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Tornado damage to farms totals \$35 million

BY JAMES H. EVERHART
HARRISBURG — Damage to agricultural goods, equipment, crops, livestock and real estate totaled an estimated \$35.5 million in last week's killer tornados, state officials said.

Damage extended to literally thousands of farmers and producers, who lost homes, silos, barns, tractors, equipment, cows and crops in the storms. A few lost their lives.

The death toll in the disaster — which spanned three states and parts of Canada — now stands at 86, while overall damages in the 12-county disaster area in Pennsylvania are estimated at \$225 million.

State and federal agencies and a variety of relief organizations have already begun the process of cleaning up the wreckage and helping thousands of victims return to life as it was before Black Friday.

The damage occurred during a five-hour period the night of May 31, as 26 tornados touched down through western Pennsylvania,

Ohio, and New York, the nation's worst tornado occurrence in more than a decade.

Federal relief officials, although reporting a preliminary damage figure slightly lower than the state total, had broken down loss amounts by category, as follows:

- Housing, \$6,740,000.
- Equipment, \$8,565,000.
- Farm buildings, \$10,318,500.
- Livestock, \$960,700 (horses, \$74,500; cows, \$386,200; hogs, \$500,000).
- Fencing, \$42,000.
- Fowl (mainly quail and turkey), \$287,000.

Crawford County, one of the hardest hit, reported ag losses of \$7,127,000, an estimate which Crawford County Farmers Home Administration supervisor Bob Schoenfeld described as "conservative." The figure included damage to or destruction of 860 pieces of farm equipment, worth a total of \$4,300,000.

Schoenfeld said the destruction in his area included lost cows, missing silos, vanished equipment, a two-ton truck twisted in half, a

pickup truck rolled 400 to 500 yards, and livestock and animals hideously disfigured by the powerful winds.

Federal officials were on the scene trying to help the stricken farmers to apply for new loans and credit to rebuild their facilities and return to operation.

A Farmers Home Administration official said his agency had money available to lend to borrowers who were not able to obtain credit elsewhere

Those farmers who suffered losses were eligible to obtain low-interest loans for 80 percent of actual losses, up to \$500,000.

State Department of Agriculture officials were on the scene, helping with damage assessments and working to determine salvageability of food in storage at groceries, warehouses, dairies and other food storage facilities

Farmers who needed assistance were directed to the Disaster Assistance Centers to be in operation from today through Wednesday throughout the region.



The first-floor walls are standing, but the roof and the second floor of the Robert Foresman house in Dewart, Northumberland County were torn off by a tornado.

Amid the destruction, neighbor helps neighbor

BY MARGIE FUSCO
 Staff Correspondent

DEWART — Around the bend of River Road, the macadem twists into the mouth of hell.

Three days ago this was fertile bottomland, dotted with lush farms easily visible from nearby Route 405 or across the river on Route 15. Now one-half mile north of Dewart, Northumberland County, as well as across the river in the Allenwood and Elmsport, in Union and Lycoming Counties, the farms are rubble.

Buildings are no longer standing, save for an occasional silo or half a house. Oak groves have been snapped off like so many matchsticks. The pastures are empty, littered with window frames, torn curtains, bedding, roof tiles, and dead animals.

A preliminary damage estimate shows 28 barns, 9 silos, untold numbers of livestock and

machinery and vehicles, 77 homes, two businesses, a church, and 140 mobile homes or trailers destroyed or damaged in Northumberland County. The Union County damage was primarily to a campground and eight houses.

In Lycoming County 35 farms were either destroyed or received major damage. The aftermath of the storm left five people dead and about 100 injured. First estimates put property loss at the \$2 million mark.

Last Friday began as a normal evening at the Foresman farm. Shortly after dark, a group returned from the nearby river where they'd been fishing. A few more people were in the barnyard finishing evening chores. Robert and Eleanor Foresman were upstairs in their brick farmhouse about ready to end the day.

Outside there was a storm

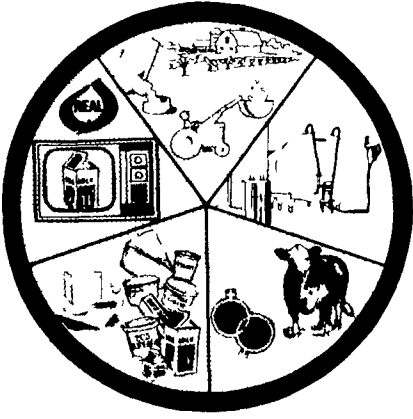
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"A late-model junkyard," is Tom Lower's description of his new and used implement dealership located east of Evans City in Butler County. Lower (pictured with daughter Jenny) estimates that damages from last Friday's tornado could easily top \$1 million.

JUNE IS DAIRY MONTH at Lancaster Farming

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