

Council Bluffs,
Omaha also hit
by tornadoes

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Friday's
tornado
leaves path of
destruction

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WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

Tuesday, April 30, 2024

nonpareilonline.com

‘HEARTBREAKING’

MINDEN RECOVERING FROM TORNADO HIT



JOE SHEARER PHOTOS, THE NONPAREIL

Extensive storm damage is seen in Minden Saturday afternoon after a tornado tore through the town on Friday.

Community devastated by one of several tornadoes in area

ANDREW SMITH
Council Bluffs Nonpareil

Tornadoes left destruction in their path Friday, leaving Pottawattamie County in a state of emergency and devastating the community of Minden.

Access to Minden remained largely closed to nonresidents Monday, and about half the community was without shelter Friday. The entire city was without power and natural gas. A curfew between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. was put into effect in the community.

Gov. Kim Reynolds immediately issued a disaster proclamation, and Minden declared its own state of emergency.

Relief and cleanup efforts have since begun, although scattered thunderstorms are possible later this week, with the National Weather Service office in Valley, Nebraska, saying Monday the threat of severe storms was uncertain.

One Minden resident died as a result of injuries sustained in the storm, which

was the only known fatality in the region. A handful of other injuries have been reported to Pottawattamie County officials, but they were not life-threatening. One emergency responder was treated for injuries at a hospital and released.

“It’s heartbreaking to see these people who have lost houses, cars, essentially their life until they have to rebuild it,” Jeff Theulen, chief deputy of the Pottawattamie County Sheriff’s Office, said at a late Friday briefing.

Doug Reed, director of the Pottawattamie County Emergency Management Agency, estimated that 180 houses in the community had been impacted, with about 40% of them destroyed.

Roads into to Minden were blocked by Pottawattamie County deputies, limiting entrance to first responders, residents and cleanup crews by the time The Nonpareil arrived on scene Friday night. On

Please see **MINDEN**, Page A2



Extensive storm damage is seen in Minden Saturday afternoon after a tornado tore through the town on Friday..

Minden tornado kills 1

KEVIN COLE
Omaha World-Herald

A 63-year-old Minden man died Saturday in an area hospital as the result of injuries he received in the tornado.

A relative said Monday that Nicholas Ring died Saturday. He was taken to the Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha after being trapped in his basement when his family’s home was struck by the tornado.

Ring’s wife, Valerie, suffered a broken ankle, according to her cousin, Pam Santage of Royal. The Ring home was one of approximately 80 that was destroyed in the town of 600 people in northern Pottawattamie County.

Santage asked for prayers for the Rings and their two adult sons. Three other Minden residents were injured in the storm but all of them were treated and released.

Ring is the only known fatality from a severe storm outbreak in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska. About three dozen tornado injuries had been reported over the weekend.

COMMENTARY

We are all 712 strong

I had never seen anything like it before. Period.

This weekend was a laboring one, physically and mentally for hundreds of people, perhaps even thousands. From Elkhorn to Crescent, from Council Bluffs to Minden, Friday, April 26, 2024, will be remembered for years to come.

This past weekend, I returned to my old hometown of Minden.

A town in which my two brothers and I were raised. We moved in when I was just 4 years old. After just celebrating my 31st birthday earlier this month, my parents and many friends and former high school classmates still call it home. To say that there are a lot of memories in Minden would be selling it short.

It’s funny how it sometimes takes a disaster like this to make you realize how many memories you still remember, but as I drove through Minden for the first time Saturday morning, it just hit.

Though I initially thought of going to my family Friday night, it was later decided that my wife and I would wait till the next morning as — with power lines and all sorts of debris on the road — it was not safe to enter yet, hence part of the reason why state troopers were blocking all entrances to town.

I saw plenty of drone pictures and videos of what the town looked like Friday night. Though seeing it all digitally was incredible on its own, it did not even begin to prepare me for the real deal.

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VIEW: For video and additional photos, point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link. **NEWSVU**

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Weather

T-storms
High 82 • Low 51
FORECAST • A8



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Police investigating deaths of 2 men

KEVIN COLE
Omaha World-Herald

Council Bluffs police said Sunday that officers are investigating after two Omaha men were found dead on the west side of the city.

Police and fire department medics were called to the 2100 block of South 29th Street about 12:20 a.m. for a report of a man down. First responders located Deonte Ivory, 36, deceased on the roadway just north of the Horseshoe Council Bluffs Casino.

Shortly after 7 a.m., police and medics were called to the entrance of the Western Trails

Historic Center, 3434 Richard Downing Ave., about 2½ miles south of where Ivory had been found. Someone walking their dog found the body of Michael Anderson, 25, who was pronounced dead at the scene.

Autopsies will be performed on both men. Police said detectives are investigating the circumstances of both deaths, including whether they are related.

Anyone with information regarding these incidents is urged to contact the Council Bluffs Police Department's Criminal Investigations Division at 712-328-4728 or Council Bluffs Crime Stoppers at 712-328-7867.

Relief efforts aim to assist tornado victims

SCOTT STEWART
Council Bluffs Nonpareil

Following Friday's devastation in Minden and elsewhere in southwest Iowa, along with the greater Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area, cleanup and recovery are well underway.

The Red Cross has been mobilizing disaster volunteers, who are distributing relief supplies and meal kits over the days ahead, according to a news release.

Red Cross volunteers continue to assess the residential damage in affected communities, the release states. Residents affected by the storms can receive assistance by calling 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767).

