

First hit were business along West Broadway: Roofs ripped off Close Encounters Lounge and Mad Hatter Muffler Center; a wall blown out of the Heritage Inn motel; windows blown in at Rog & Scotty's supermarket; Grease Monkey, severe structural damage; and windshields shattered on cars in the Superior Honda lot.

The storm then roared into nearby residential areas. A half-hour later a second siren sounded, but the damage was done and people had begun to crawl out; many terrified, many injured.

No one died, but 55-year-old Jimmy Fitch, 716 Graham Ave., suffered serious head injuries in a five vehicle accident on Interstate 80 during the storm.

At least 83 people sought medical help, others with cuts, scratches and bruises tended their own wounds and started digging out.

Gov. Terry Branstad was notified of the disaster and ordered state aid for the stricken city. The National Guard and State Patrol responded; initially 100 Guard members and 50 Troopers rolled in. The Salvation Army and American Red Cross mobilized and friends and neighbors showed up to help. A command post was set up in a double garage on N. 25th St. and Salvation Army and Red Cross vans, carrying food and drink, moved into the stricken area.

City and county officials gathered in the Emergency Operations Center in the basement of the damaged courthouse to establish a central base of operations. Meetings were held almost every hour to brief officials, department heads and volunteers on damage reports and cleanup efforts.

After a tour Sunday, July 17, Branstad declared Pottawattamie County a disaster area and held up the signed proclamation

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A garage that used to sit next to 723 Ave. E was lifted off its foundation, torn apart and dropped onto Avenue E in front of the house. Photo by Steve Glowacki.



Vehicles were the target of falling trees, limbs and branches. This pickup truck's topper will probably be part of the tons of trash generated by the storm. Photo by Steve Glowacki.