

# At least 25 are dead after a rare, long-lasting tornado tore through Mississippi

By Juliana Kim, Joe Hernandez

A rare, long-track tornado left a trail of devastation across western Mississippi on Friday night — killing at least 25 people, tearing buildings and leaving thousands of homes without power. At least one person also died in storms in Alabama.

"This is a horrific event," Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves said during a news briefing. "It's heartbreaking. There's really no other way in which to describe it. It is absolutely heartbreaking."

President Biden, who spoke to Reeves on Saturday, also called the images from Mississippi "heartbreaking" and offered the full support of the federal government in the aftermath of the storm.

"Jill and I are praying for those who have lost loved ones in the devastating tornadoes in Mississippi and for those whose loved ones are missing," he said.

Photos show the devastation caused by the deadly Mississippi tornado

Biden also noted that FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell had already deployed emergency response personnel and resources to the state to assist

with recovery efforts. "To those impacted by these devastating storms, and to the first responders and emergency personnel working to help their fellow Americans: we will do everything we can to help," he added.

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency said on Saturday afternoon that 25 people had died and dozens were injured due to the tornadoes.

Officials noted that local and state rescue teams had been deployed overnight, and resources were available for victims impacted by the destructive weather.

In Alabama, the Morgan County Emergency Management Agency confirmed to NPR that at least one person in that state had died after a mobile home overturned during tornadoes.

## The storm left a trail of devastation behind

A tornado landed in Rolling Fork, Miss., which is about an hour's drive from Jackson, around 8 p.m. local time, according to National Weather Service meteorologist Lance Perrilloux.

Rolling Fork Mayor Eldridge Walker told CNN that his "city is gone."

Walker, who has been sur-

veying the wreckage in his town, said the damage and devastation is widespread. He added that several residents have been found trapped in their homes and rushed to hospitals while emergency responders search for more survivors.

"The rescue missions are still taking place as we speak," Walker said on Saturday morning.

The twister then traveled northeast, upending neighboring towns in Silver City and Winona. The severe weather also produced golf ball-size hail.

Devastation continued in Black Hawk, a small town about 60 miles northeast of where the tornado made landfall.

Houses were destroyed, buildings collapsed and trees across the town were splintered, according to photos shared by a local resident, Chris Alford.

Alford, who lives a few miles outside of Black Hawk and frequently spends time there, visited the area on Saturday to help assess the damage. He said some residents were found trapped inside cars and that houses and cherished community landmarks, including a Baptist church and community



Debris covers a damaged structure in Rolling Fork, Miss., on Saturday. A powerful tornado tore through the Deep South on Friday night, killing several people in Mississippi and obliterating dozens of buildings. Rogelio Solis/AP

center, were turned into ruin. "The area is just completely devastated," he told NPR. "People are pulling together, but they need help."

Reeves declared a state of emergency in the affected areas. FEMA administrator Deanne Criswell told FOX News on Saturday afternoon that she was working with Reeves to get a federal emergency disaster declaration request written "as quickly as possible."

The National Weather Service said a severe weather threat for the area was continuing through Saturday evening, with the possibility of showers and thunderstorms into Sunday.

Experts say such a long-lasting tornado is "very

rare" In total, the tornado spanned roughly 170 miles and lasted over an hour, which Perrilloux of the NWS described as "very rare."

"This is one of the more rare tornadoes that we've seen in recorded Mississippi history given its longevity and strength over a period of time," he told NPR.

At least one other, weaker tornado may have hit Mississippi but it has not been confirmed, according to Perrilloux.

Reeves said search and rescue operations were continuing across the state.

"The loss will be felt in these towns forever," he said. "Please pray for God's hand to be over all who lost

family and friends." At least 13 people have died in Sharkey County, The Associated Press reported. Five more people were killed in Carroll County and Monroe County, which are northeast of Rolling Fork, according to ABC News.

In a Facebook live video, Mississippi Highway Patrol trooper Jose Watson also confirmed another death in Silver City.

As of Saturday afternoon, more than 40,000 customers had lost power in Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee, according to PowerOutage.us.

In Alabama, residents in Hamilton in Marion County reported roof damage, downed trees and powerlines, according to Al.com.



Storm debris and uprooted and splintered trees surround the Carroll County school bus that Helen Munford drove. It was parked in the Summerfield community of Carroll County near her mobile home, which was demolished by a suspected tornado Friday night that claimed her life and that of two others. (By Ken Strachan)

## \*Carroll

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He pointed to the schoolhouse. "I don't know how old it was," he said, "but my dad went to school there."

Phillips said he suffered "some nicks," but his wife sustained more serious injury. "My wife got the brunt of it on her face. She got hit by a stick. She got a scar right up here, where it pulled her hair up."

He and Michelle were treated at an ambulance that

was stationed at the local Dollar General, but they had to walk through the dark to get there. "She's got arthritis real bad," he said. "We had deputies and EMTs helping us, but we sat there for a couple of hours."

He pointed out the holes in his pickup, which included a blown-in windshield, punctured tires and a hole in the driver's-side rear cab window. "That's where my son was sitting," he said.

Residents combed the area looking for anything salvageable. They seemed

stunned but in good spirits. The church building suffered catastrophic damage, with one whole side of it placed flat on the ground, forming a slick platform on which people walked to look inside the remains of the church. The altar was heavily damaged and exposed to the sun, with the piano shoved to one side and the Christian flagpole standing upright next to it. Four heavy altar chairs appeared untouched by the storm, which put a big limb through an interior window. A framed oil painting of the

# Hyde-Smith, Cruz offer Constitutional Amendment to cement Supreme Court at nine justices

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) today joined U.S. Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and others in reintroducing a proposed constitutional amendment that would ensure only nine justices could serve on the U.S. Supreme Court at a time.

The "Keep Nine" constitutional amendment is paired with a Cruz bill to create a point of order requiring a supermajor-

ity (two-thirds) vote before any legislative effort to modify the size of the Court could be considered in the Senate. In recent years, multiple Democrats have come out in favor of packing the Supreme Court by adding at least four additional seats.

"For more than 150 years, our United States Supreme Court has carried out its duty with nine justices. It is both nonsensical and dangerous for Democrats to pack the courts solely because it suits their political agenda," Hyde-Smith said. "This legislation would insulate the courts from political posturing, and keep checks and balances operating as they were designed to do."

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ity (two-thirds) vote before any legislative effort to modify the size of the Court could be considered in the Senate. In recent years, multiple Democrats have come out in favor of packing the Supreme Court by adding at least four additional seats.

"The Democrats' answer to a Supreme Court that is

dedicated to upholding the rule of law and the Constitution is to pack it with liberals who will rule the way they want. The Supreme Court should be independent, not inflated by every new administration. That's why I've introduced a constitutional amendment to permanently keep the number of justices at nine," said Cruz, who also introduced the legislation in previous sessions of Congress.

If enacted, the two proposals would provide a substantial barrier to attempts to change the composition of the Supreme Court. Currently, the number of justices on the Court could be modified with a simple majority vote in Congress and the approval of the President.

U.S. Senators Roger Marshall, M.D. (R-Kan.), Bill Hagerty (R-Tenn.), Mike Lee (R-Utah), Cotton (R-Ark.), Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Josh Hawley (R-Mo.), Thom Tillis (R-N.C.), John Kennedy (R-La.), and Mike Braun (R-Ind.) also cosponsored the "Keep Nine" constitutional amendment.