

## Butler County's Tornadic Event June 15, 2009

WOW! What an adrenaline rush June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009 developed into. I usually follow my gut instinct so for 2 days I knew something was going to happen somewhere! If I had only known the weather would play out like it did I may have decided to take vacation like my boss is doing!!! Seriously though, this is the busiest, most exciting, and wildest event I have worked in my 8 years with Emergency Management!



Approximately 5 p.m. I decided to put out a weather broadcast on the public service radio updating the potential for severe weather later in the evening, before I headed home to grab a bite to eat with the family. Within a few minutes of finishing the broadcast, cells started forming in the Southwest corner of Butler County.

(picture courtesy of Laury Shuetz's nephew, Shane Graves)  
5693 SE Bluestem Rd, Looking NE towards Rosalia

The National Weather Service Office (NWS), Wichita advised us conditions were favorable for tornadic activity. With the potential lurking, the EOC activated and spotters in the Rose Hill, Douglass, Leon and Augusta area were alerted to the developing weather situation.

As the storm passed through Rose Hill, it dropped quarter sized hail. This storm continued a northward track and golf ball sized hail was deposited in the areas of Hwy 54 and Santa Fe Lake. Another storm developed off this one and moved over the Augusta area bringing lots of lower level rotation with no organization.

A couple of EMS folks came over and asked me to step outside to see if there was rotation. Yep, sure enough! LOTS of lower-level rotation trying to organize. Within 5 minutes of that, we received a call into the EOC inquiring if anything was developing in the Augusta area. Unknowingly why, I turned

around in my chair, looked out our east window and spotted the wall cloud!  
The excitement began!

To make a novel shorter, during this severe weather event, Butler County had 2 active tornadic supercells :1 just East of Augusta moving North to El Dorado) and another developing North of Leon, tracking North then eventually moving over to the Rosalia area. A third storm was dropping golf ball sized hail north of El Dorado in the northern portion of the county. Three very active cells working at once.

Tornado touchdowns, albeit brief, were reported just south of El Dorado in the area of 40<sup>th</sup> & Haverhill, North of Leon/Southeast of El Dorado in the area of SE 30<sup>th</sup> & Cole Creek, Hwy 54 & Bluestem, Hwy 54 & Price Rd. area, and 2 miles W of Rosalia. All said done, we are estimating 8 touchdowns in Butler County.

El Dorado was under the gun as the one tornado touched down just South of Frontier El Dorado Refinery. Luckily, it lifted and passed a funnel over the top of the refinery. Fortunately, both this storm and the one just West of Rosalia weakened as they moved through their areas.



(picture courtesy of Augusta Dept. of Public Safety)

Shortly after the tornadic activity finished, another round of severe weather brought high winds and a microburst. The City of Douglass received some broken tree branches and an uprooted tree. A residence 3 miles East of Leon was the victim of a micro downburst. This place lost half of their roof and collapsed some interior walls. Very impressive damage.



When the storms cleared – no injuries were reported and the only major damage report received belonged to the residence east of Leon. Butler County is fortunate to have such a wide support and quality working relationships with emergency response agencies. NWS provided phenomenal support as well. Although we had to overcome some intermittent audio failures and channel interference on our public safety

radios, if storms can “go right”, this event certainly did. We had free flowing/open communications, excellent storm spotter coverage, and the tornadic events lifted before entering communities.

Thank you to everyone who provided storm spotters, relayed information, and provided pictures and video documentation. We appreciate your support and help in protecting the citizens of Butler County.

Here are a few pictures that I have received from the event. You can also go to [www.crh.noaa.gov/ict](http://www.crh.noaa.gov/ict) and click on the story *June 15, 2009 – Widespread Severe Weather* for more pictures and information from NWS.



(Picture courtesy of Donna Farthing's Aunt)  
Looking North out of Leon



(Pictures Courtesy of Butler County Sheriff's Office)  
Northwest of Leon/SE of El Dorado