

TORNADO TERROR



STAFF PHOTOS BY DAVID KENNEDY

The Applewood Apartments, located on East New Hampshire Avenue in DeLand, sustained severe damage from yesterday's tornadoes. The area around DeLand Middle School was among the hardest hit in the city.

# DeLand hit hard

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DELAND — Chad and Georgia Craft looked more like refugees than newlyweds yesterday.

The husband held the two leashes of the couple's dogs, Layla and Oscar, in one hand and clutched a dog carrier in his other arm.

The wife had her purse slung over her right shoulder and dragged a suitcase on wheels behind her as the couple walked north on Amelia Avenue, away from their home.

The Applewood Apartments on East New Hampshire Avenue in DeLand, where the couple first moved after they were married almost two years ago, was among the worst-hit areas by yesterday's tornadoes.

The storms barreled through Central Florida, leaving a path of destruction in Volusia and Lake counties.

The Crafts counted themselves among the lucky as they walked toward their car, about a half-mile away, preparing to head to a local hotel.

Georgia Craft survived the night in their apartment as a tornado careened through their neighborhood, leaving downed power lines, scattered debris and changed lives.

Georgia Craft, a 21-year-old retail clerk at a pottery store, called her husband at work around 6 a.m. after she saw the damage for herself. When she did, mud and leaves whirled around her and pressure filled her ears after she opened her front door.

"I didn't have to step out to know," she said. "I didn't have any light. I used my laptop as a light outside."

A fireman told her the pressure she felt in her ears was normal after tornadoes.

In the early morning hours yesterday, she saw devastation in her apartment com-

plex. Treetops were gone and it looked like every car in her parking lot sustained damage. "The roofs are ripped off," Chad Craft said. "You can see the insulation. It's unbelievable."

Chad Craft rushed home from his job at Tyco Kendall Healthcare after he received the call from his wife. He found his 1987 Mitsubishi pickup truck damaged with a shattered rear window, but his wife was safe.

"We had it good," he said. "Other people are having to clean glass out of their apartments."

Others wanted to just get back home.

Roommates Josh Scoot and Adam Turner walked east on New Hampshire Avenue, trying to make it back to their rented home on Arlington Avenue.

The two returned yesterday morning from a trip to Miami to find the destruction left behind by the tornadoes.

They didn't know if their home survived the storms.

"This is my first time being in [something] like this," said Josh Scoot, an 18-year-old Army reservist. "It looks like New Orleans."

Most of the people in the area south of Beresford Avenue to East New Hampshire Avenue walked around their neighborhood, surveying the damage and looking for loved ones.

Some cleared tree limbs or patched the roofs of their homes and businesses with tarps.

DeLand Police Chaplain Michael Midica set up a small command post at the corner of Amelia and East New Hampshire avenues.

He handed out hugs and half-liter bottles of water to about 80 people by 11 a.m. yesterday.

The chaplain explained: "This is our city and we have to stay strong for the people."

DeLand Police Officer Rod Hancock directs traffic yesterday at the intersection of Amelia and Beresford avenues in DeLand.



The tornadoes snapped several trees in half along East New Hampshire Avenue in DeLand yesterday.