

When the tornado hit

When the swirling cloud of wind, rain and debris hit on March 15, adults and children alike ran for cover. They made frantic calls to loved ones and quickly sought shelter wherever they could find it.

Levi Kipke and Emily Pap
Staff Writers

I was at practice

Senior Jamie Verbal was at soccer practice.

"I was in the gym at the high school when (Principal Kit) Moran came down and told us that we needed to get into the team room, by the locker rooms, to take cover," she said. "He put the school on a lock down, so nobody was allowed to leave unless they were with a parent."

Verbal and her teammates were skeptical at first because they didn't believe there was a tornado.

"We didn't think the threat of a tornado was real until someone texted one of my friends a picture of the funnel," she said. "Part of me really wanted to go look and see it, but part of me was worrying about my friends and family."

Soon enough though, Verbal said, she realized that the threat was real.

"The principal came on the intercom and told us that the tornado had just touched down in Hudson Mills," she said. "That's when I started to get worried."

Verbal's family members were the first people she contacted. Her brother was at baseball practice, but she quickly called him and her father to make sure that they were OK.

"I was supposed to pick my brother up from baseball," she said. "I didn't know how long he would be at practice before I was allowed to pick him up."

Once the tornado had passed, she went home and found her that her house was alright. However, she has been busy ever since.

"Although my house wasn't hit, I have a lot of friends whose houses were damaged," Verbal said. "I've been doing a lot of volunteer work to help rebuild Dexter."

I was at home

Sophomore Jake Kilian was at his home in Horseshoe Bend.

"I was doing my homework when my mom called and told me that a big storm was coming towards Dexter," he said. "I turned the TV on and saw on the news that there was a tornado warning, but then the power went out."

He called his parents then went down to the basement

to wait out the storm in the dark.

"Right after I went down to the basement, I heard the sound of the tornado," Kilian said. "I could hear things crashing around outside my house, and the tornado was roaring really loudly. I was kind of freaking out, and I kept hoping that everyone would be OK."

According to him, nobody was seriously injured. However, his house and many of his neighbors' houses suffered damaged, according to Kilian.

"My roof has some water damage, and my backyard has a lot of trees knocked down," he said. "My neighborhood basically had all of its trees ripped out of the ground."

He also said his neighborhood will need a lot of help getting back to normal.

"I've been spending all of my free time rebuilding and repairing my neighborhood," he said. "I don't mind it, though, because I know that we have a lot of work that needs to be done."

I was playing outside

Freshman Luke Bazick was outside his home in Huron Farms.

"I was outside playing soccer with my friends when I heard the tornado siren go off," he said. "Of course, it's gone off before and nothing happened then, so I wasn't worried."

However, he decided to go inside just in case. When he got in the house, he said his mother was watching the weather on TV, and she told him to go down to the basement because the severity of the storm made her anxious.

"My family sat in my basement for about half an hour before we heard anything happening outside," he said.

The tornado could soon be heard overhead, according to Bazick.

"We could hear a sound like a freight train right above us," he said. "It sounded like it was in the house. We could also hear all of our windows getting blown in, and the whole house was shaking. My ears started popping because of the air pressure. I was terrified, and I didn't say a word to my family. I just sat there listening to the tornado right above us."

His family and friends came out of the experience unscathed, and Bazick also said he learned a lot from the experience.

"I'm never taking tornado warnings lightly any-

more," he said. "And if another one hits, I know what to do now."

His house, as well as many others in his neighborhood, was damaged by the tornado.

"We had to move houses because of the destruction in our house," he said. "We won't be able to move back for two months."

But Bazick said he's grateful for the little things.

"Right now, I'm just thankful that no one was injured," he said. "It was really an eye-opening experience."

I was out on a walk

Mill Creek Middle School physical education teacher Katie Jazwinski and her husband Bob Jazwinski were at their home in Horseshoe Bend.

But before that, they were on a leisurely walk/run with their 4 year old daughter Jessica and 2 year old son Bobby when Jessica randomly got a bloody nose.

The couple and their children cut their outing short and headed back to the home to care for Jessica, and, perhaps, in perfect timing as well.

"Jessie has never gotten a bloody nose before, so it was very strange" Katie said.

Minutes after they reached their home, Bob started grilling outside when he and Katie began seeing trees flying around the neighborhood.

Realizing that this was no ordinary storm, the family headed inside to seek shelter in their master bedroom's walk-in closet since the home was not equipped with a basement.

"We had actually practiced a tornado drill in our house two nights prior to the tornado, so we actually stayed pretty calm considering the circumstances," Katie said. Less than a minute after the family took shelter, the tornado began ripping through their home.

"Bob covered us in clothes, and we sat there huddled in the corner. We could feel the suction from the tornado," Katie said.

After the tornado finally passed, Bob went out to recover all of the children's baby photos before they were further damaged. He came back in the closet and told his family that the roof above the piano was completely gone.

"We are not sure what photos were not recovered," said Katie. "Especially the ones that were placed around the house. We actually found a lot of them buried underneath the rumble. All of the baby and wedding photos were damaged by water, insulation and the roof falling on them, but we at least have them."

