

Storm leaves plenty of damage across county

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A sloppy kiss between a moist, unstable air mass and a veering cold front led to a stormy afternoon and evening last Friday, Aug. 14, across Carlton County. Strong downdraft winds snapped trees and unrooted others. Power lines went down, causing outages, particularly in the Carlton area and south although there were also lines down in Thomson Township. In the western part of the county, near Wright and Cromwell, low-level tornadoes were suspected but unconfirmed by the National Weather Service. A tornado warning had been issued for the area in the early evening until 7:30 p.m.

It was all part of a strong line of storms that hit Minnesota from its western midsection all the way up to the Iron Range, where there was flooding from heavy rain. The weather service reported this week that there were 13 confirmed tornadoes that sprouted from the line, including one just west of Carlton County near Lawler, rated an EF-1 with winds up to 90 mph. Pine Knot News photographer Amber Nichols said a bartender got a video of the tornado touching down and lifting back up near Amos Fredrickson's place there, which has many downed trees and some damage to buildings. Fredrickson told Nichols he was in the garage when the storm hit, and estimated the winds were close to 100 mph.

Outbuildings were damaged in the Kettle River and Moose Lake areas and to the east.

"We had storms blow up pretty quickly," said meteorologist Josh Sandstrom from the Duluth office of the National Weather Service. He said there were "all kinds of ingredients" that led to the heavy rain, winds and tornadoes.

It all moved on quickly, with many county residents soon enjoying an orange glow sunset after the worst of the storm was over, including rainbows and a crazy quilt of cloud formations.

Power out

Many residents and businesses were without power after the storm,

some for a few hours, others for more than a day. Cloquet's Laura Perttula said she lost power for 19 hours at her home on West Cloquet Avenue while other parts of the city were entirely unaffected.

And then there was the Encore Performing Arts Center, where actors followed the creed that "the show must go on."

The theater was in the middle of its first indoor performance since the pandemic began when the lights began to flicker. Then the power went out completely about two-thirds of the way through the first act.

Manager Joel Soukkala made the call to take an early intermission, then, armed with flashlights and cell phone lights, they restarted the show with nearly all the audience members sticking around.

"If a pandemic ain't gonna stop us, no little power outage will," Soukkala exclaimed theatrically, adding that they also had a small portable generator that could run one floodlight and the computer with portable speakers. Only three audience members choose to leave and return for a future performance with lights.

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Ryan Schmidt and his family live right at the end of the Willard Munger Trail in Carlton and lost six big trees "and a bunch of littles" in Friday's storm. Some of the downed trees also buried and damaged a family car. *Contributed photo*



Trees and limbs were downed in Hillside Cemetery near the South Terrace Elementary School in Carlton. Many trees were damaged around the area and electricity was out for hours when power lines were snapped. *Amber Nichols / Pine Knot News*

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