electrical routes in Imperial Friday night to insure there were no trees or other things that could short the line.

Once that was complete, Davison said they were able to restore power with the Highline feed.

Davison credited his crew and others who assisted in keeping the outage to a minimum.

The Imperial Volunteer Fire Department (IVFD) had three fires calls on Friday, all related to the storm.

A 5:20 p.m. call took them to the southwest corner of the county, and possibly into Dundy County, where a transformer was down and started a grass fire.

At 6:35 p.m., another transformer causing a small grass fire was reported east of Imperial, or north of the East Highway 6/Old Highway 6 intersection.

Both fires burned about an acre, according to reports.

The IVFD returned to Imperial where they assisted with street-by-street assessments. As a fire

prevention effort, they were looking for houses and power lines damaged by trees.

An 8:50 p.m. call from a home at 1114 Park St., reported smoke. Kristin Wiest said she wasn't certain whether a displaced neighbor's carport or a tree blowing into a power line near her house caused the problem.

The damaged power line occurred when the electricity was off. When the power came back on, something apparently shorted out causing the smoke. Wiest said several appliances were damaged, as well.

Bill Taylor, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service (NWS) in North Platte, said they detected no radar signs of a tornado during the storm. They estimated winds at around 80 mph.

Junior Mendenhall, who lives just east of the airport, said an anemometer at his home clocked a high of 78.5 mph.

Taylor said winds of this magnitude would equal the wind speed of an F1 tornado.

He said the storm moved in from northeast Colorado and intensified as it moved through Chase County, prompting him to issue a severe weather warning.

Participants in the CodeRED warning program were notified of the warnings both Thursday and Friday evenings.

County Emergency Manager Paul Kunnemann said spotters were out both stormy evenings.

On Thursday, he said it appeared the storm would go south, but it switched directions, hitting squarely on the city, then continued on to the northeast.

A tornado watch was issued on Friday, which sent the spotters out again. Kunnemann said they never spotted a tornado or ground-level rotations that night, but there were a lot higher wind speeds up above.

"I'm just glad they stayed up there," he said.

Kunnemann is gathering information for countywide damage assessments, which he will submit to the state for possible disaster declaration which, if given, would help with the repair and labor costs sustained by the communities and county.

If that happens, it will be the third consecutive year the disaster funds are received in Chase County, Kunnemann said.



Hail falls Thursday

Friday night's storm came on the heels of a severe thunderstorm Thursday, June 25 that pelted the immediate Imperial area with hail.

Taylor said two severe storms developed on the boundary of a storm cell in northwest Kansas. One strengthened just south of Imperial and was strongest as it moved over the city.

The other took a northeastern path and wreaked heavy crop damage through southwest Hayes County all the way into Lincoln County.

The cell that developed over Imperial dropped hail up to golf-ball size. The western edge of Imperial suffered from the biggest brunt of the storm.

The hail battered vehicles and took out skylights in homes in that area.

Little, if any, hail was reported on the east edge of Imperial bordering Highway 61.

Thursday's storm damaged crops on the outskirts of Imperial, as well.

Other homes in the area also lost windows and suffered roof and siding damage. In addition to crop losses, several center pivot sprinklers were destroyed or severely damaged.

Officials with the Hayes County Farm Service Agency (FSA) office in Hayes Center surveyed the damage Tuesday afternoon.

Hayes County Executive Director Deb Clifford reported the preliminary estimates show that 20 circles of corn were badly damaged, suffering anywhere from 50 to 100 percent losses.

More than 1,000 acres of wheat in that portion of Hayes County were also wiped out along with at least four circles of beans sustaining losses.

Southwest Public Power District was kept on the run last Thursday as high winds ahead of the storm snapped poles and downed lines, leading to power outages of up to seven hours south of Enders and near Wauneta.

Electric service was temporarily interrupted again from Friday night's wind, which knocked out a regulator bank, a capacitor bank and eight more poles near the same location.

Clean-up from Friday's storm continued into the week as city crews removed trees and broken branches from city parks and fields.

Insurance adjusters arrived in the area early this week but no estimates of damage has been compiled at this time.



Insurance claims

Staff at insurance agencies in Imperial have been glued either to the telephones or computers as they register claims from insured clients due to the hail June 25 and wind June 26.

All agencies reported damage to houses, vehicles, motor homes and farm buildings from either or both hail and wind. Most of those claims center upon the city of Imperial.

Crop damage was also reported to the north, east and south of town.

By Monday McNair Agency, Inc. had received over 110 calls, with some clients reporting multiple claims.

Agent Sharon Clark said additional calls were being received as farmers discovered pivots overturned and grain bins blown away from the wind Friday night.

Hail damaged skylights in some homes, creating additional damage inside homes.

She said adjusters surmised that the hail storm entered through the south part of Imperial, building up as it traveled northwest and creating larger hail.

Clark said the storm hailed the northwest part of town hard, then headed through the northeast part, with the hail diminishing in size but still causing considerable damage.

Lyle Nickerson of Service Insurance said Monday was "a rerun of what we had Friday," with wind claims being phoned in on top of hail claims.

He received over 100 calls Friday, with more coming in. Nickerson said he didn't know how

many claims his office would be hand-ling.

Farm Bureau Financial Services had received close to 70 claims as of Monday, with more coming in.

Another insurance agency in town had received “well over 100” claims as of Monday, with more expected.

Ron Cunningham of State Farm Insurance declined to state how many claims his office had received. However, he said his adjustors said damage to homes and vehicles was more severe in the northern half of Imperial.

“It was a typical hail storm in that parts of the city had more damage than other parts,” he explained.

Cunningham said the storm happened “late enough that cars were garaged and people had a chance to get home.”

Clark of McNair Agency said a few clients had reported hail or wind damage to crops close to town, mainly in the north and east.

Steve Noble, with Frenchman Valley Coop’s crop insurance department, said he received reports of a “little bit of damage on the fringes of town” from the Thursday hail storm, but it was fairly limited.

However, “When you get out in eastern Chase and west Hayes Counties, there was a strip of hail that went up that did severe damage,” he said.

Noble said corn, wheat and soybeans in a strip several miles wide from northeast of Wauneta to Wallace were pummeled.

About the only crops a producer could plant now would be soybeans or dry beans, Noble said. They would still be insurable at a discount.

But, Noble said chemicals used on corn may not allow a producer to plant broadleaf crops such as beans on the field.

All agencies said adjustors were already in town and were setting up appointments with insureds who had claims.

Farmers urged to report losses

Chase County FSA Executive Director Teri Moss reminds farmers of the requirement to report acreage that is prevented from being planted; or is disaster affected and will be destroyed to go to a secondary crop.

Reports must be made by completion of a Notice of Loss at the local FSA office within 15 days of the disaster event and prior to the destruction of the crop; or within 15 days of the final date the crop would have been planted, had planting been possible.

Moss stated that it is critical that such notices be filed in order to protect crop history and future program benefits.