70 mph winds, torrents of rain wreak havoc on city.

For the first time this year, tornado sirens wailed in Gothenburg.

Meteorologist Michael Moritz with the National Weather Service in Hastings said a tornado warning issued at 9:41 p.m. last Thursday night expired about half an hour later. Two severe thunderstorm warnings were also in effect.

Although no tornadoes or funnels actually formed, Moritz said, wind gusts of up to 70 mph toppled three Union Pacific Railroad cars on the west edge of town and ripped branches and uprooted trees throughout town.

“The tornado warning was issues based upon strong radar rotation patterns,” Moritz said.

City services director Shane Gruber said a deluge, measuring five inches on the west edge of town, in two hours was too much for city storm sewers and streets flooded for a couple of hours.

Still, Gruber said the city “dodged a bullet” as even more rain was reported east of Gothenburg.

Nickel to quarter-sized hail was also reported in town.

Crop damage was reported north of town.

Cor Peterson, who farms with her husband, Mick, said golf-ball sized hail damaged corn and sorghum in fields about 12 miles north of Gothenburg.

Peterson said she also heard of hail damage around the Dawson and Custer County line.

Throughout town, electrical service lines downed by trees and trees and large branches that blocked streets had the city crew working through and after the storm.

Nebraska Department of Road officials cleared Highway 30 just west of Gothenburg of dead limbs torn off in the storm that blocked the roadway.

In addition to branches that pulled down service lines to homes, electrical department director Mike Libich said a sub-feed blew a fuse in the 1200 block of 20th Street that caused a power outage for several hours.

Friday morning found many residents removing limbs from their yards. Gruber said branches from trees bordering the street are picked up by the city but limbs from yards are the property owner’s responsibility.

Branches from street trees were picked up by the city Friday and Monday and taken to the tree lot on the southwest edge of town.

Gruber said he thought the trimming of street trees this past lessened the amount of limb debris that the street department usually picks up.

Another noticeable improvement, he said, was that the heavy rain didn't create sewer issues as it has in the past. Gruber noted that the cleaning of problem sewer pipes by a Kearney company last year probably helped.

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