

More violent storms kill seven in Arkansas

James Brewer
27 April 2011

Only two weeks after massive storms and tornadoes left 43 dead in a swath that extended from Texas to North Carolina, another series of flash floods and tornadoes killed 7 people in the south central state of Arkansas yesterday.

The small town of Vilonia, in the center of the state, about 30 miles north of the capital, Little Rock, was virtually destroyed by a tornado that witnesses described as half a mile in diameter.

Four people are known dead and an intensive search was organized for 50 to 60 residents yet missing. Vilonia resident Shedon Brock told reporters, "The town's gone."

Rescuers fought to reach isolated areas in Vilonia's Garland County cut off by the flooding. National Guard troops were moved in to help clear snapped utility poles and uprooted trees.

Garland County emergency management coordinator Joy Sanders, told the press, "It's difficult this early on to find out what really has happened. . . . It looks like we got run over three or four times."

The National Weather Service (NSW) sent survey teams to Vilonia to investigate how much of the damage was caused by tornadoes. Meteorologist John Robinson said, "It wouldn't surprise me if we were to end up with a count of 10 or 12 tornadoes by the time all the surveys are completed."

Three of Monday's casualties were killed on highways hit by violent flooding along War Eagle Creek in the northwestern part of the state. Thirty-eight-year-old Consuelo Santillano was killed when her Honda Odyssey stalled and was swept away from Highway 265. Her 11-year-old son, who was in the car at the time, survived. An elderly man and woman were found after their car was swept away from Highway 23.

The National Weather Service warns on its web site that almost half of flash flood deaths are auto-related. When rapidly moving water rises above 2 feet on the

roadways, cars are easily carried away with passengers still inside.

A total of 50 to 80 homes were destroyed in Arkansas from the floods and tornadoes. Almost 67,000 residents were left without electricity.

Little Rock Air Force Base in Jacksonville was hit by a tornado, causing damage to 16 homes and partially taking out power on the base.

These latest deaths bring the death toll for Arkansas to 14 this month.

The governors of both Arkansas and Kentucky have declared states of emergency as residents across the region brace for further flooding and tornadoes. In Kentucky, thousands have lost power. Winds reported over 100 miles per hour, knocked down trees and power lines.

About 1,000 residents in Missouri have been evacuated in the city of Poplar Bluffs, near where the Black River is overflowing its levee in approximately 30 different places. Water rescues were carried out for 59 people. The town of 17,000 residents is about 130 miles south of St. Louis.

The US Army Corps of Engineers is considering intentionally breaching the Birds Point levee, just downriver of the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi Rivers, in a desperate attempt to relieve some of the flow of floodwaters. Missouri Governor Jay Nixon is opposed to the plan, which will flood 130,000 acres of farmland.

The Mississippi River drainage basin is the third largest in the world, after the Amazon and Congo Rivers. The area affected by such violent storms is therefore vast. It was after the flood of 1927, in which 600 people died and cities, farms and towns were laid waste, that the Flood Control Act of 1928 authorized the Mississippi River and Tributaries Act, the country's first flood-control system.

The levees that are breaching today are from

tributaries of the Mississippi, like the Black River in Missouri. More violent storms and tornadoes are predicted for today and tomorrow.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact