

Lightning Damage at the LSU Agricultural Center

Lake Charles, LA
October 25, 2003

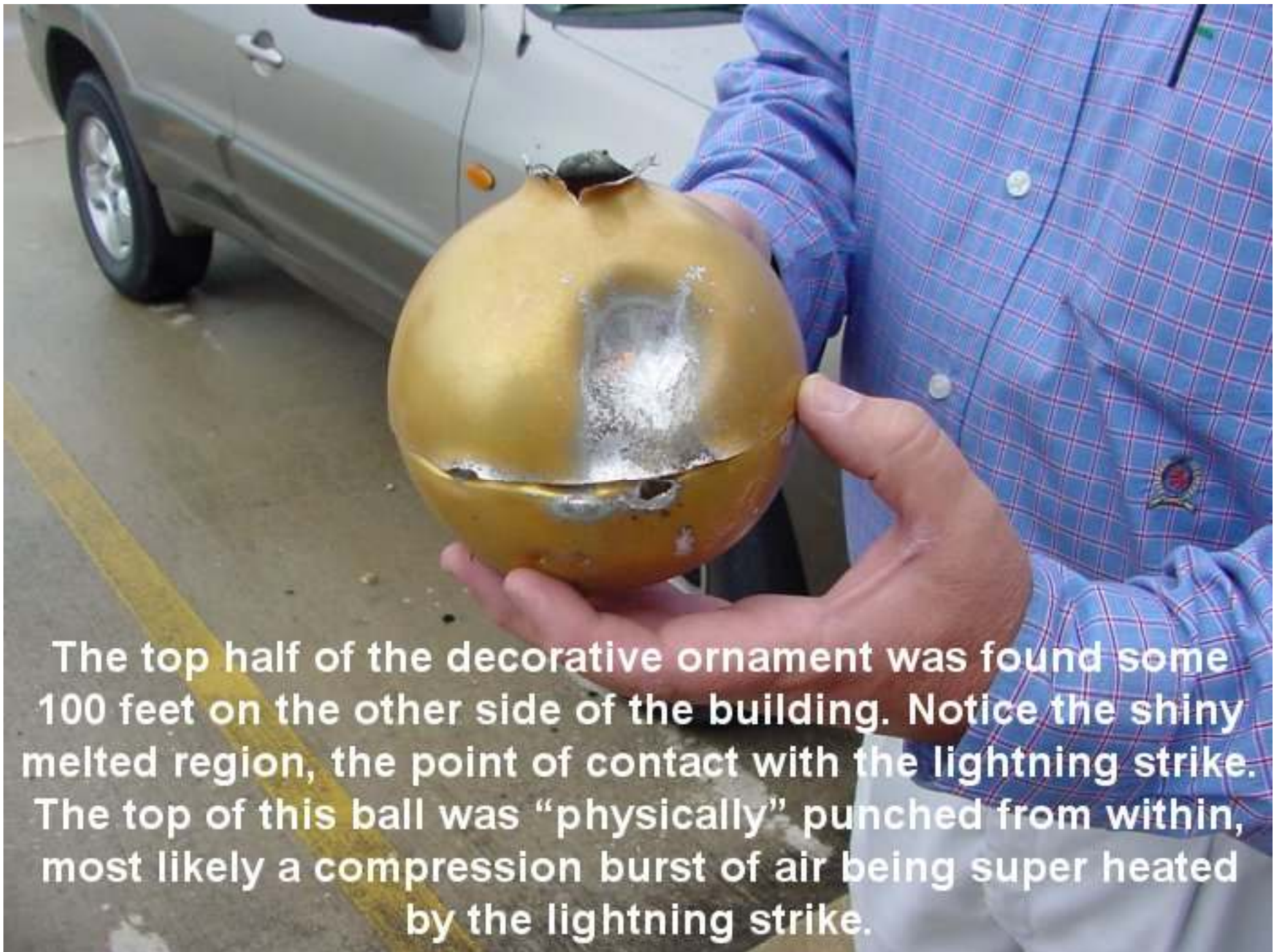
Photos by:

Donovan Landreneau
National Weather Service
Lake Charles, LA





Around 3 P.M. on October 25, 2003, a positive stroke of lightning struck a flagpole in front of the LSU Agricultural Center. Dick Gremilion, Emergency Manager of Calcasieu Parish, is holding the bottom half of the decorative ornament blasted off the top of the flag pole.

