

# Happy Easter



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## The storms of Good Friday

A day of reverence became a constant threat of violent weather in Southwest Virginia. A powerful tornado carved a path of damage, but it didn't wipe out an Easter tradition.



Southwest Virginia dealt with violent weather, including rain and even a tornado, on Friday.

FRANKLIN COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY

BY PAUL COLLINS

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The words of witnesses who looked at the aftermath of the storm that blew across Franklin County on Friday morning seemed to leave little doubt that they had witnessed a powerful tornado. They had seen the coal-black skies. They watched and listened as the wind snapped trees. Some of them dashed for safety.

On Saturday their instincts were confirmed: The National Weather Service said this was an EF 3 storm (on a scale of 0 to 5) that reached maximum wind speed of 159 mph. It was on the ground for 8.2 miles and at one point was as wide as five football fields as it traveled between Goose Dam Road and Ashpone Tavern Road at around 11 a.m.

Larry and Delores Anderson at 127 Windy Ridge Road, in the Sydnersville community, found their home in rubble. Another leveled house was vacant. At least five others had some damage.

See **STORMS**, Page A9



DESMOND KENDRICK

A destroyed home in Franklin County.

### MORE ONLINE

» To see a gallery of photographs from Friday's storms, visit [www.martinsvillebulletin.com](http://www.martinsvillebulletin.com).

## The homeowner: 'I just prayed'

BY PAUL COLLINS

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Delores Anderson said she was outside on the front porch when the winds got up and looked like they were twisting. She went in her basement and covered herself with blankets for protection.

What did she hear?  
"It sounded like a train," she said. That lasted about two minutes.  
"I just prayed."

Her husband said at one point she phoned him. She was hysterical and said the storm had blown the windows out of the house. But at that point, she did not realize the house had been demolished.

Anderson said he didn't realize how much damage had been done either until he arrived at the scene.

How bad was it?

See **HOME**, Page A9

## The heavens opened, but CrossWalk found a way

Rain, tornadoes force Good Friday tradition to be moved indoors.

BY HOLLY KOZELSKY

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Jesus and his supporters may have carried his cross in the rain, but they most likely did not have to keep ducking through doorways with it.

This year's Martinsville CrossWalk avoided the rain, but it had plenty of squeezing a wooden cross around corners and dipping it under doorways on Friday.

Sponsored by First and Wesley United Methodist Churches, the CrossWalk is a yearly tradition to honor Jesus' Good Friday walk to crucifixion. Normally, people take turns carrying a wooden cross on the mile-long walk from First UMC to Wesley UMC, stopping at stations representing Jesus's journey. Because of storms and tornado watches Friday, the walk was held inside First UMC.

See **WALK**, Page A8



HOLLY KOZELSKY/MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

As the CrossWalk concludes, participants place the wooden cross back in its support at the front of the sanctuary at First United Methodist Church.

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### WEATHER

Today will be partly sunny with a shower. Tonight will be partly cloudy.

63 HIGH 40 LOW

For detailed weather information, see Page A2



See a guide to activities in the area this summer. Page B6-7



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# The surprise: 'Get to the basement'

BY PAUL COLLINS  
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Jessica and Dallas Woody and their six children ranging in ages from 6 months to 11 years live near U.S. 220 in the Sydnorsville area, and Dallas Woody's business, Woody's Tree Service, is based there.

He said: "We got alerts on our phone."

Jessica Woody said: "I didn't really take it seriously. My dad called. My kids were out here playing. It was windy, playing like birds. ... I looked out the door. That brick house over there [across the road], I could see swirling clouds like it was

trying to touch down to the ground.

"It was weird. I had never seen anything like that. It startled me. I said, 'Kids, get in the basement now.' I don't think it ever was able to touch down because I don't think it was flat enough, but obviously it did further up the road."

Dallas Woody said he figures the tornado was trying to touch down, "but it didn't get going until a little further up."

He thought the time was about 10:30 a.m. or so.

That was right in the middle of the time period that the tornado was on the ground.



