

Texas, Arkansas Declare Disasters After Tornadoes Tear Through

The governors of Texas and Arkansas declared disasters on Monday in parts of their states hit by tornadoes and floods in a storm series that slammed central states, leaving at least five people dead, injuring more than 50 and reducing buildings to splinters.

A husband and wife were killed near a trailer park in Van, Texas, about 70 miles (115 km) southeast of Dallas, a town of about 2,500 people where scores of homes were shattered. The National Weather Service said an EF3 category tornado packing winds of around 140 mph (225 kph) hit the town.

Near the west Arkansas town of Nashville, a baby girl was pulled from the wreckage of a mobile home where her parents died in a tornado. About 10 people were injured in the state.

"She barely had a scratch on her. It's absolutely a miracle," Howard County coroner John Gray said.

In Van, workers with search dogs scoured the wreckage looking for three adults who are unaccounted for, raising the possibility the death toll will rise.

"This storm spun up real fast and the warning time was extremely limited," Van Zandt County Fire Marshal Chuck Allen said.

Media reported that another person died due to flooding in Corsicana, Texas.

After what was probably the strongest tornado to hit the town in more than 70 years, neighbors sought comfort in front of destroyed houses and residents packed up whatever belongings

they could find as they walked to evacuation shelters.

Van resident Brandi Preston, her husband and two sons pushed a wheel barrel and collected debris from their yard. Rain-soaked pink insulation from nearby damaged houses littered the ground like soggy pieces of cotton candy.

"We were in our hallway and we were holding our hands praying. I know that's the only reason we're OK," said Preston, 35.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster in Van Zandt and six other counties. Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson declared a disaster area in 10 counties.

"Sadly, we've been through this before, and we know how devastating these storms can be," Hutchinson said.

Authorities said 43 people in Texas were taken by ambulance to hospitals with injuries and several more arrived on their own.

Flash flood watches were in effect for large parts of Texas and Oklahoma. A severe thunderstorm watch extended from Kentucky to New York state, the National Weather Service said.

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