

# Funnel clouds tear through city

## Saturday storm hits with full force

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WATSONVILLE — Funnel clouds and high winds tore through local neighborhoods Saturday damaging homes and a local church.

Louise Shebanek, who lives at Meadows Manor mobile home park in Watsonville with her husband, Larry, said she was walking toward the kitchen on Saturday evening when part of an awning came crashing through the kitchen window.

Violent gusts of wind completely tore apart a 12-foot by 12-foot screened-in porch on the home, along with twisting off awnings on the front of the home.

"This room's history," said Larry Shebanek of the addition, which the wind annihilated. "The wind blew it all away."

The Shebaneks surveyed the damage this morning as clean-up crews brushed up glass and loaded twisted metal beams into a flat-bed truck. "We just thank God that no one was hurt," said Louise, "and thank the fire department for responding so quickly and being so nice."

The wind was also responsible for some damage at United Presbyterian

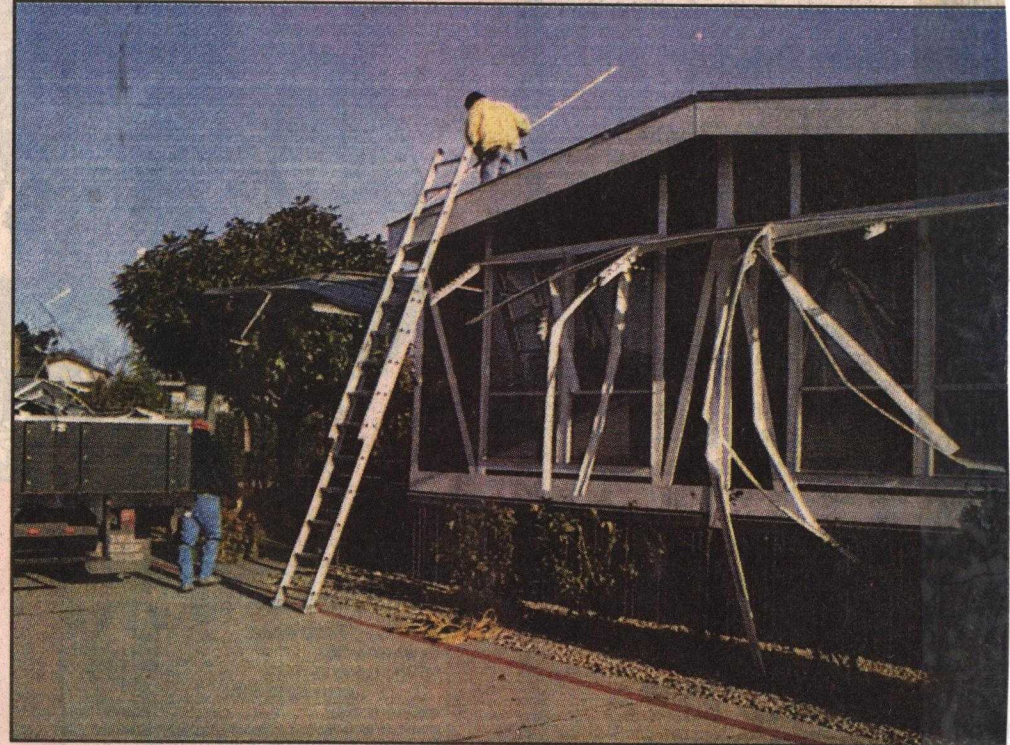
Church, 112 E. Beach St. "The cross on top is no longer there," said church secretary Lanai Fisher. "It broke in half and took some of the roof with it." Fisher was unable to estimate the extent of the damage, however.

After a tornado touched down in Richmond, located in the east San Francisco Bay area, a National Weather Service spokesman said that a multitude of calls were received from people who thought a tornado was touching down in this area. The spokesman said that the Richmond tornado was the only confirmed twister, and its fury was such that it uprooted six power poles, transformers and all.

"What these people experienced was high winds which reached 30 to 50 mph in the Monterey Bay due to a fast moving cold front," said the weather service spokesman. He pointed out that a weather pattern that fits the definition of a tornado is not commonly seen during winter or during a rainstorm.

"I swear it was a tornado," Damian Duron said of the storm that hit her 322 Palm Ave. house in Watsonville with a vengeance.

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Bridget Mendoza/Register-Pajaronian

Workers remove what was left of Larry and Louise Shebanek's addition to their mobile home after Saturday's fierce winds ripped it apart.



# HIGH WINDS

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Duron said that at about 7 p.m. on Saturday night, she heard a "roar of air" and then her house began being pelted by shingles from the next door neighbors' house at 318 Palm Ave. Duron said that the squall lasted only a few minutes, but blew shingles all the way to the end of the block.

Local fire stations were busy with reports of wires down. Aptos/La Selva Fire District reported three incidents of wires down on Saturday. North Monterey County helped Watsonville Fire Department out with one of their three wires down calls and had two of their own, one on San Juan Road and one on Fruitland.

And wires weren't the only things that fell. The California Department of Forestry reported that a tree fell at 525 Airport Blvd. at about 9:25 p.m., narrowly missing a mobile home.

"We had lightning and rain the likes of which Santa Cruz County hadn't seen since the '95 storm,"

said Scott Blakey, spokesman for Pacific Gas and Electric.

As of early Sunday morning, power had been restored to the 7,928 PG&E customers in Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito counties whose power had been knocked out Saturday night. Watsonville was the hardest hit in Santa Cruz County, with 5,208 customers losing power. Blakey said that most of these customers had power back within 12 to 24 hours, as PG&E workmen were called in to repair the damage.

"Most of the power outages were caused by wind, falling trees, and flying debris," said Blakey. He said that PG&E engineers were attributing the wild weather to a funnel cloud that came ashore at the harbor in Santa Cruz and moved down through Aptos, where 1,042 customers lost power, and into Watsonville.

The National Weather Service predicts a lull in the nasty weather, forecasting drizzle for tonight fading to partly cloudy skies tomorrow. No more storms are predicted all the way through Sunday.