STEPHANIE DOYLE

The storm moves across Franklin County viewed from U.S. 220 northbound.

# The park: 'Tangled, twisted, broken'

BY PAUL COLLINS  
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In the Sontag community in Franklin County, the apparent tornado did considerable damage at Franklin County Recreational Park.

"The lower end of the park, it looks like tornado damage for sure. It tore up a number of trees," Paul D. Chapman, Franklin County's director of parks and recreation, said. "Our disc golf course will be unplayable for quite a while. Countless trees are down in that section. Probably damage to structures. It damaged the end of our baseball fields. The light poles, the lights at night, were toppled over. One was snapped. One was pushed down. Another one is leaning pretty good."

"That field also got a lot of damage. The back stop is bent. A number of the fences are torn all up. The bleachers were blown away. In fact, one was blown across the street and is in the top of the neighbor's tree. We've probably got 8 or 10 sets of bleachers that have been ruined - bent and torn up or blown away. It's funny - the one baseball field had major damage, but the field next to it is AOK, nothing wrong with it."

He didn't have a dollar estimate of the damage.

"We're still actually assessing things," he said.

"I think we're going to close certain areas. There's



PAUL COLLINS/MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Franklin County Recreational Park in the Sontag sustained damage from the storms.

hundreds of trees tangled, twisted, broken off. For a while you could still hear them falling. We're going to keep people back from those areas."

How will this affect the park's operations?

"This is hitting us at the worst time," Chapman said. Right now is when we are busiest. Grass is growing the most. Most people are visiting parks right now, beautiful springtime. Athletics - we're slammed as it is, preparing ball fields for soccer, lacrosse, baseball, tee-ball and softball. We're busy just maintaining. This is a major setback for us. No injuries, that's the most important thing."

Chapman said he and other parks and rec staff

members got a tornado warning about 15 to 20 minutes before the storm hit. "Everyone's phones buzzed with the tornado warning," he said.

"Some of the other guys when they came up were like, 'You could really see it swirling,' that kind of thing. They were like, they could hear the winds coming. Oh, it was really howling over this way."

Chapman said, "When I went down and I saw it, you could definitely feel there was something weird in the air. It looked like a major thunderstorm to me. It didn't look too much different."

Chapman and six other parks and rec employees sheltered in the basement.

"We had the door open ... so we could see it."

Greg Clemons, maintenance supervisor for Franklin County Parks and Rec, said the apparent tornado had already crossed Route 619 (Sontag Road) by the time he got to Franklin County Recreational Park, which is on that road. "I didn't hear anything, but I was coming down [Route] 619 and could see debris a couple hundred feet up in the air. It was so far up I don't know what it was. It was raining really hard. It had already crossed the road. I was seeing the remaining debris up in the air."

"Our park is a mess. ... We have quite a mess in here."

# The neighbor: 'It was just so quick'

BY PAUL COLLINS  
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Across the road from the park, Joey Snead was at home at 2265 Sontag Road when the apparent tornado hit.

"I was a-sitting on the couch. I thought it was thunder I heard coming," Snead said. "It was just constant, so I got up and looked out the window. Coming along the wood lines over at the park, wind was like that [he moved his hands horizontally], trees were down and debris was blowing. You could actually see the definition of the [wind]."

"I picked the dog [a deaf and blind Shih Tzu] up and was getting ready to go downstairs and looked out the window, and the bleachers at the ballpark [across the road] were up in the air and it landed in the tree over on the side of the house over here and the other one landed there in the front yard. By the time I got the dog and got to the door, it had done passed through. It went by the side of the house into the woods."

"Our cat [a feral calico cat] was outside. She hasn't showed back up yet. We're looking for [her]. She came here and took up.... When the thunder

started I tried to get her to come in the house. She ran off. She's probably under the house. She gets scared."

Snead said the apparent tornado tore vinyl ceiling off part of the front porch, removed some shingles from the roof of the home, blew part of the roof off of an outbuilding, overturned and snapped or twisted trees, and did other damage to their property.

