

Weather

Tore across Midwest

Powerful 'derecho' leaves devastation

IOWA CITY, Iowa, Aug 11, (AP): A rare storm packing 100 mph winds and with power similar to an inland hurricane swept across the Midwest on Monday, blowing over trees, flipping vehicles, causing widespread property damage and leaving hundreds of thousands without power as it moved through Chicago and into Indiana and Michigan.

The storm known as a derecho lasted several hours as it tore from eastern Nebraska across Iowa and parts of Wisconsin and Illinois, had the wind speed of a major hurricane, and likely caused more widespread damage than a normal tornado, said Patrick Marsh, science support chief at the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma.

In northern Illinois, the National Weather Service reported a wind gust of 92 mph near Dixon, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) west of Chicago, and the storm left downed trees and power lines that blocked roadways in Chicago and its suburbs. After leaving Chicago, the most potent part of the storm system moved over north central Indiana by late afternoon.

"The storm system as a whole is definitely beginning its decay," said Northern Illinois University meteorology professor Victor Gensini.

A derecho is not quite a hurricane. It has no eye and its winds come across in a line. But the damage it is likely to do spread over such a large area is more like an inland hurricane than a quick more powerful tornado, Marsh said. He compared it to a devastating Super Derecho of 2009, which was one of the strongest on record traveled more than 1,000 miles in 24 hours, causing \$500 million in damage, widespread power outages and killing a handful of people.

Storm

"This is our version of a hurricane," Gensini said in an interview from his home about 15 minutes before the storm was about to hit. Minutes later he headed to his basement for safety as the storm took aim at Chicago, starting with its suburbs.

Gensini said this derecho will go down as one of the strongest in recent history and be one of the nation's worst weather events of 2020.

"It ramped up pretty quick" around 7 am Central time in Eastern Nebraska. I don't think anybody expected widespread winds approaching 100, 110 mph," Marsh said.

Several people were injured and widespread property damage was reported in Marshall County in central Iowa after 100 mph winds swept through the area, said its homeland security coordinator Kim Elder.

She said the winds blew over trees, ripped road signs out of the ground and tore roofs off of buildings. "We had quite a few people trapped in buildings and cars," she said. She said the extent of injuries is unknown and that no fatalities have been reported.

Elder said some people reported their cars flipping over from the wind, having power lines fall on them and getting injured when hit by flying debris. Dozens of cars at one factory had their windshields blown out. Buildings have also caught on fire, she said.

"We're in life-saving mode right now," Elder said. Marshalltown Mayor Joel Greer declared a civil emergency, telling residents to stay home and off the streets so that first responders can respond to calls.

MidAmerican Energy said nearly 101,000 customers in the Des Moines area were without power after the storm moved through the area. Reports from spotters filed with the National Weather Service in Des Moines had winds in excess of 70 mph.

Roof damage to homes and buildings were reported in several Iowa cities, including the roof of a hockey arena in Des Moines.

Across the state, large trees fell on cars and houses. Some semi-trailers flipped over or were blown off highways.

Farmers reported that some grain bins were destroyed and fields were flattened, but the extent of damage to Iowa's agriculture industry wasn't immediately clear.

MidAmerican spokeswoman Tina Hoffman said downed trees are making it difficult in some locations for workers to get to the power lines. In some cases power line poles were snapped off.

"It's a lot of tree damage. Very high winds. It will be a significant effort to get through it all and get everybody back on," she said. "It was a big front that went all the way through the state."

Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has "both significant and widespread damage throughout the city," said public safety spokesman Greg Buelow. Tens of thousands of people in the metro area were without power.

"We have damage to homes and businesses, including siding and roofs damaged," he said. "Trees and power lines are down throughout the entire city."

Cedar Rapids on Monday night issued a 10 pm curfew that will continue until further notice, as crews work to clean up fallen debris.

What makes a derecho worse than a tornado is how long it can cover one place and how large an area the high winds hit, Marsh said. He said winds of 80 mph or even 100 mph can stretch for "20, 30, 40 or God forbid 100 miles."

"Right now, it's making a beeline for Chicago," Marsh said Monday mid-afternoon. "Whether or not it will hold its intensity as it reaches Chicago remains to be seen."

Conditions

But the environmental conditions between the storm and Chicago are the type that won't likely diminish the storm, Marsh said. It will likely dissipate over central or eastern Indiana, he said.

What happened is unstable super moist air has parked over the northern plains for days on end and it finally ramped up Monday morning into a derecho.

"They are basically self-sustaining amoebas of thunderstorms," Gensini said. "Once they get going like they did across Iowa, it's really hard to stop these suckers."

Derechos, with winds of at least 58 mph, occur about once a year in the Midwest. Rarer than tornadoes but with weaker winds, derechos produce damage over a much wider area.

The storms raged over parts of eastern Nebraska before 9 a.m. Monday, dropping heavy rains and high winds. Strong straight-line winds pushed south into areas that include Lincoln and Omaha, National Weather Service meteorologist Brian Barjenbruch said.

"Once that rain-cooled air hit the ground, it surged over 100 miles, sending incredibly strong winds over the area," Barjenbruch said.

