

WADENA STRONG

Remembering the tornado that ripped through Wadena, June 17, 2010

If you were anywhere near Wadena on that fateful day, there's no way you'll forget it.

Locals say the day started out ominous. The humidity was unreal. The sky went from shades of green to black. And when the second siren went off around 5 p.m., everyone knew it was time to take cover. In a matter of minutes, Wadena was changed forever.

“

I watched awestruck as this big black grayish beast that had an awful roar to it headed north through town. ... It looked like a bomb went off in town. This house gone, this one no roof, this one untouched, this business nothing but dust.

MATTHEW KOSCIELSKI, team lead/founder of M&M Stormchasing, WCCO weather watcher and Skywarn ARES member, location: south out of town on Hwy 71 towards the Todd/Wadena county line

It was a day where we saw every, pretty much every type of tornado. We saw multi-vortices tornadoes ... and those vortices combining into a strong tornado and chasing that tornado in close proximity for a lot of miles. We were on that storm for a good 30 minutes. And of course, being in the path of that thing, that was quite memorable,” he said. “That was probably the most active and violent day that I've ever experienced over storm chasing for a total of 12 years.

SEAN CASEY, storm chaser, IMAX filmmaker

I was pregnant and thrown into the basement with a calf landing on top of me.

SAM LOUISE, Bluffton resident

I remember seeing a 2x4 went completely through the house from one end to the other. Trees twisted off like a pretzel. The houses and apartments all around were totally gone.

PAT LUND, Wisconsin resident in town for all-school reunion

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“Had we stayed at the pool I'm confident we wouldn't have made it out alive.”

Mariah Wood, Wadena resident, lifeguard at pool

“When it was all done we didn't have a house to live in, we didn't have a car, we didn't have a truck, we didn't have a boat, none of that.”

“(Alexa, three-years-old) said, 'Don't cry, it's just a summer storm.'”

“I don't want to go through that again but you get through it when you think of all the people.”

Gail Johnson, Wadena child care provider, 412 8th Street SW

“I had such a sigh of relief when we got outside and the world was still there.”

Joyce Boyne, former WDC senior bookkeeper, who sheltered in a science room at the WDC High School with custodian Terry Andrie. It was one of the few classrooms unharmed in the storm.

“The trees were all down, gravestones were tipped over. It will never look like it used to.”

Dennis Olson, former Cemetery Association President

“Everyone was walking down the street in silence and shock. Our beautiful tree lined neighborhood was unrecognizable.”

Mary Taylor, Wadena resident, walking down Irving Ave

“Just right after it passed, I could smell pine in my basement,” Pearson recalled. “So many pine branches had blown into our house.”

Vicki Pearson, Lincoln Ave. SW

Paula Pandy Chhetri / Forum Design Center

INSIDE

Details behind the storm: The National Weather Service defines in detail the power and awe of the Wadena and Almora tornadoes.

Storm chaser remembers: Local storm chaser recalls the anticipation and horror of the storm.

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Sports impact: In the face of disaster, WDC teamed up for a winning future.

B3

Safe keeping: Gail Johnson recalls weathering the 'summer storm' at daycare.

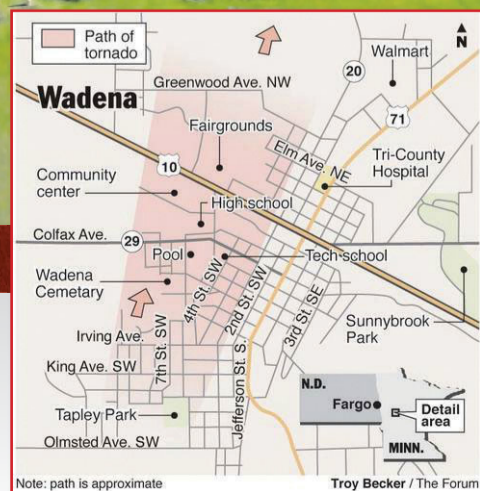
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Scars of the storm: The path of the tornado leaves a lasting impression.

