

# Sunday storm breaks windows, rips roofs

*Nobody was hurt in McMurdo's storm of the decade, though repairs will continue into summer*

*Sun staff*

Hurricane force winds shook McMurdo Station awake at 5:30 a.m. May 16.

"It was one of those things where you are suddenly wide awake and knowing that something is not right," wrote Lynn Hamann, who works in supply. "The wind shaking the building was the reason...must have been a big one to make us all wake up at the same time."

It was a Sunday, the one day most people usually can sleep in. McMurdo store keeper Zoe Vida put on earphones to try to go back to sleep, but her bed was quaking, along with the rest of the building.

"It was pretty frightening," she said.

Nobody knows how strong the winds were at McMurdo because the wind instrument blew away in the storm, but before it did it clocked 42 meters per second. At Black Island the peak wind was 76 meters per second. The temperature, with windchill, dropped to -54C.

Chef Bobby Loglisci was already up making brunch in the kitchen when he heard a creaking and banging in the exhaust system, as the wind blew smoke back down the pipes. When he stepped outside he couldn't see more than a foot ahead and had to cling to a dumpster to keep from blowing away. Within minutes his pants were embedded with snow and ice.

Several hours later, after he'd returned to work, a friend came to alert him to a ruckus in Loglisci's room. The wind had ripped his window from its hinges, spewing several inches of snow across his room.

"There was one of my neighbors, a 90-pound woman trying and failing to hold the shutters of my window closed. The snow was pouring in and it sounded like a freight train in my room," he wrote.

Within minutes about 30 people were in his room helping shovel snow and cover the gaping window with plywood.

The litany of damage National Science Foundation station manager Bill Coughran sent reads like the aftermath of war, with 85 significant items. Seven buildings lost doors, windows, roofs or exterior walls, including a window in building 159 that crossed the room like a bullet, causing an exit wound on the other side. Bay doors ripped off two buildings and the roof over the boiler room of building 155 peeled back. The roll-up door and roof were completely torn from a storage building. The shuttle bus shelter was carried by the wind and lodged against a pickup truck parked nearby. All the windows on one side of a



Photo courtesy of the McMurdo community

*During the May 16 storm, gale winds blew in the garage door to the heavy machinery shop, allowing snow to blanket vehicles parked inside.*

shuttle bus  
blew out,  
along with  
nine windows  
from seven  
trucks and vans.

The wind snapped  
three power poles,  
knocked down power  
lines and bent a flag  
pole to a 45 degree tilt.  
The helicopter landing

pads were swept up and wrapped around  
portions of the Chalet, the administrative  
center in the summer season.

Shipping vans and waste barrels were  
thrown about. Even rooms that still had  
windows and doors filled with snow, as  
the wind blew it through tiny holes. All the  
communication went down during the  
storm and two weeks later the station was  
still without the few television broadcasts  
they receive from off-continent.

"It was by far the worst storm I have  
seen in my five winters," said carpenter  
John Ackley.

At New Zealand's nearby Scott Base  
the 15-hour gale blew off a hangar door,  
blew in the windows on two vehicles and  
overturned two shipping containers.  
Antarctica New Zealand chief executive  
Lou Sanson told the New Zealand press  
the storm was the biggest to hit Scott Base  
in 10 years.

Two people spent the night in a recre-  
ational A-frame hut about 3 km from New  
Zealand's Scott Base. Luckily nobody was

## Storm stats

Peak wind recorded before the gauge blew away  
42 meters per second = 82 knots = 94 mph

Peak wind at Black Island  
76 mps = 147 knots = 169 mph

Temperature, with windchill,  
- 65 F = -54C = 291 Kelvin

camping out  
in the recre-  
ational trailer,  
called Silver  
City. It caved in  
under the wind and  
snow.

"You know with  
hurricanes the trailer  
park's always getting  
hit," Vida said.

Despite the damage to  
buildings, nobody was injured. The search  
and rescue team put guide ropes up between  
the dorms and the main building with the  
cafeteria so people could come and eat.  
Many people spent the day in their rooms or  
in the common areas. The station store  
opened and sold \$600 of food and souvenirs  
in two hours.

"People thought of their families a lot  
during the storm," Vida said. "People kept  
saying 'You don't send the photos of the  
storm with the roofs gone to your moth-  
ers.'"

The intensity of the storm and the  
cleanup and repairs that followed left peo-  
ple exhausted, she said. Two weeks later  
the cargo department held a barbecue party  
to celebrate cleaning out all the snow that  
had filled the cargo bay after both doors  
blew off. The theme was "What is this and  
where did it come from?" as they tried to  
identify items blown around in the storm.

"There are heaps of pieces and parts  
the community gathered up around sta-  
tion, after the storm," Hamann said.