

# The 30th Anniversary of the "Super Outbreak"

April 3rd, 1974 will be a night that most Alabamians will never forget. Catastrophic death and destruction occurred on this night as eight tornadoes, including four violent ones, swept through the northern half of the state. A highly unstable environment caused 148 tornadoes to strike in just 24 hours on April 3rd and 4th over 13 states. This "Super Outbreak" resulted in 335 deaths and over 6,000 injuries across the nation.

Alabama was one of the hardest hit states during this tornado outbreak. Eighty-six people were killed which accounted for 25% of the fatalities across the country during this 24 hour period. The first violent tornado touched down near the Mount Moriah community around 6:25 pm CDT. This F5 tornado rapidly moved northeast through Lawrence, Morgan, Limestone, and Madison counties for 85 continuous miles. Devastated areas included western Moulton (Lawrence), Tanner (Limestone), Harvest (Madison), and Hazel Green (Madison). A second violent tornado, rated as an F4, began in southwestern Limestone County roughly 40 minutes after the first storm. Amazingly, this second tornado, which was 20 miles in length, never deviated more than two miles from the first tornado's track. Many communities in Limestone County were hit back to back in less than one hour which resulted in many rescue efforts being halted. Over half of the 86 fatalities in the state occurred during these two tornadoes.



from the book, April 3, 1974: The Alabama Tornadoes. Copyrighted 1974.

Later during the night, another storm developed to the southwest of the destruction in North Alabama. At 8:50 pm CDT, an F5 tornado touched down in extreme rural Mississippi, but quickly crossed state lines into Lamar County. This tornado, which quite possibly is one of the most intense tornadoes to ever strike Alabama, went through the small town of Guin in Marion County leaving nothing left in its path. The tornado then went through the William B. Bankhead National Forest in Winston County leveling tens of thousands of trees. The path left from the downed trees could be seen using satellite photography. This tornado caused 30 deaths and over 300 injuries.

Other areas across North and Central Alabama were devastated that fateful night. Remembering severe weather events like the "Super Outbreak" should remind us how important safety and awareness can be during situations which call for protective actions. Severe weather awareness can be the key to survival and the prevention of repeating history.

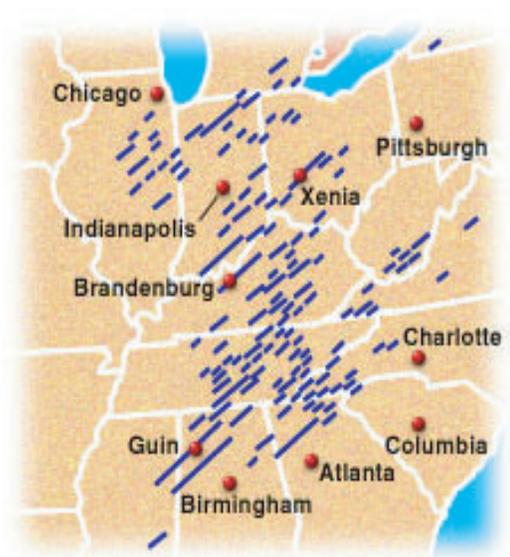
## THE 1974 TORNADO OUTBREAK

### WORST IN U.S. HISTORY

Massive F5 tornado rips across Xenia, Ohio, April 3, 1974 (photo by Fred Stewart)



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Graphic by Chad Palmer