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Heat Bursts Possible Tonight Across Eastern Oklahoma

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Tulsa - Showers and thunderstorms in eastern Oklahoma tonight could result in a weather phenomenon known as a "heat burst".

As a front nears, conditions in eastern Oklahoma and northwest Arkansas will be similar to that seen in the Wichita area at about 1 a.m. Thursday morning, when a heat burst affected the area, causing the temperature to rise from 85 to 102 in a matter of minutes.



A heat burst often occurs when showers or thunderstorms in a hot environment begin to dissipate, sending a downdraft of hot air toward the surface. It results in evaporation of rain in the downdraft, initially cooling the air.

But, once evaporation is complete, the air begins to warm rapidly. The heat burst occurs when that warmer and drier air reaches the earth's surface.

Most often, heat bursts just result in a rapid rise in temperature and decrease in dew point, but some can cause damage. Temperature rises can be so sudden and drastic that crops can be damaged, as was the case in 1909 in a heat burst in northwestern Oklahoma.

A sudden pressure drop and strong, gusty -- possibly damaging -- winds can also occur, although are rare.



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