



## UMass tornado chaser: Springfield tornadoes were 'uncharacteristic'

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By **Diane Lederman, The Republican**

Stephen Frasier loves **tornadoes**.

Frasier, of the **University of Massachusetts at Amherst** Electrical and Computer Engineering Department and director of its Microwave Remote Sensing Laboratory, chases them in Midwest states such as Kansas and Oklahoma. But on Wednesday, he was in his Amherst office as the sirens wailed on campus warning all there to stay inside after the National Weather Service issued a tornado warning.

He wasn't chasing them because he said it's typically too difficult because of the number of trees here.

While tornadoes are not "as rare as you think," what happened "was a pretty big system," and was "uncharacteristic."

ABC40 meteorologist Dan Brown said the number of tornadoes that touched down Wednesday "is almost unheard of in our terrain. It's fairly hilly, it breaks the tornado down."

But Wednesday, they kept coming.

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**Don Treeger, Republican staff photographer**

06.01.2010 | A child runs for cover as bad weather moved back into the area following a tornado touchdown in the South End of Springfield. This was on Central St.

[Tornado touches down in downtown Springfield gallery \(33 photos\)](#)

Fraiser said a tornado of that power can spawn "dozens of little tornadoes."

State police reported that tornadoes had touched down in Agawam, Charlton, Monson, Oxford Springfield, West Springfield, Westfield. Wilbraham

can change

and Sturbridge.

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The National Weather Service in Taunton said the exact location, strength and length of time of each tornado would not be available until Thursday morning or possibly late Wednesday night.

Brown said the system was winding down as night came because without the heat of the day and the cool front coming, "it loses its energy."

Frasier said officials won't know how powerful the tornado was until the damage is assessed.

Tornadoes are rated on what it is called the Enhanced Fujita Scale with the higher the number the greater the damage.

The deadly storm in Joplin, Missouri, was considered an EF-5.

William Babcock, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Taunton, said "it's definitely been wild here in southern New England. There's been a variety of things; tornadoes are the headline event.

"This is an impressive situation that we had, with not only the amount of lightning but the ability to spin up tornadoes over several areas."

Several storms were coming from central New York to Western Massachusetts but the tornadoes actually formed in Western Massachusetts, he said.

Not all the damage, however, was caused by the tornadoes, but what he called "straight-line winds." Those he said, "can be every bit as damaging as a tornado."

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