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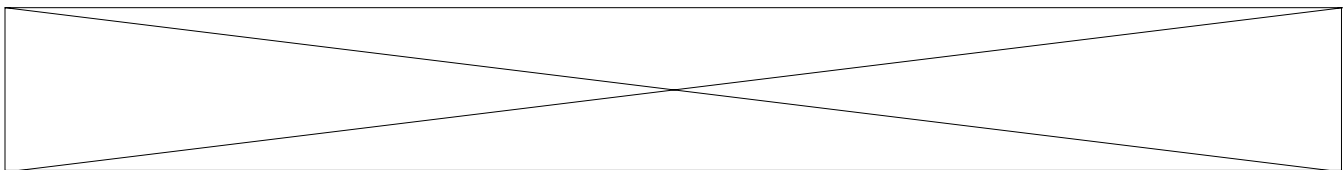
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Storms slam Phoenix area

Winds of up to 100 mph leave trail of destruction from Tempe to downtown

By TERRY TANG
ASSOCIATED PRESS

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PHOENIX -- A series of fast-moving thunderstorms packing winds of up to 100 mph plowed through the Phoenix area, leaving tens of thousands without power, damaging several airliners and collapsing a brand-new college football facility.

There were no immediate reports of injuries from Thursday's storms, which were a particularly intense episode of Arizona's summer "monsoon" season.

About 500 travelers were forced to spend the night at Sky Harbor International Airport, where damage was reported to terminals, cargo areas, electrical systems, jetways and aircraft, spokeswoman Deborah Ostreicher said.

The airport was shut down for about an hour during the height of the storm, which dumped up to 1½ inches of rain and three-quarter-inch hail in some areas.

Southwest Airlines spokeswoman Whitney Eichinger said three of the company's Boeing 737 jets were damaged. Two were quickly repaired and put back in service. A third, damaged when a baggage belt blew into the side of the plane, was still being repaired Friday afternoon.

Airport officials said three United Airlines jets, an Aeromexico plane and aircraft from commuter carrier Mesa airlines also were damaged.

Flight delays were likely to continue Friday afternoon because flight crews were kept late and may have worked the maximum number of hours allowed.

National Weather Service meteorologist Leslie Wanek said Sky Harbor recorded peak winds of 75 mph, but radar indicated gusts of up to 100 mph in parts of the metro area.

In Tempe, Arizona State University officials said the storm damaged the school's new \$8.4 million indoor practice facility, which is used mostly for football.

A witness said the fabric roof on the structure was shredded and the bubble dome had completely deflated.

The 103,500-square-foot facility was completed this month.

At the state Capitol, a statue of World War I pilot Frank Luke Jr. was toppled from its pedestal. Hundreds of trees in central and uptown Phoenix were downed, and windows were blown out of at least one high-rise building downtown.

Jeremy Solem was huddled by the stairs in his sixth-floor loft on Central

Avenue when the storm destroyed 12 windows.

"It was kind of like a tornado. I just started hearing a 'pop, pop, pop,' " Solem said. "I guess that's the price you pay for a really great view of the city."

A large section of roofing from a new condominium complex was torn off and thrown hundreds of feet, landing on the lines powering the city's soon-to-open light rail line. James Allan, a light rail worker helping with the cleanup, said the roofing piece had brought the power lines down six to eight feet. Workers cleared most of the debris and were repositioning the wires.

More than 20,000 customers remained without power Friday, utility companies said. At the height of the storm, about 100,000 homes and businesses were without power.

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