Omaha Public Power District reported more than 55,500 customers without power in Omaha and surrounding communities.

The weather service's Marsh said there's a huge concern about power outages that will be widespread across several states and long lasting. Add high heat, people with medical conditions that require power and the pandemic, "it becomes dire pretty quickly."



Patrick



The steeple at College Church in Wheaton, Illinois was toppled during a storm on Aug 10, in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. Church officials check out the damage from the rooftop which also left several trees in the nearby park heavily damaged. (AP)



President Donald Trump arrives for a news conference in the James Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House, on Aug 10, in Washington. Trump briefly left because of a security incident outside the fence of the White House. (AP)



Rogers



Villanueva

America

Trump abruptly escorted:

President Donald Trump was abruptly escorted by a US Secret Service agent out of the White House briefing room as he was beginning a coronavirus briefing Monday afternoon. He returned minutes later, saying there was a "shooting" outside the White House that was "under control."

"There was an actual shooting and somebody's been taken to the hospital," Trump said. The president said the shots were fired by law enforcement, saying he believed the individual who was shot was armed. "It was the suspect who was shot," Trump said.

Trump said he was escorted to the Oval Office by the agent. The White House was placed on lockdown following the incident.

The shooting took place near 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue just blocks from the White House, according to two sources with knowledge of the situation who were not authorized to speak publicly about it. Law enforcement officials were still trying to determine the suspect's motive (AP)

LA sheriff concerned: The Los Angeles County sheriff said Monday he has concerns about tactics deputies used to detain three Black teenagers at gunpoint after the mother of one said the youths had been threatened by a man holding a knife.

Sheriff Alex Villanueva said in a social media post that he had seen a video of the incident - which was uploaded by one of the teen's mothers to her Instagram profile last week - and that the matter is being investigated.

CBS Los Angeles reported that the trio were teenagers. Deputy Juanita Navarro, a spokeswoman for the department, said the youths were not arrested during the incident Friday and had been released at the scene.

Tammi Collins wrote on Instagram that her son was sitting with friends at a bus stop in the Santa Clarita Valley when a man asked them if they had any drugs and then tried to steal their belongings. She said the man then pulled out a

Politics

Trump breaking promise to older Americans: DNC

'Payroll tax break weakens Social Security'

WASHINGTON, Aug 11, (AP): President Donald Trump's move to defer Social Security payroll taxes could be taking him into treacherous political territory.

His directive - aimed at boosting an economy shaken by the coronavirus pandemic - doesn't affect retirement benefits but impacts how they're paid for. Democrats seized on it Monday as a signal that Trump would cut the social safety net and break a promise he made as a candidate in 2016 not to touch Social Security and Medicare. Some nonpartisan experts also expressed concerns.

Deferral of the 6.2% payroll tax on employees for the last three months of this year could mean that up to \$100 billion in payments to the Social Security Trust Fund would be delayed, according to an updated estimate by the nonpartisan Committee For A Responsible Federal Budget, which advocates for reducing government deficits.

"What it does is undercut Social Security," Rep. John Larson, D-Conn., said Monday, addressing Trump's move. The president "is defunding Social Security and breaking his promise. ... He will say, 'I'm not doing anything to touch Social Security, I'm just deferring this,' but it's as clear as my hand in front me." Larson chairs the House Ways and Means subcommittee overseeing the retirement program.

The Democratic National Committee was out with a video accusing Trump of breaking his promise to older Americans.

The White House pushed back.

"Providing a payroll tax deferral poses no risk to the Social Security Trust Fund and puts more money in the pockets of hardworking Americans as we fight to end this pandemic from China and rebuild our economy safely," spokesman Judd Deere said in a statement. "This has been a priority for President Trump and while congressional Democrats played politics the president acted for the forgotten men and women of this country as he has done so many times before."

With more than 60 million beneficiaries, Social Security is funded by a 12.4% payroll tax evenly divided between employees

and employers. But there's a cloud over the program's long-term finances, and even before the pandemic, government experts estimated it would be unable to pay full benefits starting in 2035. Medicare's hospital fund is also financed by a payroll tax, but that's not affected by Trump's directive.

Social Security and Medicare are seen as politically untouchable. It's not just that seniors have clout in elections, but the two programs have longstanding inter-generational support.

Trump acted on his own after negotiations with Congress on another COVID-19 relief package broke down. The president has authority to take such limited steps during the national emergency due to the coronavirus.

Trump has also directed Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to work with Congress to forgive the entire amount of the payroll taxes deferred. Otherwise, the tax holiday would become a tax liability for workers when the government comes back to collect the money owed to Social Security.

Troubles

The whole exercise troubles some nonpartisan experts, who say the bedrock principle of Social Security is that earmarked payroll taxes from employees and their employers pay for earned benefits for retirees.

"This undermines the dedicated funding, which is the foundation of Social Security," said William Arnone, CEO of the National Academy of Social Insurance, a nonpartisan public policy organization.

Although the White House says the Treasury Department will guarantee that the Social Security Trust Fund is made whole, Arnone said he's worried because payroll tax collections have already taken a hit this year in the coronavirus economy.

