



The Beast (microburst, South Padre Island)...

...The Beauty (double rainbow after the storm)

More Storms with Wind and Hail April 16th Microburst Slams the Beach; Welcome Rains for Others

Recap

A slow moving front, prior boundaries from evening storms on the 15th, and a warm humid air mass in place across the Rio Grande Valley activated numerous afternoon and early evening thunderstorms on April 16th, 2012.

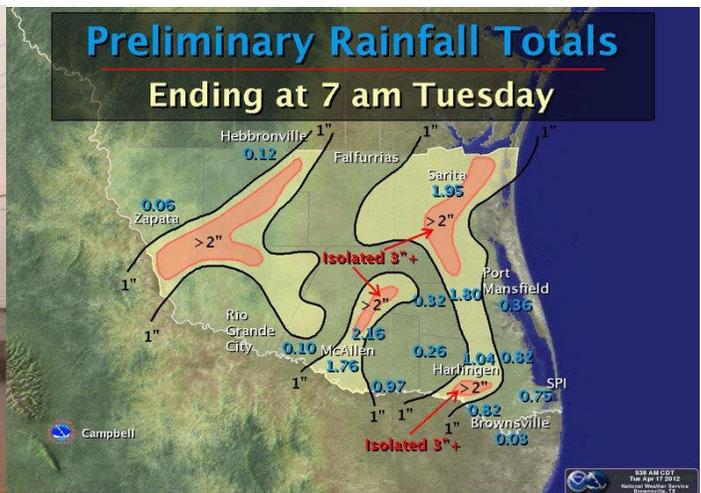
Early morning showers produced a funnel cloud in Donna; the tail of stronger storms which produced [flooding, tornadoes, and hail across the Coastal Bend](#) from mid-morning through mid-afternoon produced a small tornado on the Kenedy Ranch along the Kenedy/Kleberg County line. By afternoon, temperatures warming into the mid and upper 80s were sufficient to trigger rapid development of thunderstorms in eastern Starr County; these would slide into Hidalgo County during the afternoon and produce a combination of torrential rains, frequent lightning, and hail mainly between pea and dime size with a few nickel and quarter size reports in the Edinburg/Pharr/McAllen area. More than 2 inches of welcome rain fell in Edinburg (below). By late afternoon, inflow of deep moisture along the Highway 77 corridor filled in thunderstorms between the Cameron/Willacy County line and the south end of the King Ranch. One storm grew very robust and slowly drifted in between Rio Hondo, Harlingen, San Benito, and Los Fresnos. An assumed large hail core centered over rural locations; others observed wind gusts to 55 mph and rainfall as much as 3.7 inches in Rio Hondo.

The outflow associated with the large storm in north central Cameron County outran its updraft support, and much of the action calmed by the time the remnants reached Brownsville between 5 and 545 PM. The outflow combined with other boundaries from storms sliding along the Rio Grande River into southwest Cameron County to flare up a small but potent storm just west of Port Isabel just before 6 PM. As the storm raced east onto South Padre Island, a downburst developed which produced winds up to 57 mph at the Port Isabel Coast Guard station (along Laguna Vista Bay) and a ½ mile swath of estimated 70 to 75 mph winds across the central portion of the resort area of South Padre Island, all occurring roughly between 622 and 628 PM CDT. Reports from residents indicated two small boats sunk at a bayside dock, two windows blown out of shuttle buses, a restaurant awning blown down, a utility pole knocked down at a service station, and lawn furniture strewn around one resident's yard.