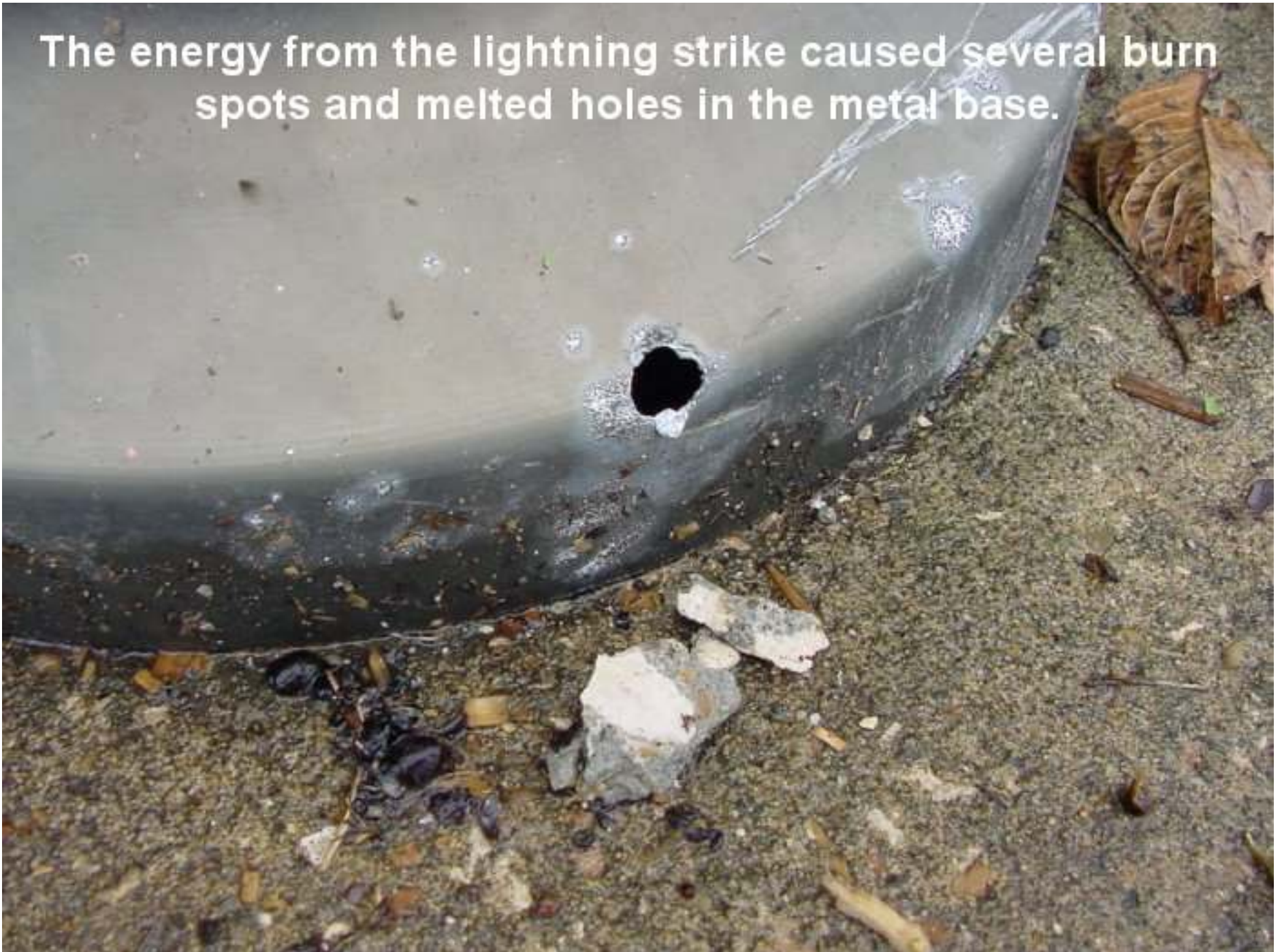


The top half of the decorative ornament was found some 100 feet on the other side of the building. Notice the shiny melted region, the point of contact with the lightning strike. The top of this ball was “physically” punched from within, most likely a compression burst of air being super heated by the lightning strike.



The concrete near the base of the flagpole was damaged from underneath, near the settlement cracks and groves.

