

## DISASTER AT SUN'N FUN



The horrific storm that hit Sun'n Fun on Thursday, March 31, left millions of dollars in damage. There were many erroneous reports that first came out. The later reports, on Friday afternoon and Saturday, April 1-2 were more correct. Here are some of the later reports with links to their full text:

The National Weather Service confirmed in a report released on Friday that a category EF-1 tornado hit the Lakeland airport on Thursday about noon time. The tornado had top winds estimated at 95 mph, a path length of just over a half mile, and a path width of about 30 to 40 yards. The NWS report also confirmed the impact of 70 to 75 mph "downburst thunderstorm severe straight-line winds," with

the tornado impacting the west end of the runway about 12:05 p.m. The full NWS report is available online here: <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/images/tbw/TopNews/PDF/survey31mar2011.pdf>

### 69 PLANES DAMAGED

Possibly the best accurate report came from the Lakeland *Ledger* in an article by John Chambliss. He writes:

“At least seven people were taken to Lakeland Regional Medical Center with minor injuries, while others were treated at the event. High winds toppled a shack a security guard was in, while poles and other flying debris struck visitors.”



“Lakeland Police said Friday morning that 69 planes were damaged causing hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage and a dangerous situation with spilled gas. Dozens of vendor tents were uprooted. Officials canceled all events and visitors were forced to leave the grounds, creating long lines of traffic . . . City employees and a contractor expected to turn over the damaged planes Thursday night and

tow them to a nearby field or lot.”

You can read the complete Ledger article at <http://www.theledger.com/article/20110331/NEWS/110339894?Title=About-40-Planes-Some-Buildings-Damaged-at-Sun-n-Fun>

Note about the damaged planes:

PHOTO GALLERY: Boneyard of Damaged Airplanes at Sun 'n Fun

( [http://www.avweb.com/news/snf/NWSTornadoLikelyHitSunnFun\\_204396-1.html](http://www.avweb.com/news/snf/NWSTornadoLikelyHitSunnFun_204396-1.html) )

The report about a building collapse trapping 70 people came in at first as fact, then rumor, then truth. Such is the variability of news when there is a disaster. The last news about this is:

### TENT COLLAPSE DID TRAP 70 AT SUN 'N FUN

(from Avflash! Sun'n Fun: After the Storm --- April 1, 2011)

“There were some scary moments for about 70 people, including nine former Women Air Service pilots in their 90s, when the storm that ripped through Sun 'n Fun on Thursday collapsed the tent structure in which a luncheon was being held in the WASPs' honor. The event was sponsored by the Wings of Dreams Aviation Museum of Keystone Heights Airport in Florida. Bob Oehl, an executive volunteer with the museum said he and others fought to keep the aluminum structure and tent supported while most of the attendees huddled under the tables. He said he called 911 as rain, hail and furious winds collapsed the structure around them. Initial reports of a building collapse trapping 70 people were refuted by Lakeland Police and Sun 'n Fun staff, possibly because the facility was not a permanent structure. "But it happened," said Oehl.”

See this article at:

[http://www.avweb.com/news/snf/SunNFun2011\\_SunnFunHitByViciousWindsRainExtensiveDamage\\_204378-1.html](http://www.avweb.com/news/snf/SunNFun2011_SunnFunHitByViciousWindsRainExtensiveDamage_204378-1.html)