

= 1989 Northeastern United States tornado outbreak =

The 1989 Northeastern United States tornado outbreak was a series of tornadoes which caused more than \$ 130 million ( 1989 USD ) in damage across the Northeastern United States on July 10 , 1989 . The storm system affected five states with severe weather , including hail up to 2 @. @ 5 inches ( 6 @. @ 4 cm ) across , thunderstorm winds up to 90 mph ( 140 km / h ) , and 17 tornadoes . Several towns in New York and Connecticut were particularly hard @- @ hit . Several homes were leveled in Schoharie , New York and extensive damage occurred in Bantam , Connecticut . A large section of Hamden , Connecticut , including an industrial park and hundreds of homes , was destroyed ; and in some places buildings were flattened to the ground .

More than 150 people were injured by the tornado outbreak , and one person was killed by straight @- @ line thunderstorm winds . While tornado outbreaks in this area are unusual , this storm was especially rare in that it produced six significant tornadoes , two of which were violent F4s , and featured many tornadoes with tracks of several miles .

= = List of official tornadoes = =

= = Storm details = =

Storms began causing damage early in the morning on July 10 , 1989 . A tornado briefly touched down in Ogdensburg , New York at 5AM , injuring one person . Hail up to 1 in ( 25 mm ) wide , wind gusts over 50 mph ( 60 km / h ) , and many reports of wind damage were reported in New York , Vermont , and Massachusetts before noon . Severe weather is an unusual occurrence in the morning , and the activity only increased in severity towards the middle of the afternoon .

= = = Schoharie County tornado = = =

The event which devastated areas from Montgomery to Greene County caused \$ 20 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 in damage and injured 20 people . While the Storm Prediction Center archives say that it was a single tornado , it was likely three or more tornadoes , each producing F3 to F4 damage . Only damage near Schoharie was at the F4 level , and some sources doubt it even reached that intensity at all .

The first tornado touched down three miles east of Ames at 1 : 27PM , moving southeast . It passed near or through the towns of Carlisle , Howe Caverns , Central Bridge , and Schoharie before lifting . Continuing southeast for 10 miles , the storm produced another tornado briefly near Rensselaerville . After another 10 miles , a third tornado touched down between Greenville and Surprise . This final section of the path is plotted as a skipping tornado , but may have been three or more separate tornadoes .

= = = Connecticut tornado family = = =

An hour after the previous event caused destruction in Upstate New York , a new tornado family began producing significant damage in the adjacent state of Connecticut . The first tornado , which may have been three separate tornadoes , started its path of destruction in Cornwall , leveling a virgin forest known as Cathedral Pines . At the nearby Mohawk Mountain Ski Area , every ski lift was destroyed , with some lift chairs found miles away . The tornado continued south @- @ southeast through Milton , leveling hundreds more trees , and destroyed the village of Bantam before dissipating . Strong downburst winds continued to cause damage and level trees after this tornado lifted : it was during this period between tornadoes that a 12 @- @ year @- @ old girl was killed by falling trees in Black Rock State Park .

Soon afterwards , another tornado touched down in Watertown , passing through Oakville and northern Waterbury , damaging or destroying 150 homes .

The Hamden tornado was by far the most destructive tornado of this family , and possibly the most damaging of the entire outbreak . It touched down at 5 : 38 pm near the Wilbur Cross Parkway . Industrial cranes and cars were tossed through the air , and rows of houses , as well as an industrial park , were flattened . The tornado lifted just a few minutes later at 5 : 45 . The damage path was only five miles long , stopping just short of the city of New Haven , but it damaged or destroyed almost 400 structures in its path .

The storm was so intense at this point that an 80 mph ( 130 km / h ) wind gust was measured in downtown New Haven after the tornado dissipated . About the same time , a tornado struck the area between Carmel and Brewster , New York , unroofing a condominium complex . Five people were injured .

