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Strong storms pass through SEK

Strong storms moved through southeast Kansas and southwest Missouri on Sunday.

The National Weather Service in Springfield, Mo. reported tornadic activity in storms that passed through Neosho County and Cherokee County early Sunday night.

The storms brought about high winds and rain in Pittsburg and the surrounding area and no injuries were reported.

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Wacky weather combinations hit SEK

By STEPHANIE FARLEY

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After storms rolled across parts of southeast Kansas Sunday evening, with some areas experiencing tornado watches and warnings, residents of Crawford County awoke Monday to a temperature of 39 degrees at 7 a.m. and snow flurries.

Which begs the question: What's up with this weather?

The temperature stayed relatively even throughout Monday, fluctuating between 35-39 degrees during the day. But the contrast lies in Sunday's temperatures and weather: Rain and about 60 degrees at 10 p.m. The weather southeast Kansas is experiencing may be rare but according to one National Weather Service meteorologist, it's not surprising.

Basically what's been happening, said Doug Cramer, a National Weather Service meteorologist, is a powerful storm system came out of the Rockies and moved across Kansas and the Central Plains. As it moved across the state, the system drew up a lot of warmth and moisture from the Gulf of Mexico.

For this time of year, Sunday's temperatures were warm and the atmosphere extremely moist. And whenever those two conditions come together in the months of November, December, January or February, and some type of storm system interacts with that, then tornadoes and severe weather will happen, Cramer said.

"It's very unusual to get that type of moisture and that type of warmth to provide that instability for thunderstorms during the cold season," Cramer said. "So when you get that over the cold season, the ingredients are always there for severe weather and tornadoes because those wind fields are very strong this time of year."

On the flip side for Monday's weather, Cramer said, it got really cold as opposed to Sunday's severe weather. A cold front also came through Sunday night with the storm system, he said, so the front changed the wind direction to the northwest and there was a lot of cold air bottled up across the high plains of South Dakota, western Nebraska and eastern Wyoming.

"And that's the air that you're feeling right now," Cramer said.

The colder temperatures are a result of that entire air mass moving overnight across Nebraska and Kansas and spreading across Pittsburg. Cramer said there was still sufficient moisture and "lift," despite the cold front, to get snow flurries.

In order to get any type of precipitation, Cramer said, "lift" is needed because the atmosphere is actually lifted to provide rain, snow, thunderstorms and other types of precipitation.

But is this type of weather normal in November?

"I think this time of year, these types of things can happen," Cramer said. "Do they happen frequently? Not really."

Southwest Missouri typically has a secondary tornado season in November, Cramer said, so they're not unusual - the primary season is spring. Weather like this doesn't happen often, he said, but it's not surprising that it did.

Cramer used Dec. 17, 2002, as an example. On that day a series of tornadoes swept across Cherokee County and into southwest Missouri, causing several fatalities. It's important for people to remember, he said, that in southeast Kansas and southwest Missouri, tornadoes can happen at any time of the year.

What was unusual, Cramer said, was the strong, environmental wind following the storms. The storm system was powerful enough to create wind gusts in excess of 65 mph across the Four State area, he said.

The Crawford County Sheriff's Office had reports of downed power lines and tree limbs throughout the county.

Safety Tips for Severe Weather:

* Have disaster supplies on hand: Flashlight with extra batteries; first aid kit; essential medicines; emergency food and water; non-electric can opener; portable, battery-operated radio with extra batteries; cash and credit cards; and sturdy shoes.

* If home at time of warning: Go to storm cellar, interior room, basement or lowest level of building; if no basement, go to inner hallway or small, inner room without windows, such as a bathroom or closet; stay away from corners of rooms because they tend to attract debris; use arms to protect head and neck.

* If in a mobile home or car: Get out and find other shelter. Don't attempt to out-drive the tornado.

* If at work or school: Go to basement or inside hallway at lowest level; avoid places with wide-spanned roofs like auditoriums, cafeterias, large hallways or shopping malls; get under piece of sturdy furniture and hold on to it.

* If outdoors: Get inside; if no time to get indoors or it's not available, get down in a ditch or low-lying area or crouch near a strong building; use arms to protect head and neck.

(Facts provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA.)

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http://www.morningsun.net/stories/112805/loc_20051128026.shtml

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