

TORNADO HITS BRADFORD



The grey funnel cloud as it passed over Bradford yesterday. It touched down in parts of town.



Cleaning up after the twister swept through yesterday.



A mass of downed trees on Fletcher St.



Debris is scattered over back yards in the hard-hit Fletcher St. area.

BRADFORD - A tornado smashed through Bradford yesterday at around 3:30 p.m., causing considerable damage.

There were no reports of injuries.

Fletcher St. was the hardest area hit, with residents reporting shingles torn off roofs, trusses uprooted, windows smashed, small sheds torn to pieces, and fibreglass insulation spread everywhere. Part of the roof of the Fletcher St. home of Bradford doctor Larry Barcza was ripped off.

Stanley and Muriel Cairns were driving to their home at the corner of Scanlon Ave. and Colburne St. when the twister struck.

"There was a great ball of flames," Mr. Cairns said. It was later found that they saw an optical illusion caused by the wind ripping off red fibreglass roofing insulation.

Mrs. Cairns added "When we were coming down the road we could see debris flying through the air."

LOST PATIO

The couple, who moved into their house six years ago, lost their back patio. Mrs. Cairns said the sound of the storm was "terrible - just like a roar." She said she'd never seen such a storm, and added "you wouldn't want to, either."

Just down the street from the Cairns on John

St., Luis Moniz didn't see the storm, but he felt it. He was inside his house when the tornado hit and told reporters he could feel the velocity of the winds.

At Fred C. Cook Public School there were a few children playing on the school grounds just before the twister struck. A workman at the school, Robert Laraby, told The Witness the doors of the school couldn't be closed because of the force of the wind. He said the lights went out and a picnic table outside was blown away. "The kids were getting extremely nervous."

He said the tornado lasted about two to three minutes.

Desmond Paul Smith was on his way home to his Holland St. apartment when it struck. He was heading north through the main intersection when he saw "Stuff going up in the air and a big bolt of lightning. It knocked lines out and I saw flames from the hydro poles."

TREES UPROOTED

He said he saw branches as long as 6 ft. going 300 ft. into the air, and saw huge trees knocked over with their roots exposed.

Mr. Smith said he warned a man on the street that there was a tornado coming and the man didn't believe him. "Then he looked behind him. "Then he looked behind him and started to run."

The Bradford man also saw the 20-ft. hole in the roof of International Fruit Distributors and

said staff there showed him a huge tractor trailer which had been lifted several feet to a new resting place by the force of the winds.

Traffic lights at the main intersection were knocked out and power was blacked out in several areas around town.

Power was restored in some areas at 6 p.m.

DAMAGING HAIL

Hail the size of mothballs also swept through the town. By press time damage estimates were unavailable.

Shocked residents toured Fletcher St. to view the worst of the damage.

Bradford police reported numerous minor car accidents, and the Bradford Fire Department was kept busy responding to calls about downed power lines.

Minutes after the tornado struck, an official of the weather office at Toronto International airport confirmed that tornado warnings had been issued for a large area of southern Ontario. It appears Bradford was the hardest hit area.

The Witness office on Dissette St. was also blacked out by the tornado, and staff put together the final pages of this edition with manual equipment by candlelight.

Our thanks to Newmarket Photo Lab for the use of their facilities.