



National Park Service
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Death Valley National Park
PO Box 579
Death Valley, California 92328

760786-3200
www.nps.gov/deva

Death Valley National Park News Release

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Contact: Linda Slater, 760 786-3279, Linda_Slater@nps.gov

High winds cause extensive damage to buildings and vehicles

DEATH VALLEY, CALIF.—A powerful storm system brought heavy rains and wind to Death Valley National Park. Extremely high winds in the Cow Creek administrative area blew the roof off of a historic office building dating back to the Civilian Conservation Corps era of the 1930s. Windows were blown out of four vehicles belonging to staff living at Cow Creek. Roofs of five other buildings at Stovepipe Wells were also damaged.

Although the wind was extremely strong, it didn't last long. Park Superintendent Mike Reynolds estimated wind speeds at up to 100 miles per hour, but said the high winds lasted for only about ten minutes. Superintendent Reynolds observed the storm from the porch of an office building in Cow Creek. "Lightning strikes were coming fast and furious, when a sudden micro-burst of wind swept through Cow Creek," said Reynolds. "We ducked behind the porch pillars to protect ourselves from the wind, and then saw dumpsters blowing down the road." After the winds died down, rangers discovered the missing roof and covered up computers and office equipment to protect them from the rain.

"The atmosphere during this storm was very dry below the storm cell," said National Weather Service Meteorologist Alex Boothe. "Microbursts occur when rain falls into very dry air causing evaporational cooling. The cooled air sinks rapidly and spreads in all directions as it hits the ground."

As the winds blew and heavy rains fell, rangers were called to the Inn at Death Valley to respond to a tree fire—a palm tree had been struck by lightning and was smoldering in the crown. Rangers were able to quickly extinguish the fire burning in the garden area west of the Inn.

North Highway/Scotty's Castle Road, Titus Canyon Road, and Mesquite Campground are closed. All other roads and facilities are open.



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