

Performance of Masonry during the Middle Tennessee Tornadoes, January 24, 1997

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Abstract*:

Eight tornadoes struck middle Tennessee around 5 p.m. Friday afternoon, January 24, 1997. The storm damaged over 250 structures and injured 23 people in nine Tennessee counties. Rutherford County – specifically the cities of Murfreesboro, Smyrna, and surrounding communities – sustained 70% of the total damage (*The Tennessean*, January 26, 1997). Murfreesboro is located about 30 miles southeast of Nashville; Smyrna is about ten miles closer to Nashville, and both are on Highway I-24 (Figure 1). Published reports indicated widely varying maximum wind speeds. An initial National Weather Service survey reported F4 intensity (Fujita scale) with 207- to 260-mph winds (*The Daily News Journal*, January 27, 1997). Subsequent wind speed estimates ranged from 120 to 160+mph. The same storm front had struck parts of Alabama earlier in the afternoon. The path length near Murfreesboro was about 6.5 miles long.

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