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NATIONAL

NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Tornado-shaken residents begin cleanup

■ **DISASTER:** Efforts by federal emergency agents are hampered by sightseers and looters

FORT SMITH, Ark. (AP) — After a swarm of tornadoes left a trail of splintered homes, smashed buildings and four dead, shaken residents did their best to clean up and recover from a night of terror.

"I had three years in Vietnam, and I had never known the type of fear as last night," said Bill McAdams on Monday as he surveyed what little was left of his home in Van Buren.

The twisters roared through Fort Smith and suburban Van Buren late Sunday, sweeping some houses off their foundations, before moving on to St. Paul, a rural community 50 miles away. At least 50 people were injured and more than 330 left homeless.

"Everything's basically gone," said City Administrator Strib Boynton on Monday as he toured the hardest-hit neighborhoods. "It is staggering ... truly staggering."

Federal Emergency Management Agency inspectors began touring the area today, and their boss, FEMA head James Lee

Witt, was expected this afternoon. Gov. Jim Guy Tucker, who is on trial in Little Rock in a Whitewater-related fraud case, planned to accompany Witt. He had received court permission to be temporarily absent from the trial.

The Red Cross said 636 houses, 30 apartments and 217 businesses were damaged. Of those, 35 houses, five apartments and 78 businesses were beyond repair. Damage was put in the millions of dollars.

The worst damage was in a historic district downtown — where some of the buildings date to the 1800s — and a residential area 1 1/2 miles away. Several buildings collapsed.

Firefighters conducted a house-to-house check for damage and victims Monday evening, but were hampered by traffic jams caused by sightseers.

Five people who police said were about to start looting were arrested and charged with prowling. Police Cpl. Tim Randolph said, "We're having a problem with lookers, and some of the lookers are looking to loot."

In Fort Smith, a 2-year-old girl and a 5-year-old boy were crushed to death when the houses they were in collapsed. Out-

side one house, rows of 30-foot trees two feet in diameter lay across the street.

In St. Paul, police found the bodies of a man and his 10-year-old son in the ruins of their house Monday. "It just disintegrated," Deputy Bill Mason said.

Along Interstate 40, tractor-trailer trucks were left strewn like toys. "I've seen four semi's on Interstate 40 on their side, and all of them pointing in different directions," said volunteer worker Roger Weaver of Alma.

The tornadoes were part of a series of storms that swept through the Midwest and South over the weekend and Monday. More than 100 tornadoes were reported.

In Oklahoma, severe storms and flash floods Sunday and Monday were blamed for five traffic deaths and damage to 350 buildings.

There was major damage in parts of central Illinois late Friday and in Berea, Ky., on Saturday. More violent weather downed trees and power lines late Monday in Mississippi and Alabama, and two people were injured, one seriously, in Mississippi's Copiah County.

Methodists continue opposing homosexuals

■ **DOCTRINE:** The church supports the rights, but not the morality, of gays

DENVER (AP) — The United Methodist Council of Bishops today upheld church policy opposing the ordination of gays and declaring homosexuality incompatible with church teaching.

Less than a week after 15 prelates announced they personally opposed United Methodist policy on homosexuality, the full 67-member council of bishops acknowledged there are serious differences within the 8.5 million-member church on the issue of homosexuality.

But spiritual leaders of the nation's second-largest Protestant church said they are committed to following church law.

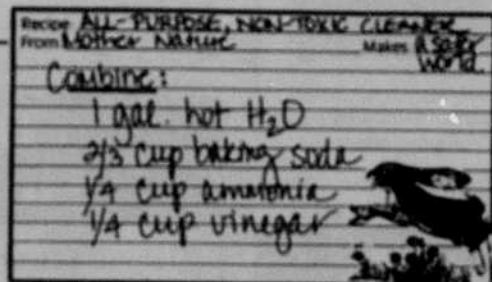
The bishops said they "are committed, collectively and individually, to teach and uphold our church's doctrine and discipline."

Last week, declaring it was time to "break the silence," 11 active and four retired bishops said in their personal convictions they opposed church policies condemning homosexuality.

In the Episcopal Church, heresy charges have been brought against a bishop who ordained an openly gay deacon.

However, the dissident United Methodist bishops said they would continue to obey church laws. They added that they "urge our United Methodist churches to open the doors in gracious hospitality to all our brothers and sisters in the faith."

Church policy upholds the civil rights of homosexuals, but says "self-avowed, practicing homosexuals" may not be ordained. The church also says the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching and says no denominational money may be given to promote the acceptance of homosexuality.



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