



# NWS Damage Survey

## Severe Weather Event: May 20, 2020

### NWS Glasgow, MT



For media inquiries: 406-228-4042

#### ...Straight Line Winds of 105-110 mph Caused Damage near Brockway, MT area...

Significant thunderstorm wind damage occurred on the evening of Wednesday, May 20, 2020 in McCone and eastern Garfield Counties. The storm system originated with large hail and severe winds in the Yellowstone River Valley. As it moved northward, it transitioned into an extreme high wind and heavy rain event as it approached Montana Highway 200. When it approached Fort Peck Lake and the Missouri River it continued with severe thunderstorm winds, heavy rainfall and had some weak tornado indicators. A weak [EF-0 tornado occurred near the Whatley area between Glasgow and Nashua](#).

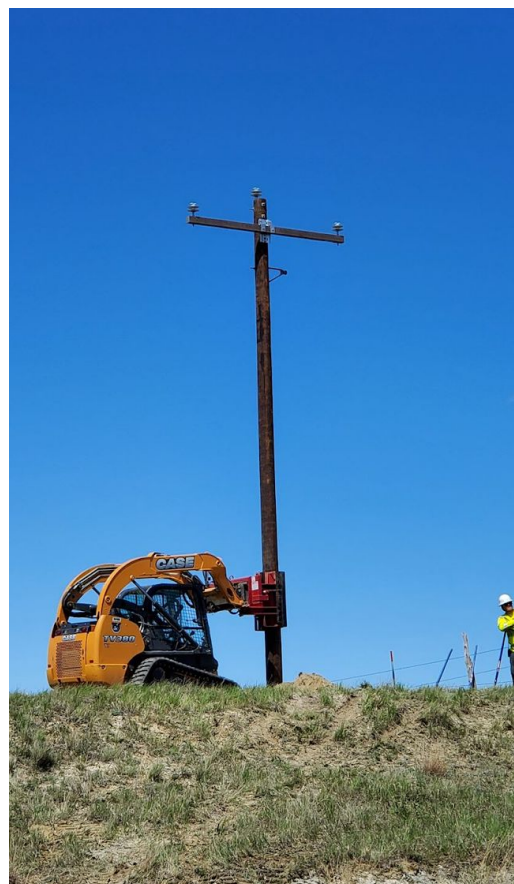
#### Damage along Highway 200 from Flowing Wells to Circle:

McCone Electric Cooperative reported at least 100 three phase power poles were down, and at least 14 transmission poles were down. As of 5/22/2020 we did not yet have an estimate on the number of single phase poles that were lost.

The NWS damage survey crew noted that most of the poles were snapped or sheared off near the ground. There were poles ~3 miles west of Brockway that were sheared off half way up the pole, indicating higher wind speeds in this area. The poles sheared at the bases were not rotted according to one of the employees, and the poles were not decades old.

Estimated wind speeds along the section of Highway 200 from Flowing Wells to Circle with poles snapped at the bases is 80-95 mph.

Estimated wind speeds ~3 miles west of Brockway on the poles snapped part way up is 105-110 mph.



#### Property Damage ~3 West of Brockway:

The property damage in the area 3 miles west of Brockway included a home with half the roof pulled up and blown nearly 150 yards to the north of the property. The garage collapsed and an interior wall collapsed inward. While the homeowner indicated that the house had an extra-wide overhang that allowed for more surface area for the winds to lift the roof, it was a newer home and well built. The family of four was home, and while one person was pinned under the collapsing roof trusses, no one was injured. Estimated wind speeds at the home: 105-110 mph.



*The center of this photo is in the living room and where the person was pinned after half the roof was blown off and some of the trusses collapsed into the home.*

Neighbors on either side of this home within a half mile to a mile had some damage to calving sheds and other outbuildings, but nothing to the extent that this location experienced. Damage at those other two locations would be consistent with 75 to 90 mph winds.

Further damage occurred almost straight north of the Brockway area, on Horse Creek Road. There were several barns and outbuildings that were destroyed, with all the debris blown in a northerly path. Observed wind speeds and damage estimates put this area in a 75 to 95 mph range for wind speeds.