Since the destruction of the family's home, the Jazwinski's have been staying at the Holiday Inn Express in Chelsea and will be moving into a rental home over Spring Break.

"We have always believed in God, so we know he definitely put people in the right places at the right time," Bob said. "We still wish that we were far away from Dexter when this took place so we didn't have to experience the house being wrecked right above and around us, but we were in there. We hold each other a little closer and a little longer. We didn't think it was possible, but we have more love and affection towards each other."



Photo Credit: Emily Darrow

A young girl from Huron Farms holds out a piece of hail that fell from the sky during the tornado.



Photo Credit: AJ Korte

This funnel cloud by Crest Court, a subdivision behind Deer Run, eventually headed toward and hit near downtown Dexter.

What happened

Storm carves path of destruction

Nicole Ferguson
Web Editor

A tornado watch was issued around 5 p.m. by the National Weather Service until 6:30 p.m. Thursday March, 15.

Local radio stations like 104.1 Country stopped playing music to alert the public and keep them updated.

Hail 1.8" in diameter showered down.

At 5:17 p.m. the tornado touched down near North Territorial and Dexter Townhall Roads. At this time, it was classified as a EF-1 tornado on the Enhanced Fujita Scale, meaning it had winds of about 100 mph.

Next, the tornado, reportedly 800 feet wide, traveled down Dexter-Pinckney Road and hit Horseshoe Bend Dr. in Carriage Hills, uprooting numerous trees and causing structural damage. At this time the tornado was a EF-2 with winds of around 120 mph.

Tornadoes in the United States usually travel from Southeast to Northeast. This tornado, how-

ever, traveled 7.2 miles through Dexter in the opposite fashion, from Northwest to Southeast.

Moving Southeast, the tornado intensified to a EF-3 at 5:31 p.m. with winds of around 135 mph

The tornado was an EF-1 at crossed over Huron River Drive, but it intensified again to an EF-3 as it touched down in Huron Farms.

The tornado damaged about 200 homes and destroyed at least 20.

There was much more natural destruction than structural. In Horseshoe Bend, mostly trees were destroyed.

In Huron Farms mostly homes were damaged or destroyed.

About 2,000 DTE customers were left without power after the tornado.

The Dexter Township Board allocated \$200,000 for the clean-up of natural debris, and Washtenaw County approved a resolution allocating up to \$500,000 for tornado emergency services and clean-up.

No one was hurt or seriously injured during the storm.

"I'd like to say thanks to all of the people who came out and helped. There were so many that there were lines to do work. Thanks to all the football lacrosse players. You helped out so much that I can never repay you all," junior Eddie Hafner

Hafner lives on the Huron River right next to the Dexter Mill. When the tornado hit, it tore down 28 trees and ripped off his roof and sent the top of the Mill into the Hafner's yard.

Tornado path

5:17 p.m.

The tornado touched down just northeast of the intersection of N. Territorial and Dexter Townhall Road.

The tornado moved southeast and produced EF-1 damage limited to uprooted and snapped trees as well as minor roof damage. Winds reached an estimated

100 mph



Photo Credit: Charlotte Morrill

The tornado strengthened as it hit the Horseshoe Bend subdivision, causing structural damage to the outside of homes with winds at an estimated

120 mph

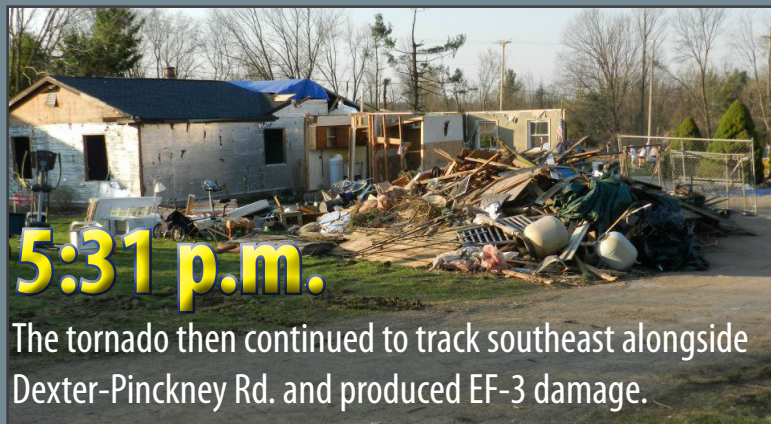


Photo Credit: Kevin Dombkowski

5:31 p.m.

The tornado then continued to track southeast alongside Dexter-Pinckney Rd. and produced EF-3 damage.

The tornado destroyed one home northwest of Dexter. It then made a left turn and paralleled Huron River Dr. producing EF-2 damage on the north side of Dexter with winds at an estimated

135-140 mph



Photo Credit: Emily Darrow

The tornado then produced EF-3 damage again in the Huron Farms subdivision. Several homes were destroyed by winds of an estimated

135-140 mph

5:52 p.m.

The tornado then weakened as it moved southeast and lifted near the intersection of Zeeb and Ann Arbor-Dexter Road.