

Tornadoes rip through several US states, leaving trail of destruction and at least 28 dead

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Over the last 48 hours violent storms, including dozens of tornadoes, have ripped through the central and southern United States, leaving a trail of destruction and claiming the lives of at least 28 people in Kentucky, Missouri and Virginia. Tornadoes have been spotted in nearly a dozen states including Indiana and Wisconsin.

Videos shared from across the US show cars overturning, roofs being ripped off and massive tornadoes demolishing entire neighborhoods, apartment buildings and worksites.

On Friday, the National Weather Service (NWS) issued its first ever “Dust Storm Warning” for the city of Chicago after the state, for the second time in two years, was enveloped in a massive dust storm. While thankfully not as deadly as the May 1, 2023 storm, which led to 72-car pileup resulting in 8 deaths, this most recent storm forced road closures and led to at least one multi-vehicle accident.

As of this writing, severe weather warnings are still in effect for several states throughout Monday, including southeastern Colorado, western Nebraska, northern Texas, western Oklahoma and Kansas. Videos posted on social media Sunday show multiple tornadoes touching down in Barrett, Colorado and just east of Denver.

Severe hail and tornadoes were visible from the Denver International Airport.

The thunderstorms and deadly tornadoes began on Friday. While the NWS warned of possible severe weather throughout the region on Thursday, its ability collect weather data and turn it into accurate and timely warnings has been severely damaged due to spending cuts imposed by Elon Musk’s misnamed “Department

of Government Efficiency” (DOGE).

Cuts imposed by the world’s richest man in order to help pay for tax cuts for the ultra-wealthy and a \$1 trillion military budget have led to a gutting of the NWS, and with it the capacity to provide urgent warnings of extreme weather events.

Since Trump’s inauguration, nearly 600 people in the agency out of 4,000 have left, mainly through layoffs and retirements. DOGE-imposed cuts have also reduced the capacity of weather stations to conduct twice-daily weather balloon launches, used to collect the data that powers forecasting models.

Normally the 122 weather forecasting offices spread throughout the United States operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. “For most of the last half century NWS has been a 24/7 operation—not anymore,” Tom Fahy, legislative director of the National Weather Service Employees Organization (NWSEO), told the *New York Times* in an article published just before the storms hit.

Fahy told the *Times* that due to cuts ordered by DOGE, four weather stations were no longer operating on a 24-hour schedule, including offices in Sacramento and Hanford, California; Goodland, Kansas; and the station in Jackson, Kentucky that was directly in line with one of the tornadoes that touched down Friday evening.

Several powerful EF3 (Enhanced Fujita Scale) and EF2 tornadoes, with wind speeds of 111-165 miles per hour (179 -265 kilometers per hour), were reported in Kentucky Friday night and Saturday morning. Kentucky is the state with most confirmed deaths so far from the storms.

Governor Andy Beshear, a Democrat, confirmed that at least 19 people had died in Kentucky, with significant destruction reported in London and Somerset. Major damage was also reported at the London-Corbin Airport, including the destruction of the local medical helicopter, along with several collector planes flipped over or damaged. Multiple buildings were also demolished.

In an interview with WYMT Mountain News, Joshua Hammons, a night worker at the London-Corbin Airport, said a friend watching him on security camera footage warned him to get inside just before the tornado touched down.

“Houses are just gone,” Hammons told the outlet. “Half of the airport, just gone.” Hammons said he spent all day Saturday using a chainsaw to cut through downed trees to look for survivors in the debris. “There ain’t no words for it,” he said. “It’s like a warzone.”

While the Jackson, Kentucky weather station was able to issue 11 tornado warnings, Fahy told the *Times* this was only possible due to an “all hands on deck scramble” which allowed the office to remain open through the night. Fahy warned that four additional stations are also in danger of losing overnight staffing: Cheyenne, Wyoming; Marquette, Michigan; Pendleton, Oregon; and Fairbanks, Alaska.

In Baltimore, Maryland, where an EF1 tornado was reported, workers at the Amazon warehouse in Baltimore (BWI5) reported that several vehicles in the employee parking lot were damaged and overturned by the storm.

“We have tons of overturned trucks in the parking lot. Nobody hurt, just a lot of semis messed up and other cars,” a worker at BWI5 told a WSWS reporter. “I lived in the city for 40 years and never experienced nothing like that before. Until now.”

In a photo shared with the WSWS by a worker at the facility, a semi-trailer is seen overturned in the parking lot.

This is the second time in the last seven years a tornado has impacted the Baltimore Amazon facility. In 2018, two workers, Andrew Lindsey, 54, and Israel Espana Argote, 37, were killed at the facility when the roof partially collapsed during a storm. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) declined to fine or hold Amazon liable for the

workers’ deaths.

This is not out of the ordinary in capitalist America, where workers are routinely treated as less than human. Following a roof collapse during a storm in Edwardsville, Illinois in 2021 that resulted in six fatalities, OSHA again declined to fine Amazon, instead issuing a less than toothless “Hazard Alert Letter.”

Thousands of people have been left homeless in the St. Louis-area in Missouri after a single EF3 tornado carved a path through the region that led to dozens of injuries, five deaths and some \$1 billion in damages.

St. Louis Mayor Cara Spencer imposed a curfew for the hardest hit areas Saturday night. As of this writing, over 5,000 homes were reported damaged or destroyed and some 50,000 customers in St. Louis were still without power.

In neighboring Scott County, Missouri, a separate smaller tornado ripped through the county, leaving two dead and destroying multiple homes.

In Fairfax County in northern Virginia at least two people are dead due to falling trees from the storms. Both fatalities, including that of a 27-year-old Alexandria resident, occurred when a tree fell onto their cars.



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