#### **Fort Peck Lake Recreation Areas:**

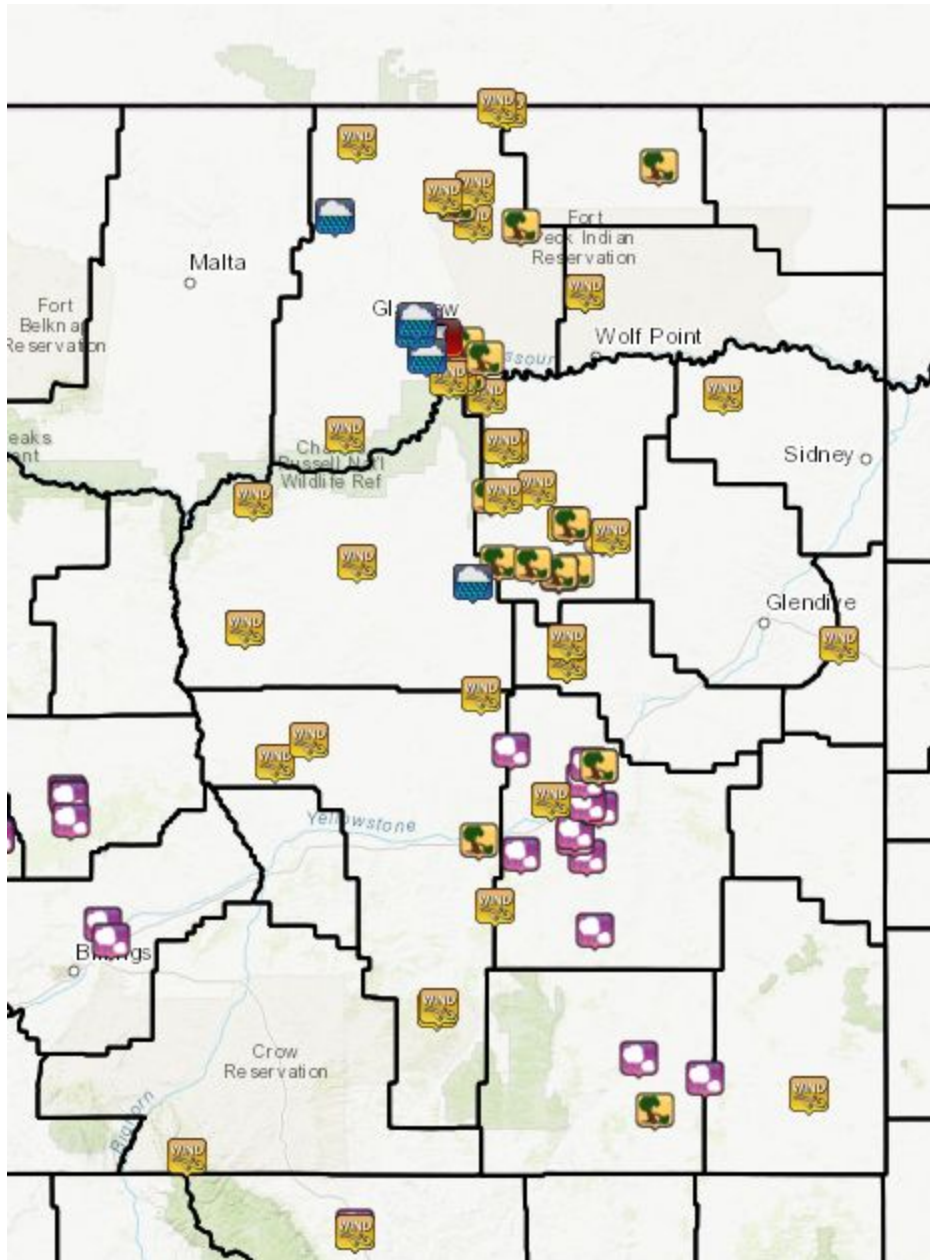
In the Nelson Creek Recreation area, there were three campers that were blown over and destroyed. Another camper was flipped in the Flat Lake area near Fort Peck Dam. No occupants were in the campers at the time.



*Photo from DJ Redstone at Nelson Creek Recreation Area via social media.*

**Garfield County:** The Garfield County Sheriff's Department flew over the eastern portion of the county and provided [aerial photos on their social media feed](#) of heavy rainfall runoff and damage to farms/ranches. Photographs indicate property damage to farm buildings. Based on the wind observations in the area and the damage seen, wind speeds are estimated to have been in the 60 to 80 mph range.

**Damage/Storm Reports:** The National Weather Service greatly appreciates all the phone calls and reports/photos shared with us on social media. This map shows our preliminary reports (which may be adjusted for time and location as more information arrives). Additional reports are helpful, and can be posted on our [Facebook page](#), Tweeted to us (@NWSGlasgow) or emailed at [ggw.wxreport@noaa.gov](mailto:ggw.wxreport@noaa.gov).



Link: [Preliminary Storm Reports received from 5/20/2020 3 pm to 11 pm MDT](#)

**Decision Support/Products:**

The National Weather Service in Glasgow called State and County Disaster and Emergency Services Coordinators on Monday May 18th leading up to the event, emphasizing concerns that included risk of hail, wind and heavy rainfall capable of causing flooding, and while an isolated tornado wouldn't be out of the question, but less impactful than the other hazards. Social media posts and our website were highlighting threats of severe weather days in advance.

At 305 pm on 5/20/2020, the National Weather Service issued the Severe Thunderstorm Watch, indicating that most of eastern Montana had the potential for severe thunderstorms through 11 pm.

