

JACKSON, Miss. — A line of severe storms that pushed across Mississippi

damaged a casino, sent water pouring into a college gymnasium during a basketball game and knocked out power to the state's biggest prison, authorities said Friday.

There were no immediate reports of injuries. Officials considered the damages minor.

The severe weather hit Mississippi Thursday and early Friday, knocking down dozens of trees and power lines and damaging a few homes and other structures, mostly in the Mississippi Delta and north of the Interstate 20 corridor, said Joanne Culin, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Jackson. Scattered power outages were reported.

The Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman, a sprawling maximum-security prison in Sunflower County that is home to Mississippi's death row, was running on emergency power Friday morning after the storms knocked down power poles nearby, officials said.

Mississippi Department of Corrections spokeswoman Suzanne Singletary said officials were assessing the damage Friday morning and the prison was being powered by generators.

Danny Prater, Sunflower County's deputy director of emergency management, said the storm knocked down at least 10 power poles and lines that feed electricity to the prison.

In neighboring Washington County, Harlow's Casino Resort and Hotel evacuated its top two floors Thursday when strong wind peeled back some of the roof, blowing insulation into the parking lot and allowing water to pour inside the building, officials said.

Washington County Emergency Management Director David Burford said the casino was not heavily damaged and remained open. The casino's manager did not immediately respond to a

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message Friday.

The damage in the area "was real minor," Burford said. "We were fortunate. That was an ugly storm."

The weather cut short a women's basketball game in Oxford when rain water spilled into the gymnasium and sent University of Mississippi player Kenyotta Jenkins slipping to the floor.

High winds during the storms caused rain to fly sideways through air vents in the roof, said Brian Russell, an assistant director of event operations at Ole Miss.

No. 4 Tennessee was awarded a 66-39 victory over Mississippi when the game was canceled with 5:24 left.

There have been no confirmed tornados in Mississippi, but Culin said the weather service would send a survey team Friday to determine if straight line winds or a tornado destroyed five homes and damaged a church just across the Mississippi River in West Carroll Parish, La. There were no immediate reports of injuries. The same cell likely hit Mississippi.

Forecasters predicted better weather for Friday and Saturday, but are concerned about another strong storm system that could hit Mississippi on Sunday.

Mississippi Emergency Management Agency spokesman Greg Flynn called damages in the state "very minor."

"We've very lucky. Now we just have to get ready for Sunday, which is supposed to be worse," Flynn said.

Storms hit casino, prison, knock out power in Miss., La. - Deseret News

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