For those wanting to support disaster survivors, Pottawattamie County Emergency Management is encouraging monetary dona-

tions, which allows responders to provide exactly what's needed to those seeking assistance.

Donations can be made to the Southwest Iowa Emergency Relief Fund to support areas impacted throughout the region at givewest-erniowa.org. A special fund dedicated to the community of Minden is in the process of being created.

Donations to the fund will support Iowa nonprofit partners, communities, disaster relief organizations and public health organizations who are on the front line of disaster relief efforts, according to the Community Foundation for Western Iowa.

SHARE Iowa, an initiative of the foundation, offers a resource to access information on how you can assist our communities through relief efforts. SHARE Iowa will update its resource website as information

is submitted at sharegoodiowa.org/tornado.

Relief items for the Minden and east Pottawattamie County communities were being collected at the Neola Area Community Center. Relief items for the Crescent community were being collected at the Crescent fire barn.

The United Way of the Midlands also has set up the Nebraska & Iowa Tornado Relief Fund to help those with displaced families and destroyed homes. Donate to the fund by visiting unitedwaymidlands.org/tornadorelief, texting TORNADO24 to 41444, or calling 402-522-7962.

The United Way says 100% of donations will be directed to nonprofit programs meeting people's need for emergency shelter and essential needs, such as food and clothing, according to a news release.

Minden

From A1

Saturday, Minden Fire and Rescue asked that volunteers stay away until things were more secure and safe. A news media tour was provided on Monday.

After the storm Friday, residents were asked to evacuate after the disaster due to safety concerns. A yellow school bus was seen by The Nonpareil entering the town to shuttle residents to a safe location. A deputy cited the risk of the area having no power, water or gas.

Outside the town, friends and family parked their cars and called their loved ones.

After waiting for over 90 minutes outside the barriers, Council Bluffs residents Tina and Victor Dominguez gave up trying to pick up Tina's sister, who lives in Minden.

"They had a tree through their roof and windows shattered," Tina said. "They did go to the basement though. She said, 'I'm good, I got my wine, I'm good!'"

After a phone call, the Dominguez's told The Nonpareil that their relative wasn't evacuating her home despite pleas from a law enforcement officer. She also believed her car to be totaled.

The Red Cross established two shelters in the county that were not needed as displaced residents were able to arrange overnight accommodations, according to Pottawattamie County Emergency Management.

A Salvation Army-Omaha disaster-relief team brought 100 meals Sunday to recovery workers, volunteers and first responders in Minden. The group will continue this multi-community disaster-relief operation for as long as it is needed, officials said.

On Friday night at the Minden United Church of



ANDREW SMITH, THE NONPAREIL

People come up the road from Minden, Iowa. The town's entrance was blocked off by the Pottawattamie County Sheriff's Office after the town suffered major tornado damage on April 26, 2024.



JOE SHEARER, THE NONPAREIL

Traffic moves in and out of Minden via Tamarack Road Saturday afternoon as residents, volunteers and other crews work to clean up following a tornado in the area on Friday, April 26, 2024.

Christ, which survived the storm and has become a community hub of help and

support, there were plans to take 4-wheel-drive vehicles out to devastated parts of

town to bring meals to those who need them, pastor Eric Biehl said.

"A lot of people are just kind of in shock," Biehl said.

"It's all overwhelming now."

Tammy Pavich, who stores equipment on the west edge of town, said she "kind of breathed a sigh of relief" after the first round of tornadoes moved through Omaha. Then, she recalled, the storm "hit Minden dead-on."

Todd Lehan, a lifelong resident of the town, said he took shelter in a windowless basement.

"It sounded like a vacuum cleaner on top of your house," Lehan recalled.

Reed credited early warnings from the weather service, preparedness on the part of emergency responders and the attentiveness of residents with keeping the human toll low.

"We're not surprised," he said. "We're thankful."

Under blue skies on Saturday morning, Tory Crozier took stock of the farm she

shares with her husband, Jared, and their five children, about a mile south of Minden.

The large shed that housed a number of vehicles — and Jared's man cave — was destroyed. The greenhouse where Crozier had been raising plants she hoped to sell was damaged. The foundation of the family's home was tilted, the north wall detached.

"We don't know if the house is salvageable," Tory Crozier said. "I'm assuming not."

Still, three dozen volunteers using a fleet of heavy equipment already was swarming the farm to help clean up the wreckage.

Crozier was thankful that both her family and most of her livestock were OK.

Her family was in the basement when the storm hit. They felt pressure in their heads and their ears popped. The pressure left her with a headache.

As soon as the storm passed, friends, family and neighbors began arriving. They couldn't do much Friday night, but they started again right away Saturday.

The family lost about half their chickens. But the cows, horses and goats were fine. A calf, picked up by the storm and flung into a fence, was injured but was expected to survive.

"That was a scary thing, because I didn't want any of them to die," she said.

Crozier said she probably will stay with her sister for now. But area residents already had begun offering up campers and homes on Facebook as options for displaced residents.

"That's the great part about a small town, is you can offer that and trust people," she said.

Nonpareil managing editor Scott Stewart contributed to this report, which also contains material from The Associated Press and the Omaha World-Herald.

THE DAILY
NONPAREIL

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Council Bluffs, IA 51503

IDENTIFICATION

The Daily Nonpareil (ISSN: 1046-1833), a Lee Enterprises Newspaper, is published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 300 W BROADWAY STE 712, COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA 51503. Periodicals Postage Paid at Council Bluffs, IA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PO BOX 2795, MECHANICSVILLE, VA 23116.

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