

## JULY 4, 1969 • DEVASTATING STORM

On July 4, 1969, the community gathered in Lakewood Park to watch the traditional fireworks display. There was no sign of trouble as the crowds gathered.

At 7:33 PM local forecasters received the first alert about the possibility of a bad storm but, for reasons that remain unknown, a warning was never issued. Severe thunderstorms moved from Lake Erie into Northeast Ohio communities at about 8:00 PM, with winds gusting to 100 miles per hour in the Cleveland area according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The damage was felt across Northeast Ohio but especially at Lakewood Park when hurricane force winds came rolling in and toppled 100 trees just as thousands of people gathered to watch the fireworks.

Here is how the experience of the storm was described in *The Plain Dealer*: “At Lakewood Park, people saw an ominous wall of black clouds advancing rapidly across the lake toward the park. The temperature suddenly dropped 10 degrees and a light rain began to fall. An unearthly quiet descended over the park. Then the sky went dark, and people heard what sounded like the roar of a train. A blistering downpour that turned horizontal, carrying leaves and branches from trees and other debris, hit hard. People began shrieking and running. Visibility was zero. Then, one after another, trees began falling, upending their roots...Power lines were snapping and buzzing; lawn chairs, blankets and picnic packings all became projectiles in the full-force gale. Everything was chaos.”

The storm reportedly only lasted only 10 minutes but caused widespread flooding and damage.

*Information about the storm was taken from an article published in Cleveland, Ohio's newspaper, The Plain Dealer, July 4, 2013.*