

Junction Tower Tornado?

By Maurice Bourassa – Towerman

An account of my experience on August 25, 1999 while on watch in Junction Fire tower in northern Saskatchewan. Junction Tower is located 25 miles Southwest of La Ronge. A severe storm event struck the community of Green Lake at 1600 hrs and struck my tower site two hours later at 1800 hrs. It appeared to be a normal black wall of rain below a storm cell. I had observed similar walls of rain all summer in my area. Except this storm, as it approached from the Southwest, was preceded by violent winds that increased to a strength that I have never previously experienced on Fire watch, in any of the three towers that I have manned. The black rain wall resembled a tornado but very much wider with the same violence. The storm was imbedded with large pounding hail which increased in volume and loudness, accompanied by very hard rain and very fast gusting violent winds.

50 - 60 kph winds had been experienced all afternoon leading up to the event which then doubled in intensity. After ten minutes, the violence and pitch blackness moved northeast off the tower site and the sky returned to a bright day. Hundreds of 60 - 70 + foot tall mature Jackpine and Poplar and other tree species snapped at the tops, middle or at the base of the trunks. Twisted, mangled and downed trees littered the tower site very similar to tornado damage. Clean up would be exhaustive.

Are "Plough winds" the development of a tornado that dissipates prematurely? Northern Saskatchewan has been, in my observations, experiencing more violent winds every year. Can full impact tornadoes become a reality in Northern Sask? Are they another threat, next to wildfire, that Fire watch personnel need to be alert for in the future?