= = = Long Island = = =

The storms continued to produce damage after crossing onto Long Island . An F2 tornado caused significant damage in the town of East Moriches . A man was thrown with his trailer across an airfield ; he escaped the destroyed trailer with only minor injuries . The tornado was accompanied by 2 @. @ 5 inch ( 6 @. @ 4 cm ) hail . Other areas further east also saw straight @- @ line wind damage and hail up to an inch across .

= = = Massachusetts storms = = =

While the destructive tornadoes were affecting Connecticut , this part of the storm produced four brief F1 tornadoes in quick succession north of Worcester , which occurred between 4PM and 4 : 15PM . These tornadoes each produced damage paths less than 150 feet ( 45 m ) wide , and less than 0 @. @ 5 miles ( 0 @. @ 8 km ) long .

Moving east @- @ southeast into southern Middlesex County , it continued producing severe winds ( gusting up to 90 mph ; 145 km / h ) and very heavy rain . Another tornado touched down very briefly in Norfolk County , followed by two more brief touchdowns in Plymouth County near 5 : 30PM . The storm then weakened , but still managed to produce 60 mph ( 95 km / h ) winds on Cape Cod , before finally moving out into the Atlantic and dissipating .

= = = New Jersey storms = = =

Around the same time , the last of the activity was affecting areas of northern New Jersey . Two F0s and an F1 tracked through parts of Passaic and Bergen counties , snapping and uprooting trees , and causing \$ 4 million in damage . About 150 houses were damaged in Bergen county alone .

= = Aftermath = =

In Waterbury , Connecticut , mayor Joseph Santopietro declared a state of emergency due to extensive damage in the city .

In Hamden , Connecticut , the National Guard was called in to aid in cleanup and keep order , as some looting was reported in the devastated area . President George H. W. Bush declared the area a disaster area on July 18 . The damage was so intense that much of the area was without power for a week , and trees were still being cleared a year later .

There was some damage to homes and other structures from this storm , but most damage was confined to wooded areas . Several major roads , including Route 9 , Route 12 , and Interstate 190 , were closed due to flooding or downed trees . The main financial impact was from damage to utilities , which totalled over \$ 2 million in Princeton alone .

Despite the extensive and widespread damage , only one death was reported from the entire severe weather outbreak , and this was due to straight @- @ line winds , not a tornado . Many people , including Connecticut Governor William O 'Neill , commented that it was " a miracle " that more people were not seriously injured or killed .

= = Historic outbreak = =

This storm event was one of the most extensive ever seen in the Northeastern United States . In all , 17 tornadoes touched down , possibly more . There were 14 instances of measured severe winds ( several over 80 mph , 129 km / h ) , along with 46 reports of straight @-@ line wind damage . There were 10 reports of hail 1 inch ( 2 @.@ 5 cm ) across or larger , and hail 2 @.@ 5 inches ( 6 @.@ 4 cm ) wide fell from one storm , which was producing a tornado at the time . Hail this large is especially rare in this area of the world .

Remarkably , though hundreds of homes and other structures were leveled , no one was killed by tornadoes that day . Tornado damage caused about 140 injuries , mostly minor , and one death and 11 injuries were caused by wind damage . In just five hours , the storms produced more than 12 @,@ 500 lightning strikes . The airport in Oxford , Connecticut recorded 4 @.@ 4 inches ( 112 mm ) of rain in just 30 minutes . While the northeastern United States experiences occasional tornadoes , an event of this scale is especially rare . Typical tornadoes in this area are short @-@ lived and not particularly damaging . This outbreak featured several long @-@ lived tornadoes , produced by storms which also produced destructive non @-@ tornadic winds over a large area . Since 1950 , only six violent tornadoes have occurred in the Northeastern US , two of which were part of this outbreak . It was by far the worst tornado event in the area since May 2 , 1983 , when six significant tornadoes tore through New York , and maybe the worst since the Worcester Tornado .