The energy from the lightning strike caused several burn spots and melted holes in the metal base.





Damage to the front concrete walk and flower bed.



This was the exit region of the lightning strike, which traveled underground from the flagpole. This concrete is 6 inches thick with wire mesh and rebar re-enforcement.



A closer look at the exit "hole" of the lightning. Two ends of the landscaping timber was completely removed.



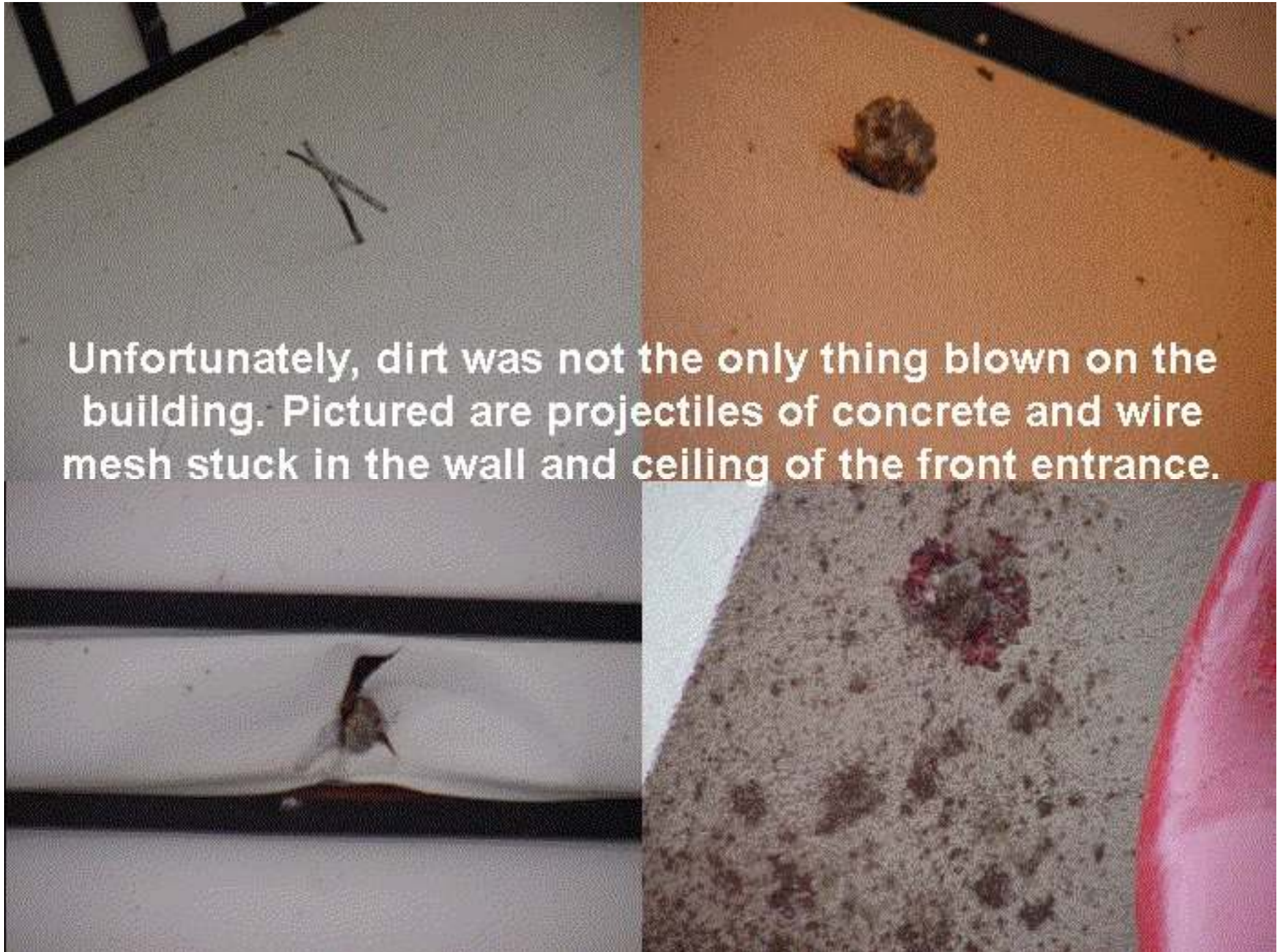
Notice the wire mesh was completely severed and melted in this chunk of concrete.



