

23 November 2019

Tornado in Utrecht in KwaZulu-Natal and other severe storms on Friday evening (22 November 2019)

On Friday evening (22 November 2019), severe thunderstorms lashed the north-western parts of KwaZulu-Natal and south-eastern parts of Mpumalanga. These severe storms resulted in damaging winds and hail.



Figure 1: Tornado damages in the Utrecht area on Friday evening (Source: Newcastle Advertiser).

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A tornado is a rotating column of air extending from the cloud base of a cumuliform cloud and is in contact with the ground. These vortices can result in extensive damages and loss of life. At 19:30 local time, a severe thunderstorm warning was issued for the Amajuba and uMzinyathi Districts in KwaZulu-Natal with damaging winds and hail, which was then forecasted to move to Zululand. A severe storm developed between Newcastle and Dundee in KwaZulu-Natal on Friday evening and moved eastwards. This storm then changed its path north-east in the direction of Utrecht.

Specific radar signatures suggested that tornadic activity was present. This storm continued to move through the Utrecht area in a northerly to north-easterly direction but weakened about 20 km north of Utrecht.

The same storm then redeveloped and resulted in large amounts of small hail and some large hail in parts of Mkhondo Local Municipality (Piet Retief area) around 23:30 SAST and continued moving in a north-easterly direction to the north of Piet Retief until 00:30 SAST, which resulted in damage to property and difficult driving conditions.



Figure 2: Damaged property in the Piet Retief area (Mpumalanga) taken earlier this morning (Source: Marie Van Deventer, ReenvalSA).

Radar signatures suggest another **possible** tornado in the area but no ground observations had confirmed this as of yet.

Expected weather alerts for today (Saturday):

Severe thunderstorms are expected today (Saturday) over the eastern parts of North West province, eastern Free State, in places over KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and southern Limpopo from the afternoon.

The South African Weather Service will continue to monitor any further developments relating to this weather system and will issue subsequent updates as required. Furthermore, the public are urged and encouraged to regularly follow weather forecasts on television and radio. Updated information in this regard will regularly be available at www.weathersa.co.za as well as via the SA Weather Service Twitter account @SAWeatherServic

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