

This story will be updated. A rare storm packing 100 mph winds and with power similar to an inland hurricane swept across the Midwest on Monday, blowing over trees, flipping vehicles, causing widespread property damage and leaving hundreds of thousands without power. The storm known as a derecho lasted several hours as it tore across eastern Nebraska, Iowa and parts of Wisconsin, had the wind speed of a major hurricane, and likely caused more widespread damage than a normal tornado, said Patrick Marsh, science support chief at the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma. It's not quite a hurricane. It has no eye and its winds come across in a line. But the damage it is likely to do spread over such a large area is more like an inland hurricane than a quick more powerful tornado, Marsh said. He compared it to a devastating Super Derecho of 2009, which was one of the strongest on record traveled more than 1,000 miles in 24 hours, causing \$500 million in damage, widespread power outages and killing a handful of people. "This is our version of a hurricane," Northern Illinois University meteorology professor Victor Gensini said in an interview from his home about 15 minutes before the storm was about to hit. Minutes later he headed to his basement for safety as the storm took aim at Chicago, starting with its suburbs. Gensini said this derecho will go down as one of the strongest in recent history and be one of the nation's worst weather events of 2020. "It ramped up pretty quick" around 7 a.m. Central time in Eastern Nebraska. I don't think anybody expected widespread winds approaching 100, 110 mph," Marsh said. MidAmerican Energy said nearly 101,000 customers in the Des Moines area were without power after the storm moved through the area. Reports from spotters filed with the National Weather Service in Des Moines had winds in excess of 70 mph. Farmers reported that some grain bins were destroyed and fields were flattened, but the extent of damage to Iowa's agriculture industry wasn't immediately clear. Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has "both significant and widespread damage throughout the city," said public safety

spokesman Greg Buelow. The weather service's Marsh said there's a huge concern about power outages that will be widespread across several states and long lasting. Add high heat, people with medical conditions that require power and the pandemic, "it becomes dire pretty quickly." What makes a derecho worse than a tornado is how long it can hover in one place and how large an area the high winds hit, Marsh said. He said winds of 80 mph or even 100 mph can stretch for "20, 30, 40 or God forbid 100 miles." Marsh said the storm will likely dissipate over central or eastern Indiana, he said. What happened is unstable super moist air has parked over the northern plains for days on end and it finally ramped up Monday morning into a derecho. "They are basically self-sustaining amoebas of thunderstorms," Gensini said. "Once they get going like they did across Iowa, it's really hard to stop these suckers." Derechoes, with winds of at least 58 mph, occur about once a year in the Midwest. Rarer than tornadoes but with weaker winds, derechoes produce damage over a much wider area. The storms raced over parts of eastern Nebraska before 9 a.m. Monday, dropping heavy rains and high winds. Strong straight-line winds pushed south into areas that include Lincoln and Omaha, National Weather Service meteorologist Brian Barjenbruch said. "Once that rain-cooled air hit the ground, it surged over 100 miles, sending incredibly strong winds over the area," Barjenbruch said. ___ Borenstein reported from Kensington, Maryland. AP reporter David Pitt contributed from Des Moines.