

June 15, 2011 Microburst Damage in Hardin, MT

Severe thunderstorms developed over Billings, MT at approximately 730pm on Wednesday June 15th. This severe thunderstorm progressed east across central Montana, basically tracking just north of Interstate 90 from Billings to Hardin. The southern flank of the storm produced persistent winds in excess of 60 mph.

Between 730 pm and 800 pm, wind gusts of 60 to 70 mph moved through Billings, with numerous trees and branches blown down, resulting in scattered power outages.

At 830 pm, the severe winds enhanced over Hardin, MT. National Weather Service officials conducted a survey of the damage and determined that it was the result of microburst winds that surged well south of the associated thunderstorm. Local wind speeds have been estimated to have reached speeds of 90 mph. The hardest hit area was the southwest side of Hardin. Several businesses experienced at least partial roof damage. This same area saw numerous trees either snapped off or uprooted and homes with shingles blown off.

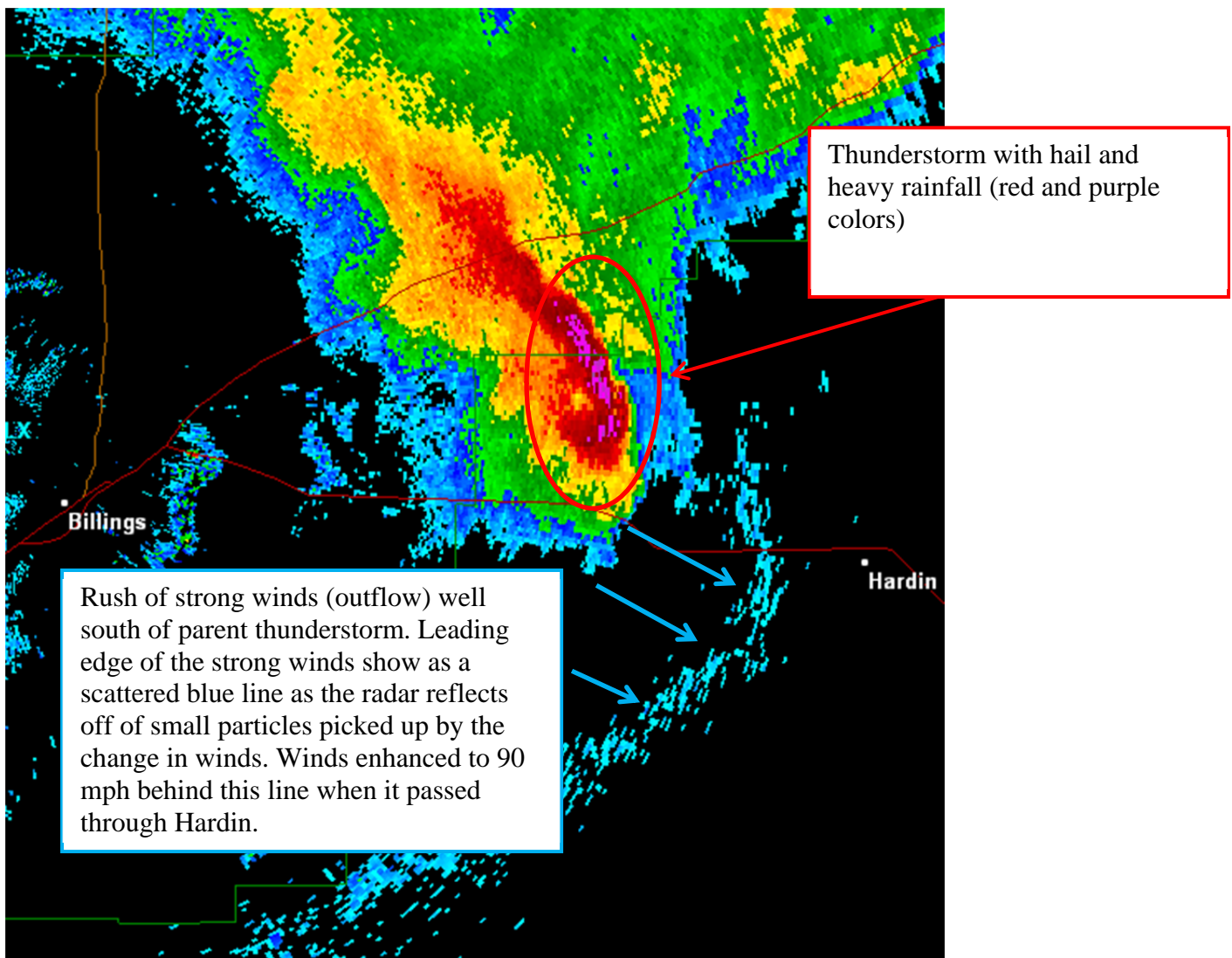


Figure 1: Radar display of the Severe Thunderstorm just before the severe winds hit Hardin, MT

Figure 1 shows the Billings National Weather Service radar display minutes before the high winds slammed into Hardin. The strongest part of the thunderstorm remained well north of the damage path. Witness reports indicated very little if any rainfall in those areas that experienced the damage, basically indicating a “wall of wind” spreading in from the west.



Figure 2: Large trees uprooted



Figure 3: Roof damage to a grocery store and motel



Figure 4: Damage to a storage building; Sign completely bent over