

9 a.m. Temp spiked to 97, winds gusted to 62 at height of 'heat burst' storm Monday night in NW Midland

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An unexpected and violent "heat burst" brought a temperature spike to 97 degrees and a wind gust to 62 mph at 11:25 p.m. Monday, the same time power lines were whipped, utility lines snapped and traffic signal poles bent like paper clips in Northwest Midland. Damage seemed largely confined to the intersection of Midland Drive and Loop 250 and roughly a 2-3 block area either side of the intersection.

At the same time the temperature spiked at Midland International, the temperature at Midland Airpark, closer to the center of the damage, jumped to 91.

"What happens with a heat burst," said National Weather Service Meteorologist Eric Platt, "is that a shower or thunderstorm decays very rapidly and when that happens you get rainfall that evaporates which increases the wind that come out of the storm. When that air goes from high levels to the surface very quickly it warms very quickly and that causes the rapid increase in temperature."

The rare weather event usual lasts 1-2 minutes; lingering higher temperatures can often remain. In fact the temps recorded at Midland Air Park continued to rise and reached 93 at midnight. The unusual weather event is most common during the summer months, Platt said.

Oncor spokesman Mike Nieto said Tuesday morning almost 800 residents of Northwest Midland could be without power until "sometime this evening" following Monday night's unexpected and violent windstorm, about 11 p.m.

"We have nearly every available line crew coming in to help," Nieto said. "One of the main things we're fighting this morning is the replacement of the damaged poles. Those polls are 60-70 feet tall, and to replace them we have to dig around the existing infrastructure, water, sewer and fiber optic cable. We might have to hand dig wooden poles. Nieto said 10-11 crews of 3-4 linemen each were working to resolve the outage.

One car was abandoned overnight in the middle of the loop after its tail section slammed into the bridge embankment over Midland Dr. Police spokesman Tina Jauz said an increase in accidents were reported, however there were no injuries.

One Oncor worker called it 'Quite a mess.'

MIDLAND DR., LOOP 250 CLOSED

Loop 250 from Midkiff to Wadley and Midland Drive from Lehigh to Briarwood are expected to remain closed until about Noon today during clean up efforts. Wal-Mart and many other businesses in the corridor were closed and without power early Tuesday morning.

"We've restored service to a majority of the people who were affected," said Nieto, adding that he did not know how many people were without power at the height of the storm. Nieto said for more specific information regarding their power, residents should call the phone number printed on their individual bills.