



1983 Ground Hog Day Tornadoes

Fact Sheet

- Date: February 2, 1983
 - Time: 920 am
 - Estimated Tornado Intensity: F2
 - Estimated Maximum Wind: 113-157 mph
 - Tornado Width (Yards): 40
 - Path Length (Miles): 1
 - Deaths: 1
 - Injuries: 6
 - Damage Amount: Unknown
 - Number of Homes Damages: 36 trailers
 - County: Highlands
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- Date: February 3, 1983
 - Time: 920 am
 - Estimated Tornado Intensity: F0
 - Estimated Maximum Wind: <73 mph
 - Tornado Width (Yards): Unknown
 - Path Length (Miles): Unknown
 - Deaths: 2
 - Injuries: 5
 - Damage Amount: 500,000
 - Number of Homes Damages: 54 mobile
 - County: Pinellas



A community destroyed after a tornado tore through it.

St Petersburg Times



'The "Wizard of Oz" all over again'

St Petersburg Times



A young boy shifts through rubble in grief, where his parent's house once stood.

Tampa Tribune

Summary of event:

On the morning of February 3, 1983 winds started to pick up around the St. Petersburg area. People started to wake up to the approaching storm. The storm produced numerous tornadoes that rumbled through several counties. The storm that hit tossed debris around and created heavy rains.



Detailed experiences:

Mike Pothier is just one of the many people in St. Petersburg that was awoken by the tornadoes fury. **In just 20 seconds, the twister blew open locked doors, battered an aluminum shed behind the house at 625 26th St. S., pulled a television antenna from the roof, then slammed into some industrial buildings across the street, leveling one of them. "It was The Wizard of Oz all over again," said Pothier (St Petersburg Times, February 3rd, Section B).**

As the storm hit Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties it produced several tornadoes in the area. One tore through east Hillsborough County and destroyed several homes. Many people were frightened as they took cover at the last second from the tornado. Numerous people stood outside after the tornado passed looking at what they called their homes. Some even explained what they were doing and their experience as it was occurring. **"I crawled to the kitchen where I found my wife. She had hit the floor. My boy was there too," said strawberry farmer Roy Parke. "All three of us were on the floor. But we were safe. That's all we thought about then. We were just glad to be alive (Tampa Tribune, February 3rd, Section 4-A)." Roy Parke and his family were just a few of the several residents that survived this devastating incident. "It sounded like a freight train came through my house. Such a sickening sound you never heard," he said (Tampa Tribune, February 3rd, Section 4-A). Another resident stated the following: "Our house is in a shambles. You don't know where to turn or what to do," said Rosa Lee Lawson as she looked at the plastic material that was nailed in place where her roof used to be. The wind picked up her lawnmower from her back yard and set it down on the roof at the rear of her house (Tampa Tribune, February 3rd, Section 4-A). Another resident explained what happened to him when the tornado hit his area "Nineteen-year-old Steve Dixon woke up just before his bedroom roof was torn off. "I heard the high winds and the rain. I turned over on my stomach, and for some reason I just put the pillow over my head," said the Pettie Road resident. "The tiles from the roof were falling everywhere" (Tampa Tribune, February 3rd, Section 4-A). Jesse Carr a very devastated victim was sad after looking at his house after the tornado. "The house just exploded. The bedroom wall was moving back and forth. It looked just like a dancer doing the hula," he said (Tampa Tribune, February 3rd, Section 4-A).**

The storm continued moving east and spawned a tornado in Highlands County. The tornado crushed through a mobile home park destroying the trailers and throwing the aluminum. Nothing but flattened trailers was left behind the tornado. **The twister lifted several mobile homes off their foundations and sent them crashing to the ground. Some were overturned. At least four elderly residents were trapped inside the twisted wreckage. Rescuers were able to free them within 15 minutes of the 9:20 a.m. tornado (Tampa Tribune, February 3rd, Section 4-A).**



As the storms produced heavy rains and several tornadoes in Florida there were only a couple of deaths. The tornadoes tossed and turned several homes and trailers and made its way leaving crumbled pieces of structures behind it.

Winds reached 125 mph as tornadoes hit Suncoast

St Petersburg Times

Tornado rips through east Hillsborough

The storm that spawned the tornado also created 13 other twisters and heavy rains in the state, causing at least three deaths.

Tampa Tribune

jured and preliminary damage estimates ran into the millions of dollars.

However, a small tornado, primarily about 20 miles east of Tampa, was the hardest hit area in Hillsborough. Between 25 to 30 houses were reported damaged, according to local volunteer firefighter Mark Curtis.

"As far as we've been able to determine, the damage was

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Jesse Carr, above, as seen through a shattered window of his three-bedroom home, surveys tornado damage. The house had lost its roof, and Carr said he had tried unsuccessfully to shelter his daughter and himself with a mattress.

Tampa Tribune