Other pieces of concrete and landscaping timber blown some 10 feet away from the exit region.

Dirt from the flowerbed portion of the exit region blown upward onto this lamp and the side of the building.

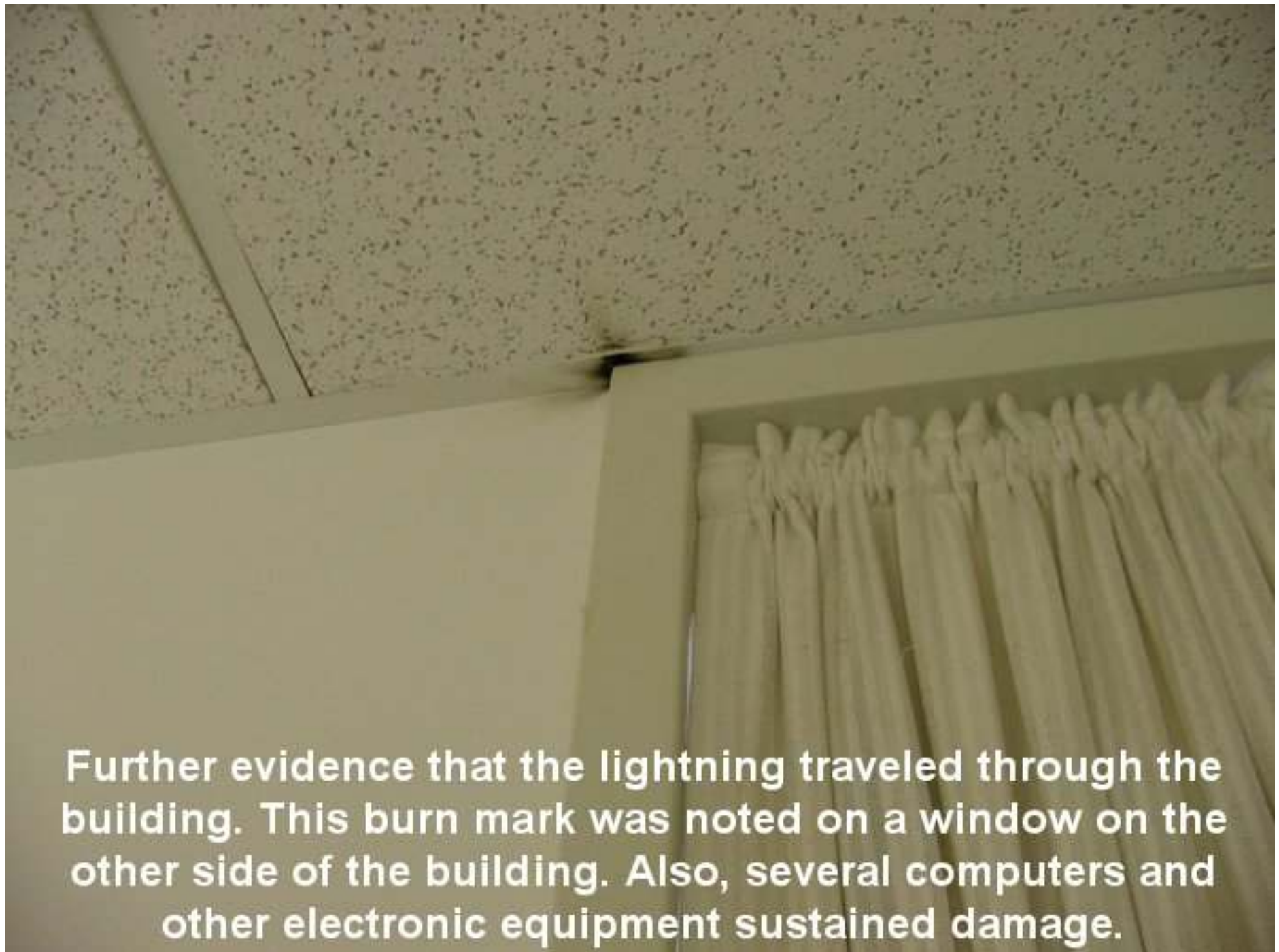




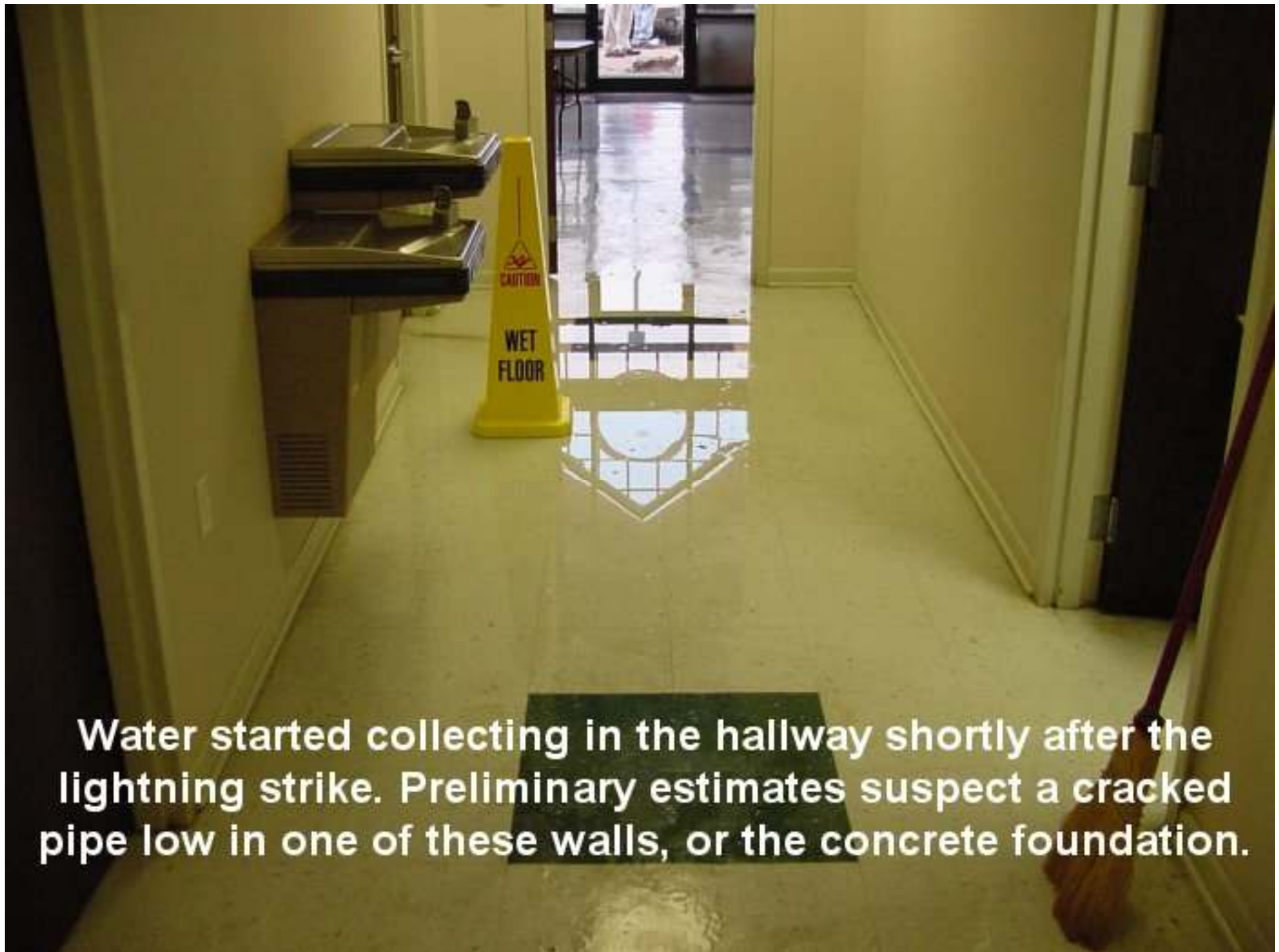
Unfortunately, dirt was not the only thing blown on the building. Pictured are projectiles of concrete and wire mesh stuck in the wall and ceiling of the front entrance.



A secondary exit region of the lightning shattered the concrete near the sidewalk and parking lot interface.



Further evidence that the lightning traveled through the building. This burn mark was noted on a window on the other side of the building. Also, several computers and other electronic equipment sustained damage.



Water started collecting in the hallway shortly after the lightning strike. Preliminary estimates suspect a cracked pipe low in one of these walls, or the concrete foundation.