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Fast-moving storm takes down trees, power at Sawyer Lake

By THOMAS P. CALDWELL, THE LACONIA DAILY SUN Aug 7, 2018



A storm on Friday afternoon snapped off several trees, including one that fell on this cottage on Berry Avenue at Sawyer Lake. Downed power lines are in the foreground. (Courtesy Photo/Dan Walker)

GILMANTON — There were no reported injuries from a storm that created a microburst over Sawyer Lake on Friday afternoon, but one couple had been in a room of their cottage only moments before a large tree fell through the roof and left the building uninhabitable.

Mary and Steve Shremp are lucky to be alive, according to their neighbor, Dan Walker, who stopped by to view the damage in the private community after the storm had passed.

The storm that sheared off the tops of some trees and uprooted others hit about 4:30 p.m., knocking out power and damaging a number of the homes, according to the Gilmanton Fire Department. It took about eight hours to restore the power, and the cleanup was still underway Monday.



Gilmanton police and fire personnel responded to the area to keep people away from downed power lines until Eversource could get there and make the repairs. The Gilmanton Highway Department also assisted in clearing the trees. The Sawyer Lake Association, which maintains its own roads, has been busy making repairs in the wake of the storm.

Walker, who lives on Chestnut Avenue, said he and a friend were just getting ready to go out kayaking and, with his Navy background, he first checked with the National Weather Service. There were bad weather warnings and he calculated that storm “was heading right at us.”

Moments later, hail “the size of an average person’s thumb” was pounding his deck and the awning over his door, Walker said.

“It was alarming. There was thunder, but not a lot of rainfall. Then the wind was coming up and I couldn’t tell whether it was trees falling or thunder that I was hearing,” he said, describing it as a large-diameter downdraft, “larger than a waterspout,” that quickly moved in and out again.

“It was like a war zone,” he said in describing the aftermath of the storm. “Some life jackets and lawn chairs that had been near the water had been blown across the road and into the woods.”

He said it looked as if lightning had struck trees on Berry Avenue, breaking the tops off the trees.



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