

Six killed, including two children, as dozens of tornadoes strike Tennessee

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A series of two dozen tornadoes struck middle Tennessee with destructive force late Saturday killing six people in the Nashville area, including two children. News reports said as many as 83 people were taken to local hospitals while nine were transported to Vanderbilt University Medical Center on Sunday in critical, unstable condition.

The tornadoes were part of a massive storm system that stretched from Florida to Maine and covered the entire Atlantic coast of the US. The severe thunderstorms, heavy rainfall and high winds went from the southeast to the northwest on Sunday with many areas facing a flood risk.

In Clarksville, fifty miles northwest of Nashville, officials confirmed the death of three people. Clarksville Fire Chief Freddie Montgomery told CBS News that teams, including special operations crews, were carrying out secondary searches in the area.

The National Weather Service reported that Clarksville was hit by an EF-3 tornado with peak winds of up to 150 miles per. The tornado was 600 yards wide and was on the ground for 43 miles, passing through three counties in Tennessee and Kentucky.

Ten-year-old Arlan Coty was killed when the tornado struck his house on Henry Place Boulevard. The boy's mother, Katherine Burnham, said in a Facebook post that their home was directly in the path of the tornado and Arlan did not make it out in time. Her daughter, Ella, was injured and taken to a local hospital, where she was treated and released with minor injuries.

A GoFundMe account set up by the employer of Arlan's father Kyle Burnham had raised \$144,000 by Monday afternoon to support the family. Meanwhile, more than 50 employees and family members came to the area to help comb through the destruction to search for family mementos.

Clarksville-area authorities identified the other two victims as Donna Allen, 59, from Florida, and Stephen Kwaah Hayes, 34, from Clarksville.

At least one structural fire was still burning on Sunday, according to Chief Montgomery. He said the department received, "a lot of other medical calls." He added that parts of the city sustained different levels of damage, with some areas "totally destroyed."

In Madison, a neighborhood in the northeastern part of Nashville, three victims of a tornado were identified as 37-year-old Joseph Dalton, 31-year-old Floridema Gabriel Perez and her son, 2-year-old Anthony Elmer Mendez.

Metro Nashville Police Department reported that Joseph Dalton was inside his mobile home on Nesbitt Lane when the storm rolled it on top of the Perez' home. The National Weather Service said Madison was hit by an EF-2 tornado with 120-125 mph peak winds and a path width of 400 yards.

As of Sunday, more the 50,000 people were without power in Tennessee. According to Joe Pitts, mayor of Clarksville, it may take a couple of weeks for power to be fully restored.

Residents of both areas described how they were taken by surprise by the storms and there was not enough time to respond. The storms were moving so quickly that the roar of the winds came and went in a matter of seconds leaving enormous destruction in their wake.

The *New York Times* interviewed Eric Dzidotor on Sunday afternoon as he visited the piles of debris in Clarksville where his home was. The *Times* reported, "Mr. Dzidotor said he had moved into the house two years ago with his wife, their three children, his mother in-law and his brother in-law. His mother-in-law was now in the hospital with injuries she suffered during the

storm, he said. His brother-in-law, who was 26, did not survive.”

Dzidotor, said the storm lifted him from the upstairs of his house to his neighbors’ yard. “It was like falling down from an elevator,” Dzidotor said. The *Times* continued, “When he landed on the ground and the rain began to pour down, he called for his family. He pulled his daughters, ages 2, 4 and 17, from their collapsed house, one of them with an injured leg, before trying unsuccessfully to rescue his brother-in-law.”

Meteorologists have pointed out the fact that this is the third consecutive December with terrifying and deadly tornado outbreaks. While tornadoes can happen any month of the year in the US, researchers have anticipated that as the climate warms due to capitalist-induced climate change, an increasing number of tornadoes may strike during cooler months of the year.

As NBC News reported on Monday, “Strong and changing winds at different heights in the atmosphere, also known as wind shear, were a key ingredient that fueled this weekend’s tornado outbreak, promoting ‘spin’ in the atmosphere to form tornadoes. That combined with warmer-than-average temperatures—as much as 20 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than average in some areas—to create tornado conditions.”

A study published in 2021 by the Bureau of Meteorological Society found that due to the warming atmosphere, tornado-favorable environments during the winter months have increased across the southern United States.

In 2021, a tornado outbreak hit Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee and Kentucky and spanned December 10 and 11. One tornado reached a level of EF4 and struck Mayfield, Kentucky with 190 miles per hour sustained winds.

In December 2022, more than 50 tornadoes ripped through Louisiana from December 13 to December 15. A damaging EF2 tornado hit New Orleans on December 14 and the most powerful of that outbreak was an EF3 which struck Union Parish, near the town of Farmerville.



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