

National

Tornado leaves five dead, 37 hurt

United Press International
TULSA, Okla. — A small dog, whining over the body of its owner, helped searchers locate the body of the fifth confirmed victim of a tornado that ripped through southeast Tulsa and adjoining suburbs. Four other bodies had been found earlier and authorities believed all of the victims came from a small mobile home park in Bixby that was wiped out by the twister that apparently touched down at least four times as it passed through the area late Sunday.

The fifth victim was found lying in a ditch, his body guarded by the small dog, State Trooper Kent Thompson said.

At least 37 other persons were injured and dozens of houses and mobile homes were damaged or destroyed, authorities said.

Tornado damage was also reported at Kiefer, a small town about 15 miles west of Bixby.

"We've got several homes completely destroyed and a lot of them got the roofs off," Kiefer Mayor Earl Heylon said. "There's a lot of trees down, and we... have extensive damage in a new home area." Before hitting the mobile home park in Bixby, the tornado struck a church and injured several of the approximately 40 people inside, officials said.

An observer at the scene said several of the people in the church suffered broken bones and other injuries.

"The Red Cross is providing first aid (to those in the church and other damaged areas) and Tulsa Life Flight is bringing the injured to St. Francis Hospital," American Red Cross spokeswoman Cheryl Blonsky said.

"At this point 37 have been brought to the hospital," she said. "We have no report on the extent of injuries or the number admitted."

A preliminary survey showed 21 houses destroyed, 16 with major damage and 30 with minor damage within the Tulsa city limits alone, she said.

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Latest Atlanta victim was smothered, coroner says

United Press International
ATLANTA — Joseph Bell, the 24th young black slain in the Atlanta area during the past 20 months, died of asphyxiation and was probably smothered, DeKalb County Medical Examiner Joe Burton said Monday.

Of the slain youths, all but two were male and 12 died of asphyxiation or strangulation.

After an autopsy on Bell's body, Burton told reporters that there did not seem to be any ligature strangulation such as would be the case with a rope. The skin of the neck was too decomposed for him to be certain, he said.

The cause of death was probably "suffocation or a combination of suffocation and smothering," Burton said.

The body had been "in the river almost as long as Bell had been missing," he said. Bell had been missing since March 2.

There was no evidence of external injury to the body other than it being snagged on debris in the river, Burton said.

The autopsy did reveal something of what the youth ate before

he died, he said. He declined to elaborate, but said "it is the kind of thing that will be helpful in tracing the last steps" before Bell died.

No evidence of sexual abuse was found on Bell's body or on those of the several other victims he has examined, Burton said.

"There have been a lot of rumors about the genital organs in the children that have been found dead," Burton said. "Of all those (autopsies) that I have personally done and personally been associated with, the genital organs have been completely intact, as in this case of Joseph Bell."

He did say, however, that decomposition prevented his determining whether there might have been other abuse.

The youth's body was found on the bank of the South River Sunday, about seven weeks after he vanished. A 25th black youth, 10-year-old Darron Glass, is still missing.

An unidentified couple trying out a new motorbike on a path near the South River discovered Bell's body about two miles from where the body of another black

youth — 13-year-old Curtis Ker — was found six weeks ago.

The body of 10-year-old Jackson was found on the same river in an industrial area Nov. 2.

Three other victims — "Bubba" Duncan, 21, Tim Hill, 13 and Patrick Rogers, 13, have been found in the tachochee River within the six months.

Bell and Hill lived in a block of each other in the southwest Atlanta neighborhood of Inman Park. Bell was described by friends as a street-wise youth who was always looking for a way to make pocket money.

Like many of the other victims, Bell came from a poor neighborhood and a broken home.

Bell was last seen Monday at the seafood restaurant where he sometimes worked. He was reported missing the next day and was not added to the list of children until March 13.

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Medical examiners used X-rays to identify Bell's body, which was in poor condition. Kalb County Public Safety Director Dick Hand said Sunday.

There were no serious wounds to indicate how Bell died, he said.

Sources close to the investigation said Sunday that authorities have picked up several youths who resemble a composite drawing of a man seen with one of the 25 missing and murdered youths but so far none are considered suspects.

Investigators have "got a pretty good people to look at" who resemble the composite drawing of a man driving a car in which Patrick Rogers — the 23rd victim — was seen entering the day he disappeared, the source said.

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