

Weather

Variable Clouds With
Scattered Light Showers
Tonight And Possibly Friday

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A Small Tornado Hits SC

By JOHN McNICHOLAS
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Dark towers of cumulus clouds moved through the Santa Cruz area Wednesday and spawned sheets of rain, hail and a small tornado which touched down on Santa Cruz' west side and caused moderate damage to a building.

Chains were required on Highways 17 and 9 near the summit. The Highway Patrol reported 10 minor accidents on Highway 17 and one injury accident resulting from the snow and slush.

Bartell's Body Shop, 217 McPherson St., was hit by a twister about 5 p.m., owner Chuck Fanucci reported.

"Basically, we heard the hailstorm," he said. "There was a tremendous roar, and we saw all this stuff flying through the air. Henry said, 'I think that's the roof.' First it blew one way, then it blew another, then it blew a third direction."

Fanucci never saw the tornado itself, but a friend of his reported she saw a funnel touch down near his shop at that time, he said.

There were no injuries, and nearby buildings had shingles torn from roofs.

The roaring winds blew out the shop's skylights, ripped down a rolling gate and a garage door, and tore material from the roof, Fanucci reported. There was no structural damage, he said.

Small tornados have been reported occasionally through the years in Santa Cruz County, usually in the Corralitos area.

In 1978, minor damage was caused on Walnut and Ocean streets by bursts of winds described as "twisters."

These were not true tornados, Santa Cruz weatherman Ron McDonald said at the time.

However, Wednesday's storm had all the conditions necessary to form a true tornado. The towering cumulo-nimbus clouds create violent air movement, McDonald said, which caused hailstones up to one-quarter inch in diameter as well as the funnel.

Such vertical movement carries raindrops back up through the cloud, sometimes several times, to gather layers of water and freeze. Hailstones are formed in this manner, he said.

The same movement, caused by the cold air of the cloud, can produce the

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turbulence to form a true tornado.

Though McDonald did not see the funnel, he said reports were consistent with a true tornado.

Efforts to measure wind speeds in tornados have failed, according to McDonald, because instruments are blown apart by the violent winds. Tornados in the Midwest are estimated to spin between 150 and 250 mph, and Wednesday's twister could easily have moved at speeds in excess of 100 mph, he said.

Today's forecast calls for variable clouds with scattered light showers tonight, and a continuing chance of showers Friday. Cool temperatures will continue, with highs in the 50s and lows in the 30s to low 40s.

A small craft advisory is in effect over outer waters for northwest winds 15 to 30

mph tonight. Elsewhere, winds of 10 to 15 mph are predicted.

Rainfall totals for the last 24 hours, this season and last year to date are as follows:

	24 Hrs.	Season	Last Year
Aptos	.51	36.13	14.22
Ben Lomond	1.00	67.74	27.50
Bonny Doon	1.24	70.27	24.33
Boulder Creek	.94	75.51	31.89
Capitola	.71	40.77	14.78
Corralitos	.12	40.34	16.66
Empire Grade	1.65	81.54	29.36
Felton	1.00	61.71	22.81
Graham Hill	.90	51.80	20.50
Happy Valley	.80	63.10	23.72
Lompico	1.10	80.10	29.55
Natural Bridges	.74	29.99	14.18
Rio Del Mar	.41	36.55	14.55
Santa Cruz	.48	37.88	15.89
Soquel	.56	41.22	15.60
Summit	.40	60.10	29.77
Swanton	.70	42.23	21.01
Watsonville	.33	30.45	14.61