

Powerful Storm fells trees, wires

By CATHERINE BAUM Staff Writer



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A tree split on Massasoit Street in Northampton during a storm at about 6:15 p.m. Saturday.

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NORTHAMPTON - John Ferrara, 9, was pedaling his bike as fast as he could during Saturday night's storm when he heard cracking and, moments later, saw a tree fall just 70 feet in front of him.

"It was scary," said John, who was on his way home from a friend's house when the tree split and took out a power line on Massasoit Street. His neighbors, Phil and Wendy Cooper, gave him a dry shirt and helped escort him home (which, by the way, involved short-cutting through backyards to avoid "live wires" on and around the street.)

Saturday's storm downed a few trees in the city, causing power cuts and damage on Massasoit, Hawley, Fruit, Summer and Aldrich streets, according to Sgt. Jody Kasper of the Northampton police.

"It was pretty quick - it all happened in about 10 or 15 minutes and then it was all over," said Kasper, who noted the incidents took place around 6 p.m.

Easthampton police said they had no reports of damage, although a pine tree did fall on a home and car on Chestnut Street. Amherst police also said there were no reports of storm damage there.

A "pretty substantial" tree that fell on Hawley Street in Northampton destroyed one car and caused minor damage to another, Kasper said Sunday.

On Saturday evening, John Ferrara's sister, Mary, 15, was looking out the front window of her 54 Massasoit St. home when the tree fell. Neighbors say they believe the tree fell due to storm winds.

"There was a lot of rain and I'd never seen a storm like that before and all of a sudden I just heard a crack," Mary Ferrara said. "I looked up and down the street and I didn't know what it was until the second crack, and it fell and the telephone pole went sideways."

Her mother, Cathy Santosus, was in the office in the back of the house when the fall was brought to her attention.

"I just heard my daughter and her dad scream as the tree came out," Santosus said. "I started to worry - John was out of the house and we didn't know where he was."

Santosus called 911 and shortly afterward got a call from the Coopers about her son's whereabouts. The Ferraras' power was running again at around 10 p.m. Saturday, but Santosus said her other neighbors, the Bowmans, were not home when the tree fell, and as of Sunday evening they still didn't have power.

Meanwhile, a tree snapped a telephone pole on the corner of Summer and Aldrich streets Saturday, causing damage to two cars and cutting the power until just before 2 a.m.

Tiffany Wijnhoven, of 1 Aldrich St., was watching the storm from inside her home when she saw that tree fall 25 to 30 yards away.

"It was actually fairly quiet and that was what was kind of spooky about it," Wijnhoven said. Her husband, Robert, was watching television with their 15-week-old daughter, Morgan, when they lost power, and the family resorted to camping flashlights and candles for light.

On the other side of that corner, at 57 Summer St., Nan Shipsky, 61, who is one of four tenants there, said she felt "disconnected" by the power outage.

"The telephone is a lifeline for someone like me," said Shipsky.

As a woman who usually sleeps two hours a night, Shipsky said she "willed herself to go to bed at 9," despite the police car's flashing lights and work being done on the wires outside her home.

"That's the thing that surprises me is that I did manage to sleep," said Shipsky, who woke up for the day at 2 a.m. Sunday. "I was delighted that when I woke up everything was on. That was tremendous."

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