

Wichita experiences rare 'heat burst' overnight

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WICHITA, Kansas –

Last night Wichita experienced a very rare weather phenomenon known as a “Heat Burst.” At 12:22 a.m. the temperature at Wichita’s Mid-Continent Airport was 85 degrees. At 12:44 the temperature spiked to 102 degrees. This was a 17 degree increase in only 20 minutes. Winds also gusted between 50 and 60 MPH. The heat burst winds and temperatures rapidly dissipated as they spread across Sedgwick and Southern Butler Counties.

A heat burst is caused when rain falls into very dry air, high up in the atmosphere. The rain quickly evaporates as it falls through the dry parcel of air and that parcel cools rapidly. This dense mass falls rapidly toward the ground, heating up as it compresses. When this hot ball of air hits the ground it spreads out in every direction creating very strong, warm and dry winds.

About an hour before the heat burst, wind gusts up to 40 miles per hour battered the Wichita metro area. This was due to outflow winds from severe weather south of the city, and not related to the heat burst.

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