"The question of the reimbursement of the trust fund is not clearly spelled out," said Arnone. "It is a big boost in take-home pay for workers, but what is the long-term cost to them if it makes Social Security less stable?"

Under Trump's plan, workers making below \$104,000 a year would get the tax deferral. But the president's directive is incomplete because many key details are still not known.

For example, the benefit is limited to workers who "generally" make less than \$4,000 every two weeks. However, Trump didn't define "generally" in his directive to the Treasury. What happens to people who make \$4,001?

Economist Eugene Steuerle of the Urban Institute think tank said other practical issues seem to have been ignored.

"It raises all sorts of questions with respect to people who can't come up with the money down the road to pay back the tax cut," said Steuerle. That would have to be dealt with if Mnuchin can't persuade lawmakers to permanently forgive the taxes owed.

Yet there are lots of reasons to think Congress won't bend to Trump's will.

It isn't just Democrats, as the White House suggests. Many congressional Republicans have been cool to Trump's payroll tax cut.

Lawmakers are loathe to reward the Republican president for trying to change tax policy without their consent and for trying to break the longstanding tie between Social Security payroll taxes and the earned benefit that they are paying for.

Businesses also have misgivings, because the plan would require them to change their payroll systems and could leave them responsible for collecting deferred taxes later on. How much of a boost to the economy Trump's plan would provide is a matter of debate.

In a previous coronavirus relief bill, Congress and Trump together gave employers the option of deferring their share of Social Security payroll taxes this year, but it's unclear how many businesses have taken that up.

A payroll tax break is not a new idea. Congress approved a temporary cut in the Social Security tax during the Obama years, in the aftermath of the 2007-09 recession. That cut was 2 percentage points.

knife and tried to stab them.

Collins wrote that bystanders called police to help the boys, though she wrote that apparently one caller reported that the teens were attacking the man.

Navarro said a caller reported that two Black men in their early 20s had struck a man with a skateboard.

The 11-minute video Collins posted shows at least three deputies pointing their guns at the teens - including one deputy who had a long gun. The teens obeyed the deputies' commands to back up with their hands up and knelt on the ground to be handcuffed.

Bystanders shouted at the

officers that the teens didn't do anything. (AP)

Virginia man gets 6 yrs in jail:

A Virginia man who a prosecutor described as a leader of the Ku Klux Klan and who drove through a Black Lives Matter protest in June was sentenced Monday to six years in jail.

Harry H. Rogers, 36, was convicted of six misdemeanors and sentenced to a year in jail for each charge, the Richmond Times-Dispatch reported. Rogers still faces three felony charges of attempted malicious wounding in connection with the June 7 incident.



Protestors block Fourth Avenue outside Seattle City Hall and listen to Monday's Seattle City Council budget committee voting, which included potential Seattle Police Department cuts, Aug 10. Organizers said the protest puts pressure on defunding Seattle Police and reallocating funds into the Black community. (AP)

The three felony counts were certified Monday to a grand jury by the same Henrico County General District Court judge who found Rogers guilty of four simple assaults, property damage and hit-and-run. The felony charges will be heard by a grand jury in September, the newspaper reported.

The judge didn't uphold hate crime enhancement on four simple assault charges, agreeing with the defense argument that the three victims, all of whom are white, were not targeted because of their race (AP)

Mail-in voting cause rigging:

US President Donald Trump warned on Monday that the use of mail-in voting in the upcoming presidential elections could result in a disaster or election rigging.

"We don't want to have a rigged election I know that, and you have to be very careful when you mention as you constantly do Russia or you mention China, or you mention Iran or others that attack our election system, and when you have this mail-in voting it's a-it's very susceptible," Trump said in a press conference at the White House.

"It is something that can be easily attacked by foreign countries and by frankly Democrats and by Republicans, and I think that it is something you have to start thinking about very seriously."

He argued that the US postal system is not equipped for it.

"The post office is not equipped for it, and people should vote like they did in World War I and World

War II and your numbers will be - in 90 days or less your numbers will be very good I think much better on the coronavirus," he said.

The US leader claimed that half a million incorrect ballot applications sent all over the state of Virginia to many people that weren't living.

"This is what we are going to get into, and it's going to be a disaster, and it's going to be thought a very poorly. It's going to hurt our country," he warned. (KUNA)

Cow chase leads to rescue:

A confrontation between an elderly couple and a cow and her calf required the intervention of the California Highway Patrol in Northern California this weekend.

Authorities said on Facebook that the unidentified couple had fallen to the ground after a cow gave chase to them in the Lynch Canyon Regional Park. They were hoisted into a helicopter to elude the angry bovine.

In a minutes-long video taken by highway patrol mid-air, a cow and calf are seen standing feet away from the couple on the barren trail. As the chopper hovers above the site, the cow is seen rearing its head and bellowing, while the calf stands nearby.

Highway patrol succeeded in moving the cow by sounding the helicopter's alarm, CHP wrote in a Facebook post.

Officials lifted the couple 75 feet (22.8 meters) into the air and transported them to a hospital to treat their injuries. There was no word on what happened to the mother cow or her calf. (AP)