Next-door neighbor Joyce Norris, of 2293 Sontag Road, said there was damage in her yard.

"There's a tree down, and there's debris evidently from one of the houses here," Norris said. "My furniture from the porch is in the yard or somewhere. I don't know where it is at this moment."

"Everything other than this is OK. The house is OK. I'm OK, just shook up a little bit. ..."

She was not aware that tree had been blown over in her back yard.

"I haven't looked back there," she said.

"I was just scared," she said of the storm. "It was so quick. It sounded like a freight train. It did sound like a freight train, maybe five minutes."

Did she do anything to protect herself?

# Home

From Page A1

He didn't think the damage to the house would have been worse "if you would have dropped a bomb on it."

The storm took the roof off the house, leveled most of the walls, demolished the attached two-bay garage and moved the vehicle that was inside.

"It was completely devastated," he said. "I couldn't believe it."

Anderson said a man who lives nearby told him he saw the apparent tornado take the roof off the house.

Family members, friends, emergency personnel and Salvation Army Martinsville Corps personnel were on the scene Friday afternoon to offer support, help and comfort to the Andersons.

Larry Anderson, 66, and Delores Anderson, 63, have lived in the home since 1980.

"I'm just in shock," Delores Anderson said, wiping her teary eyes at times. "It's [nearly] 40 years, lots of memories."

She tried to look on the bright side.

"I've got my family, friends and God. That's all you need."

How do they plan to proceed?

"Start over," her husband said. They do have insurance.

He said for the tragedy "hasn't sunk in yet."

According to Lt. George Keith of the Salvation Army a second home that was destroyed - on Fishburn Mountain Road - was vacant. Keith and his wife, Lt. Ruby Outlaw-Keith, responded to Franklin County to help storm victims.

# Storms

From Page A1

There were two injuries reported, but neither serious, said William B. Ferguson, director of Franklin County Public Safety.

Trees and power lines fell across U.S. 220 between Bassett and Rocky Mount, closing the highway in both directions and forcing traffic to be rerouted.

One of the injuries Ferguson noted came when

a tree fell on one of those vehicles being driven on U.S. 220. That motorist was able to get out of the vehicle.

Another person was hit by flying debris, as trees were toppled, roofs were damaged and outdoor structures and furniture were strewn.

Franklin County Recreational Park in the Sontag community was damaged extensively, and some areas may have to close for repairs.

Members of the Re-

sponding Fire District caught the funnel cloud from the storm on camera. Other residents posted short videos on social media depicting the force of the storm as it traveled across the landscape. The NWS said the storm touched down north of the

Oak Level community, just inside Franklin County and reached its peak in strength near Windy Ridge Road.

Its damage and the fear it brought are vivid in these accounts of those affected by the storm of Good Friday.

## PUBLIC NOTICE



PROPOSED SIX-YEAR HIGHWAY PLAN (2019/20 - 2024/25)

PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION BUDGET 2019/20 HENRY COUNTY

The Virginia Department of Transportation and the Board of Supervisors for Henry County, in accordance with Section 33.1-70.01 of the Code of Virginia, will conduct a joint public hearing in the Boardroom of the Henry County Administration Building located on Route 174 (Kings Mountain Road) in Collinsville, Virginia at 6:00pm to 6:30pm on Tuesday, April 23, 2019. The purpose of this public hearing is to receive public comment on the proposed Secondary Six-Year Highway Plan for Fiscal Years 2019/20 through 2024/25 and the Secondary System Construction Budget for Fiscal Year 2019/20. Copies of the proposed Plan and Budget may be reviewed at the Martinsville Residency Office of the Virginia Department of Transportation, located at 309 Weeping Willow Lane in Bassett, Virginia or at the office of the Henry County Administrator for Henry County.

Persons requiring special assistance to attend and participate in the hearing should contact the Virginia Department of Transportation at (276)629-2582.

Oral comments, written comments or other exhibits relative to the proposed plan may be presented at this hearing.

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