

Two Dead as Storms Rake Area

Written by Steve Frank
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The double line of storms that raked the area late yesterday afternoon brought downpours, high winds, and bushels of hail, pounding the area—and claiming two lives. Power was out in many areas as trees fell across power lines, roads, and into homes. Downed trees and lines claimed two lives in Wilkes County, including a fireman, electrocuted in a call to an area where numerous live power lines were down among downed trees. The Winston-Salem Journal reports that Tony Barker, a member of the Mountain View Fire Department, was electrocuted at the scene of a small fire shortly after 3 p.m. after wind blew part of a large maple tree across power lines behind Dale's Tire & Auto on Traphill Road near the Yellow Banks Road intersection. The paper said that a woman who lives near the scene said she saw Barker bending over as if to look more closely where flames were coming from beneath a small metal storage building when he collapsed and she called for help. It appeared that Barker was electrocuted without touching the building, possibly by standing in water charged by the downed line. Other firefighters responded and pulled Barker away from the building. The paper says efforts by Mountain View Fire Department first responders and Wilkes Emergency Medical Services to revive Barker with CPR were unsuccessful and he was pronounced dead at Wilkes Regional Medical Center.

It was less than 10 minutes after the firefighter was reported down that Wilkes Communications received a report that a tree had fallen on a man along Mountain Valley Church Road in the Mulberry-Fairplains Fire District. The paper said that Maurice Kilby, who turned 77 Tuesday, died when a large white pine tree fell on him in his yard, quoting Mulberry-Fairplains Chief Ricky Gambill. Gambill said strong wind blew over both forks of the tree and the larger fork fell on Kilby's abdomen and chest. Kilby's wife found him and called for help, but he was dead when emergency personnel arrived, according to Gambill.

BREMCO reports Linemen with Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation worked into the night to repair damage to power lines and poles caused by a summer storm late Thursday afternoon. Outages began around 5 p.m. and were concentrated primarily in Caldwell County where the storm brought down trees and power lines and led to several broken power poles. A total of 4,000 members were affected. At 11:30 p.m., linemen were still working to repair damage in 43 different locations in the Dry Ponds area to restore power to 239 members. In Watauga County, 2,365 members were affected, with more than 2,000 in the Bamboo and Tweetsie Railroad areas. Scattered outages affected Deep Gap, Hound Ears and Sherwood communities. All power was restored in Watauga County by 11:30 p.m. In Ashe County, 682 members in the Warrensville area and 74 more scattered across the county were affected by downed trees and tree limbs on power lines. All were restored Thursday night.

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Photos: Joel Gillie, Phillip Greene, Dave Faherty