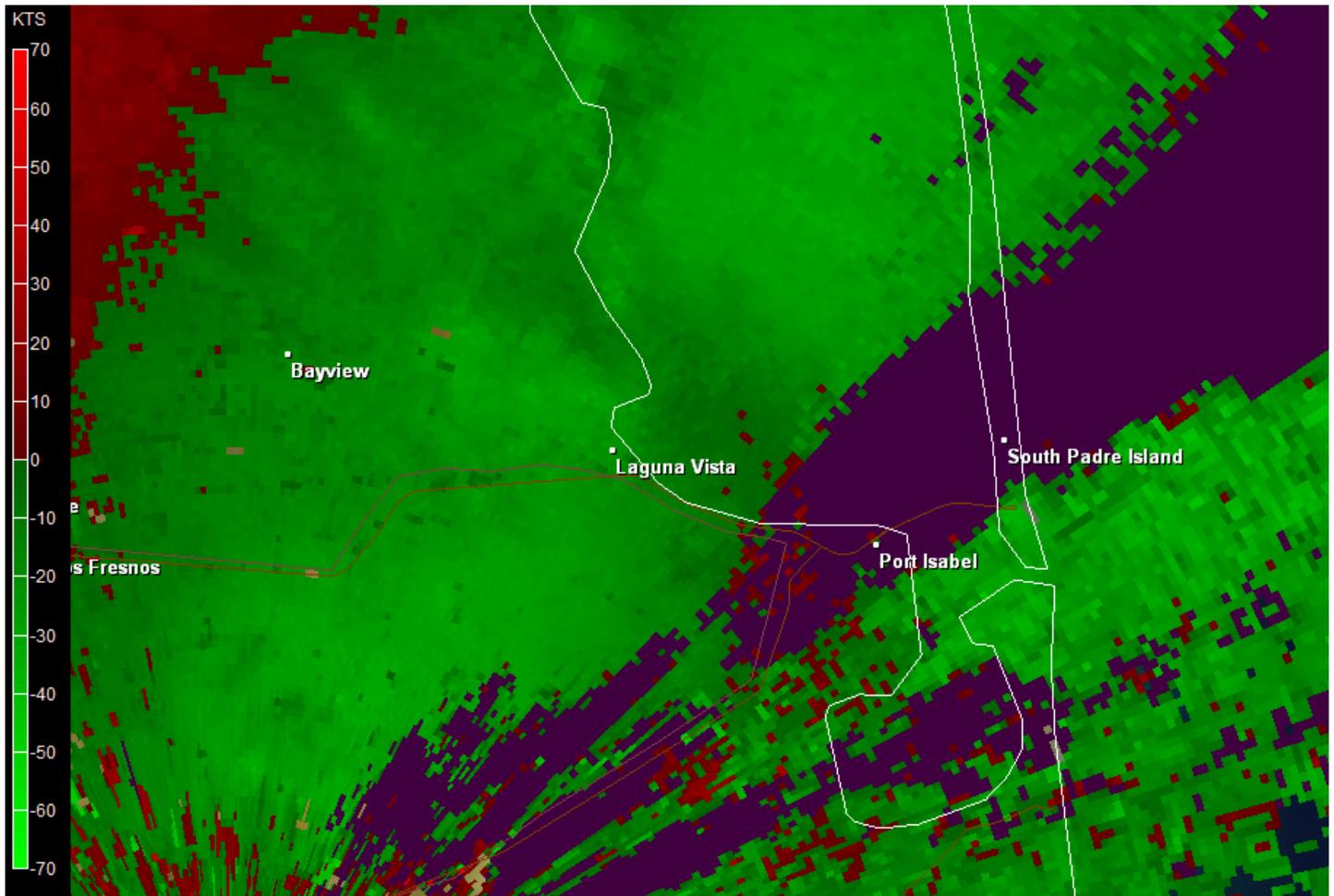
Photo credit above: Chief Javier Ch. Garza, South Padre Island Emergency Management.



Above: Roofing blown off building associated with Louie's Backyard Restaurant north of the Causeway on the bayside, South Padre Island. Photo credit: Gene Gore, South Padre Island Surfing Company.



Left: Photograph of classic "urban flooding" in Rio Hondo during the late afternoon of April 16th (Credit: Joseph Hilliard, Texas General Land Office). Right: Preliminary rainfall totals across the Rio Grande Valley and Deep South Texas. The wide variation is common during most thunderstorm episodes in the spring and summer.



Above: Click on image for animation of radar velocity as rapidly developing storm slammed across South Padre Island and into the Gulf of Mexico. Winds to hurricane force were observed between 622 and 628 PM CDT.