



# Tornadoes Rip through Central Florida In Florida's Deadliest Tornado Outbreak In 1998

## Fact Sheet

- Date: February 23, 1998
- Time: 1210 am
- Estimated Tornado Intensity: F4
- Estimated Maximum Wind: 207-260 mph
- Tornado Width (Yards): Unknown
- Path Length (Miles): Unknown
- Deaths: 42
- Injuries: 250
- Damage Amount: 60 M+
- Number of Homes Damages: 5,000
- Event Location: Central Florida



An RV turned upside down by a tornado.

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/mlb/kissimmeepics.html>



A trailer frame wrapped around an Oak tree by the force of a tornado's wind.

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/mlb/kissimpepics.html>

### Summary of Event:

On the evening of February 22, 1998 and into the early morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, there was a series of tornadoes that touched down across central Florida. **This was the deadliest outbreak of twisters in Florida's history** (<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history.do?action=Article&id=53104>).

### Detailed experience:

The tornadoes hit during the night when most people were already peacefully asleep. This had an effect on many peoples' lives. Although there were several warnings put out to alert residents, very few received the warnings. Damage was severe across central Florida. **At least one of the tornadoes reached an estimated F4 intensity. Forty-two fatalities occurred, over 800 residences were destroyed, and another 700 were left uninhabitable. Over 3,500 homes were damaged to some extent, and 135,000 utility customers lost power at the height of the storms. Damages from the tornado outbreak exceeded \$60 million, and Florida's overall storm damage total since the previous fall was approximately \$500 million. Hardest hit locations in the tornado outbreak were Winter Garden, Altamonte Springs, Sanford, and Campbell. Overall, 54 of Florida's 67 counties were declared federal disaster areas due to storms during that winter period.** (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/reports/febstorm/february98storms.html>).

This was a devastating event for all residents of the state of Florida. Many of the deaths that did occur during these tornadoes were mainly from RV's, mobile homes, campers, or trailers. Many people helped to find fellow neighbors in all the ruckus and debris after the tornadoes passed. Some areas such as the Ponderosa Park campground had rescue dogs brought

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in to find people in the wreckage. Many structures were destroyed in the Altamonte Springs to Sanford area of Florida. Numerous buildings, mobile homes and an RV park were destroyed from Campbell City to Boggy Creek Road in Kissimmee, Florida (Osceola County).

In Altamonte Springs, in one residence, a couple, their daughter and her fiancé were all killed. The young woman's body was found by divers when they searched the creek behind the home. Her 5-year-old daughter survived. One man who was wearing a life-jacket when he fell asleep in an RV (a practice he followed on stormy nights) at Rod's Fish Camp was blown into the raging St. Johns River when the vehicle was overturned. He suffered several broken ribs and other injuries, but remained afloat in Lake Harney, clinging to an overturned boat, until rescuers found him about a mile from the RV site. Another man was also blown into the river and was reported missing for several days until his body was found. Wreckage from the half dozen or so trailers was washed as far away as 6 miles up the river. In Ponderosa, a sleeping 18-month-old boy was flung, mattress and all, from his great-grandmother's home into the branches of a fallen oak tree in the yard. He was found a half hour after the tornado struck, tucked safely into the mattress, five feet above the ground, covered by sheetrock, boards, and branches which had blown onto it. The child survived with only a few scratches. The house he was in had been destroyed. A 70-year-old Episcopal priest was asleep in a chair when it was hurled 60 yards across the street. His modular home was destroyed and he was fatally injured (<http://www.tornadoproject.com/past/pastts98.htm>).



News media's gathering to view the damages left by a tornado.

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/mlb/kissimmeepics.html>

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Homes demolished by tornadoes.

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/mlb/kissimmeepics.html>



Piles of debris left from several homes.

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/mlb/kissimmeepics.html>

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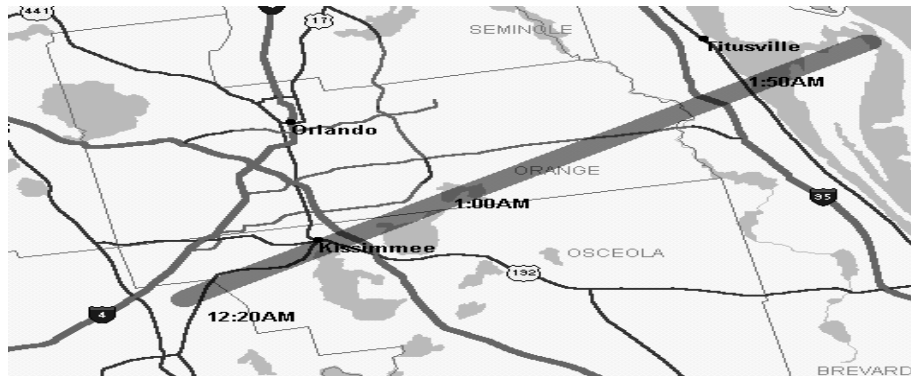
Mesocyclone 1



Mesocyclone 2



Mesocyclone 3



An image of three different tornado path's at a given time. <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/mlb/3meso.html> - all three mesocyclones.

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A house wrecked because of a tornado plowing through it.

<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/mlb/kissimmeepics.html>