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By the numbers: Numbers tallied after devastation of tornado.

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AN 'UNRECOGNIZABLE' COMMUNITY

THE FACTS

Date: June 17, 2010
 Time: 5:00-5:18 p.m.
 Tornado wind speeds: 170 mph
 Tornado category: EF4
 Length of tornado: 10 miles, 1.1 miles wide
 Tornado on the ground: 7 miles
 Tornado Sirens: 2, approx 30 minutes apart

DAMAGES: PEOPLE

Number of people injured: **34**
 Number of people critically injured: **1**
 Number of people killed: **0**

DAMAGES: BUILDINGS

Homes destroyed: **26**
 Homes minor damage: **268**
 Homes major damage: **70**
 Homes affected: **455**
 Businesses destroyed: **6**
 Businesses damaged: **11**
 Number of people displaced: **100**
 Land area damaged: **20-25% of the city**

DAMAGES: CEMETERY

Wadena City Cemetery damaged monuments: **325**
 St. Ann Calvary Cemetery damaged monuments: **206**
 Cost for restoring monuments: **\$11,000**

DAMAGES: WADENA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS

Wadena County Fairgrounds:
13 buildings destroyed, 5 damaged, 80% of trees lost
 Cost of repairing fairgrounds: **\$2 million**
 FEMA for fairgrounds: **\$1.5 million**
 Local money for fairgrounds: **\$500,000**

DAMAGES: WADENA-DEER CREEK MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL

Building: **total devastation**
 School buses lost: **17**
 Percent of books salvageable from school media center: **40%**
 Wadena-Deer Creek new middle/high school cost: **\$38.4 million**
 WDC Safe Room FEMA funds: **\$950,461**
 Total cost of WDC Safe Room: **\$1.8 million**

DAMAGES: WELLNESS CENTER

Total cost for new Wadena Regional Wellness Center: **\$12.3 million**
 Wadena Regional Wellness Center planning funds from state: **\$750,000**
 Wadena Regional Wellness Center funds from DEED: **\$4.2 million**

RECOVERY SUPPORT: WADENA OTTER TAIL LONG TERM RECOVERY COMMITTEE

Number of churches in the Wadena Otter Tail Long Term Recovery Committee: **6**
 Total funds raised with Long Term Recovery Committee: **\$725,000**
 Wadena Otter Tail Long Term Recovery Committee length: **August 2010 to October 2012, 27 months**
 Wadena Otter Tail Long Term Recovery Committee volunteer hours: **19,900**
 Wadena Otter Tail Long Term Recovery Committee on-site building hours: **12,850**
 Wadena Otter Tail Long Term Recovery Committee member meetings and fundraising effort hours: **2,200**
 Wadena Otter Tail Long Term Recovery Committee families helped: **190**

RECOVERY SUPPORT: EMERGENCY PERSONNEL

Fire departments: **56**
 Ambulances: **37**
 Law enforcement agencies: **46**
 Helicopters: **3**
 Number of National Guard soldiers mobilized to help: **40**

RECOVERY SUPPORT: TREES

Number of trees lost on private land in tornado path: **2,600**
 Number of trees disbursed on April 30, 2011: **1,900**
 Boy Scouts plant trees: **140 scouts, 12 troops**
 DNR bonding grant for trees lost in tornado: **\$9,000**
 Trees for Wadena fundraising goal: **\$100,000**

RECOVERY SUPPORT: DEMOLITION HAUL

Debris pile at old airport *as of July 17, 2010: **200 yards long, 20 feet high**
 Total demolition loads hauled: **5,000**
 Tree waste moved June 18-20: **817 loads**
 Tree debris: **23, 634 cubic yards**
 Construction demolition debris: **54,036 cubic yards**
 Masonry debris: **16,665 cubic yards**
 Metal debris: **6,667 cubic yards**

Numbers gathered from Wadena Pioneer Journal articles, the National Weather Service, Wadena Tornado book and emergency personnel and leaders from the 2010 tornado.