



Irwin / Ben Hill County Tornado

Preliminary Report

NWS Tallahassee
Wednesday Dec. 18, 2019

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Preliminary Damage Survey Results

Tornado Name – Irwin/Ben Hill County	
Date	12/17/2019
Time (Local)	1135 am EST
EF Rating	EF-2
Est. Peak Winds	125 mph
Path Length	19.2 miles
Max Width	400 yards

Tallahassee

Reports: #TLHspotter

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US National Weather
Service Tallahassee

12/19/2019
10:59 AM EST



Public Information Statement

National Weather Service Tallahassee FL
441 PM EST (341 PM CST) Wed Dec 18 2019

...EF-2 TORNADO CONFIRMED IN IRWIN COUNTY GEORGIA...

...NWS DAMAGE SURVEY FOR 12/17/19 TORNADO EVENT...

OVERVIEW...

A supercell thunderstorm moved across Irwin and Ben Hill counties during the midday hours on December 17th. A tornado touched down in central Irwin county and tracked nearly 20 miles before lifting east of Ashton in Ben Hill county. Despite significant damage to dozens of homes there were no injuries or fatalities associated with the storm.

Rating:	EF-2
Estimated Peak Wind:	125 mph
Path Length (statute):	19.2 miles
Path Width (maximum):	400 yards
Fatalities:	0
Injuries:	0
Start Date:	Dec 17 2019
Start Time:	1135 am EST
Start Location:	8.8 miles west of Ocilla, GA
Start Lat/Lon:	31.5926/-83.3990
End Date:	Dec 17 2019
End Time:	1209 pm EST
End Location:	2.5 miles east of Ashton, GA
End Lat/Lon:	31.6982/-83.1050

The initial touchdown occurred in an un-reachable area of Irwin County approximately nine miles west of Ocilla. The survey team relied on radar data to estimate the touchdown location. The first area the damage assessment team could access was along Ponderosa Road just north of Wood Rd. where dozens of pine trees were snapped and a farm had several outbuildings damaged. Damage...consisting of snapped trees, destroyed outbuildings and damaged irrigation machinery...then continued along a widening path heading east-northeast toward the Mystic community.

Damage was significant in Mystic. Several homes suffered serious roof loss and a couple brick buildings were nearly destroyed. Debris including concrete chunks was thrown hundreds of yards into a nearby field. There were hundreds of snapped and uprooted trees of all kinds in the area. Damage was well into the EF-2 range here.



Continuous damage...mainly downed trees and damaged barns...persisted along a wide path as the tornado continued moving east-northeast. The next area of significant damage was noted in a neighborhood south of Fitzgerald, Georgia at the intersection of Vo Tech and Old Whitley Crossing Roads. More than a dozen homes suffered major roof damage here with several experiencing complete loss. A couple RVs were rolled over and heavily damaged.

The tornado continued moving northeast eventually crossing into Ben Hill county along Highway 319. Several more homes suffered roof damage, many barns were destroyed and hundreds of trees were snapped. The last evidence of damage was to a barn and trees along Partridge Road approximately 2.5 miles east of the Ashton community.

The National Weather Service would like to express our thanks to the Emergency Management Agencies in Ben Hill and Irwin counties. Their assistance was critical to the successful completion of this survey and their preparedness work and alerting systems contributed to there being no casualties with this storm

EF Scale: The Enhanced Fujita Scale classifies tornadoes into the following categories:

- EF0...Weak.....65 to 85 mph
- EF1...Weak.....86 to 110 mph
- EF2...Strong....111 to 135 mph
- EF3...Strong....136 to 165 mph
- EF4...Violent...166 to 200 mph
- EF5...Violent...>200 mph

NOTE: The information in this statement is preliminary and subject to change pending final review of the event and publication in NWS Storm Data.

Johnstone/DiCatarina/Bunker



Near Mystic, GA



Near Mystic, GA



Near Mystic, GA



Near Mystic, GA



Near Mystic, GA



Near Irwin/Ben Hill line

