

Tornado kills worshipers

PIEDMONT, Ala. — A tornado caved in the roof of a church crowded with Palm Sunday worshipers, killing 17 people. Two other people died as a series of twisters and violent thunderstorms tore through Alabama.

At least 90 people were injured when the roof of the Goshen Methodist Church collapsed about 11:30 a.m., state trooper Byron Morris said.

About 140 people were in the church five miles north of Piedmont in eastern Alabama. Rescuers had feared others were buried, but all were accounted for after more than 100 searchers dug through the rubble by hand and called in a crane to lift the roof.

The storm knocked out power and

telephone service, hampering rescue efforts. Passing motorists helped ferry the injured to hospitals around Piedmont, which has about 5,000 residents and is 72 miles west of Atlanta.

The National Weather Service had issued a tornado watch for the area earlier Sunday morning. The weather service issued a warning saying a twister had been spotted on the ground about the time the roof collapsed.

Charles Pope, supervisor of the Piedmont Health Care Center nursing home, said displaced residents were sent to the Piedmont Civic Center. The National Guard Armory was used as a temporary morgue, said Delois Champ, a spokeswoman for the

Calhoun County Emergency Management Agency.

Elsewhere in Alabama, tornadoes killed one person at a park and another in his car.

A tornado also damaged the Ten Island Baptist Church in Ragland and injured an undetermined number of people, Calhoun County sheriff's dispatcher Leon Hill said.

The severe storm system moved into Georgia and South Carolina with several tornado touchdowns reported in those states. Two homes were destroyed and at least two people injured in Long Creek, S.C.

Bombs interrupt Turkish elections

ANKARA, Turkey — A bomb exploded at the famed St. Sophia museum Sunday as voters took part in local elections considered a key test for Prime Minister Tansu Ciller.

The bombing at the Istanbul landmark, in which three European tourists were injured, was the latest attack by Kurdish separatists determined to disrupt the elections. Death threats forced at least 15 candidates to drop out of races in the Kurdish-dominated southeast. Dozens of villages boycotted the election.

The first returns were expected late Sunday, and final results could take days. At stake were more than 83,000 local posts including mayors, provincial assembly members, city council members, village headmen and neigh-

borhood representatives. Voters chose from 13 parties.

The vote did not directly affect Ciller's coalition government, which has been in power for nine months. But heavy losses by her True Path Party and its allies could increase demands for elections before her term expires in 1996.

Critics hold her responsible for the nation's deepening economic crisis, which includes rising inflation and a 70 percent devaluation in the Turkish lira. Some Turks have been forced to take second jobs to make ends meet.

At the same time, the military has been unable to control Kurdish rebels seeking autonomy in southeastern Turkey.

Security forces guarded 127,000

polling stations, but failed to stop rebel-linked violence.

In Istanbul, the explosion at St. Sophia injured tourists from Spain, Germany and the Netherlands. The museum, once a Byzantine church that was turned into a mosque, is one of the country's top tourist sites. The museum did not appear to be damaged.

An anonymous caller to newspapers said the attack was carried out by the Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, which recently tried to cripple Turkey's crucial tourism industry with a spree of attacks.

In the southeast, eight people were killed Sunday by land mines believed planted by Kurdish rebels. Two people died in clashes in western Turkey.

Bosnian Serb leader threatens counterattack

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Government forces attacked Serb fighters in northern Bosnia Sunday, leading the Serb leader to threaten a counterattack and hardened negotiating stance.

Bosnian radio claimed government forces had captured key Bosnian Serb positions near Maglaj, killing 70 Serb fighters. The report was not confirmed.

Belgrade's Tanjug news agency said Bosnian Serb military sources reported "intensive" attacks by government forces, but claimed the attacks had been repelled.

On Friday, U.N. peacekeepers destroyed a Serb bunker near Maglaj, 50 miles north of Sarajevo, after a seven-hour battle. A few days earlier, Bosnian Serbs looted an aid convoy headed for Maglaj.

Speaking to his Serbian Democratic Party in Banja Luka, a Serb stronghold in northern Bosnia, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic said the government's "spring offensive must be broken."

"If they do not stop this offensive, I will order a counteroffensive, and then they shall not be able to get the territories they would be able to by political negotiations," he said, according to Tanjug. "They can never get the territories on which they are now killing our men."

Another round of talks among Bosnia's Muslims, Serbs and Croats has not been scheduled.

For months, all sides in Bosnia's two-year war have threatened a spring offensive, but it wasn't clear if the weekend fighting was part of that offensive or an isolated attack.

It is much easier to get around Bosnia's snowy, mountainous roads in the spring.

In Sarajevo, meanwhile, ethnic Serbs loyal to the Muslim-led Bosnian government held an assembly and asked that their representatives be included in peace talks since Bosnian Serbs led by Karadzic want to form a separate state. Ljubomir Berberovic, assembly president, praised the new Muslim-Croat federation for beginning "the process of stopping the war."

Charles Redman, President Clinton's special envoy on the former Yugoslavia, attended the assembly session, as did members of the Bosnian government and representatives of the city's ethnic and religious groups. Redman said the assembly was a sign that "the political life of Bosnia-Herzegovina is still alive and well" and that "people are starting to think about the things that go with peace, rather than with war."

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Consumer scams rise in Nebraska

OMAHA — The number of complaints the state attorney general's office received from consumers who thought they were defrauded rose significantly in 1993.

Consumers filed 53 percent more complaints than during the previous year, most alleging telemarketing scams, the attorney general's Consumer Protection Division reported.

"Although Nebraska was once thought to be immune to the 'big-city scams' of the coast and major cities, it has become quite obvious that professional fraud artists now consider the Midwest a prime location," Attorney General Don Stenberg said.

The Consumer Protection Division in Nebraska received 3,800 calls relating to possible consumer fraud in 1993. It handled 726 written complaints, up from 475 in 1992. Telemarketing scams accounted for 109 of the written complaints in 1993.

The division was able to get consumers at least partial refunds from 70 percent to 75 percent of the companies.

Senior consumer specialist Dan Parsons, who has spoken with consumer protection offices in other Midwestern states, said fraudulent phone calls have increased throughout the region.

But most of the companies, he said, operate outside the Midwest, mostly in Texas, California, Florida, Arizona and Utah.

"They usually don't prey upon victims in their own states" in order to inhibit prosecution, he said.

The increase in scams is particularly bothersome for Nebraska.

"Telemarketing means a great deal to Nebraska. It's a huge industry," Parsons said. "Unfortunately, the industry's image has been tarnished because there are so many unscrupulous telemarketers out there willing to do anything to get money from consumers."

Ed Taylor, executive vice president of Sitel Corp., one of Omaha's largest telemarketing companies, said a person could tell in the first few minutes if they were being scammed.

Sitel doesn't ask for a credit card number or accept credit card numbers over the phone.