

Daylight shows extent of twister's wrath across East Dunklin, Jackson streets

Extent of tornado's wrath across East Dunklin, Jackson streets became evident at dawn's light

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- By Phillip Sitter phillip@newstribune.com

Alonzo Crews, who has lived on the 800 block of Jackson Street for about nine years, said in daylight Thursday morning he's thankful "my car is the only thing that got tore up" by the tornado that struck Jefferson City late Wednesday night.

"I got out luckier than some people," Crews said.

A glance around his neighborhood underscored that statement.

The EF-3 tornado that hit Jefferson City ripped through the densely built neighborhood of homes around East Dunklin and Jackson streets, also hitting Simonsen 9th Grade Center on East Miller Street.

Dozens of homes all around the neighborhood were missing pieces of walls and roofs Thursday morning. A couple homes had almost collapsed. Snapped and uprooted trees and broken utility poles and lines blocked streets.

Crews' Cadillac sedan that he's had about five or six years and that he tries to keep clean had been parked on Jackson Street. It now has a smashed-in back window, a hole in the rear bumper and large dents on the rear passenger side door — all likely caused by airborne debris during the storm.

"It is what it is," Crews said. He said he was going to call his insurance company, and expected the damage would total \$2,000\$3,000.

Meanwhile, his landlord was inspecting the roof of his residence.

Crews said all his family and friends in town made it through the storm unharmed.

There are also several public school buildings in and around Crews' neighborhood, and several of them sustained damage — Simonsen most severely.

A visual inspection of the exterior of Simonsen — which was planned to no longer serve high school freshmen after this school year because of the planned opening of Capital City High School this fall — showed the 81-year-old school had many broken windows and had lost large sections of its roof.

Jason Hoffman, Jefferson City Public Schools chief financial and operating officer, was standing outside Simonsen when a News Tribune reporter spoke with him Thursday. He said the district would have final word today on where summer school would be held for grades 10-12.

Simonsen had been the planned location for those students to attend summer school, starting next week after the Memorial Day holiday.

JCPS' last day of school was Wednesday. Hoffman also said the district had moved the Chromebooks at Simonsen out of the building, and other items were moved to Lewis and Clark Middle School.

Other JCPS buildings were damaged by the tornado, but Simonsen appeared to be the worst affected.

The schools around Jefferson City High School sustained some damage, though the high school itself did not — at least per the early morning tour of the hallways and roof that JCPS Superintendent Larry Linthacum; Frank Underwood, director of facilities and transportation, safety and security coordinator; and maintenance supervisor John Moon took.

Underwood described the damage other nearby JCPS buildings sustained:

- Nichols Career Center had a couple of windows broken, and a gas line had been broken on the roof when large rooftop units had been blown over.
- The roof of the Adkins Stadium press box was blown off.
- Thorpe Gordon Elementary School had minor roof damage.
- Jefferson City Academic Center had minor penetration of its roof by debris.

Underwood added East Elementary School made it through the storm OK. That school was not listed in an email from JCPS director of communication Ryan Burns that listed the damaged district buildings.

Burns described the damage to Simonsen's roof as "considerable."

The school district's central administrative office on East Dunklin Street was undamaged — except for what Hoffman showed in a photo, of a sliver of wood that had impaled one of the building's windows.

Logan Stark, of Rolla, who came up to volunteer to help clean up after the tornado and was walking around the neighborhood, said seeing the damage brought back memories of the 2011 Joplin tornado.

Stark said he lived about 10 minutes away from Joplin at the time, and he helped after that storm.

“Thank God it’s not as bad,” he said of the damage in Jefferson City.

He said he had helped a woman clear a path through fallen trees Thursday morning to get to her front door, but many other people were waiting for their insurance companies to come and document the damage before cleaning up — more work for today.

Stark added while he had come up from Rolla by himself, he hoped a couple friends would join him today.