**Severe Thunderstorm Watch**

Valid Until  
11:00 PM MDT Wednesday  
May 20, 2020

**Threat Information**

- TORNADOES**  
A Couple Tornadoes Possible
- HAIL**  
Scattered Hail Up To Lime Size Possible
- WIND**  
Isolated Gusts Up To 70 MPH Possible

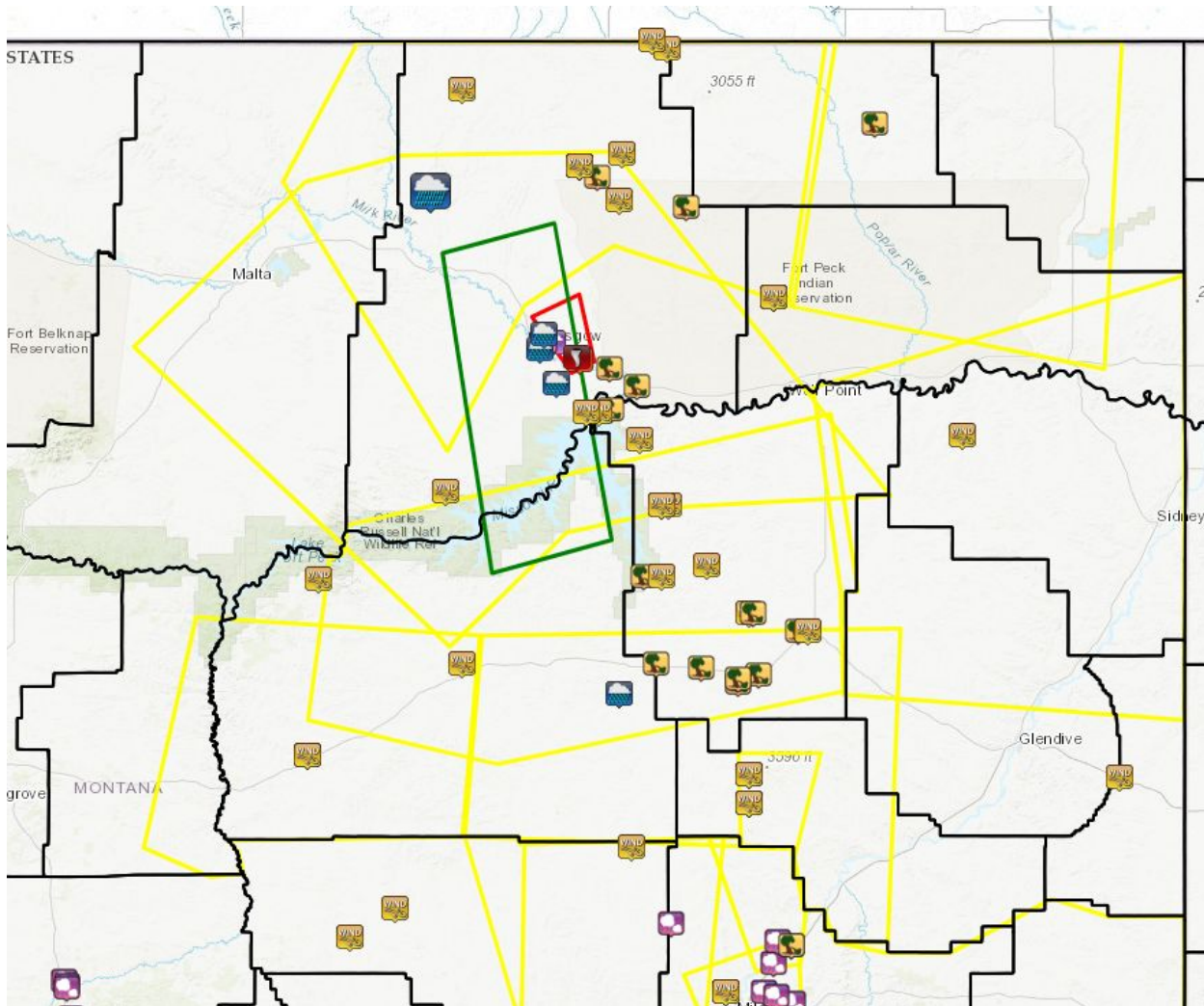
**Potential Exposure**

- Population: 293,341
- Schools: 345
- Hospitals: 26

Map labels: Havre, Glasgow, Poplar, Sidney, Lewistown, Glendive, Miles City, Billings, Hardin, Livingston, Sheridan, Cody. Highways 90 and 94 are shown. Logos for NWS and Montana Emergency Management are present.

At 728 pm, a Severe Thunderstorm Warning was issued for western Prairie, southern McCone and Southeastern Garfield Counties based on weather radar and reports from earlier storms in Custer, Prairie and Rosebud Counties.

A total of eight severe thunderstorm warnings, one tornado warning and one flood advisory was issued between 725 pm and 1030 pm.



*Overlay of all the severe thunderstorm warnings (yellow polygons), tornado warnings (red polygon) and flood products (green) issued.*