



NEWS RELEASE

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SPRING STORM GRAZES FORT RILEY, HITS OGDEN, MANHATTAN

By Christie Vanover

Spring has sprung, bringing about Kansas' legendary winds and violent tornados.

Northeast Kansas felt the brunt of spring's wakeup call this morning as a cold front triggered several thunderstorms in the region, causing damage to numerous homes, buildings and vehicles in Manhattan and Ogden.

"We were fortunate here (at Fort Riley) based on the amount of winds we had," said John Boyd, Fort Riley's fire chief. "We didn't have any reported injuries or accidents. I guess that's because of the time at night that it happened — everyone was asleep."

Fort Riley reported 53 mile per hour winds at the Multi-Purpose Range Complex and 43 mile per hour winds on Main Post.

"We had 44 and 40 mile per hour winds the last couple of days, and we got the 53 mile per hour winds at 2:55 early in the morning," said Leonard Hume, Fort Riley meteorological technician.

As the storm moved eastward toward Ogden and Manhattan, wind speeds picked up substantially. The National Weather Service preliminary storm reports showed 82 mile per hour winds at the Manhattan Regional Airport, which were the fastest wind speeds in the nation on April 19 not associated with a tornado.

In addition to the strong winds, the area was clobbered by hail. One-inch size hail poured out of the Manhattan skies, while dime-size hail struck Ogden. Fort Riley received one-fourth to five-eighths-inch size hail and along with a half-inch of rain, according to Hume.

The Fort Riley Fire Department started responding to calls at 2:30 a.m. and continued running calls until shift change at 7:30 a.m. The department received eight calls for fire alarms and downed power lines. All of the fire alarms were negative.

There were no significant power outages on Fort Riley. However, Ogden, Fort Riley's neighbor to the east, lost power around 3 a.m. Because of a community collaboration, Ogden regained power just after 6 a.m.

A line is set up between Ogden and Camp Funston that would service the installation if it lost its power, however after this storm the tables were turned. "We actually fed Ogden," said Keith Jevons, chief of maintenance. "KPL called this morning and Ogden is being fed through Fort Riley."

As of 10:30 a.m., power was out at all of Fort Riley's training ranges, except the MPRC. "Our crews are going to be out there today. The goal is to get power to train fire seven today for a reserve unit that is training there tomorrow," said Jevons.

Two electric poles broke and eight more were leaning. This afternoon most of the 7000 area on Custer Hill was without power from 2-4 p.m. to repair a pole that broke behind Bldg. 7264.

While many soldiers and their families took shelter during the fury, soldiers on guard at Fort Riley's access points had to brave the elements.

"We faced really strong winds, hail, heavy rain and small amounts of flooding in certain areas of the gates," said Sgt. Jamie Hill, who was working the Henry Gate during the storm.

"We kept the minimum possible soldiers up on the gates and the rest took shelter inside the tent. We still have to check ID cards regardless of weather," said Hill, training sergeant, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 70th Engineer Battalion.

This was the first major storm of the season, however, the most active month in Kansas for thunderstorm activity is May, and most tornadoes in Kansas occur between April and June.

Fort Riley is publishing a special Severe Weather edition of the *Fort Riley Post* April 26 with safety tips and severe weather facts. Pick up a copy to learn more about what to do when a storm hits.