

Type of Event: EF0 Tornado, winds estimated 80-85mph

Date of Event: 5/12/09

Time of Event: @5:00pm EDT

Location: 2606 – 2612 Smithtown Dr., Lakeland, FL

At approximately 5:00pm EDT on Tuesday, May 12th, 2009 a tornado touched down along portions of Smithtown Drive in Lakeland. Initial reports indicated a possible tornado, so WFO Ruskin dispatched a forecaster to survey the damage on Wednesday, May 13th. Senior forecaster Mike Cantin inspected the damage and talked with affected residents. An explanation of his reasoning for the tornado rating follows.

Damage in the area consisted of many downed tree branches ranging in diameter from 2 to 6+ inches, an uprooted tree, and a torn apart wooden carport. Several areas of collateral damage also occurred due to flying debris, including broken windows, heavily damaged fences, and areas of roof and carport damage. Pieces of the torn-apart carport were thrown 40-50 yards, between two trees, before landing on separate ends of another residence. The total damage path length was around 80yds, with a total width of 15-20yds.

The short width of the damage, eyewitness accounts, the twisted nature of area trees, along with the airborne path of the destroyed carport were the determining factors in the decision to identify the damage as tornado related.



A piece of the dislodged carport rests on a structure



Looking down the approximate tornado path

Winds with the tornado were estimated to be between 80-85 mph. This rating was based on the construction quality of the dislodged carport which consisted of older wood and straight nails. In addition, the shallow root structure of the fallen tree would have been susceptible to winds of this magnitude.

If you have further question, please contact the National Weather Service in Ruskin at 813-645-2323.