



The Birmingham News/Mark Almond

Jefferson County sheriff's deputies patrol the heavily-damaged Center Point Elementary School on Monday after a tornado ripped through the northeastern part of the county early in the morning.

500 kids need classrooms

Center Point school mostly destroyed by tornado

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Jefferson County school officials plan to decide today where the more than 500 students of Center Point Elementary School will attend classes since a tornado severely damaged their building early Monday morning.

Superintendent Phil Hammonds said the school, which was built in 2003 and underwent an addition in 2007, had damage to

about 80 percent of the building and will have to be razed.

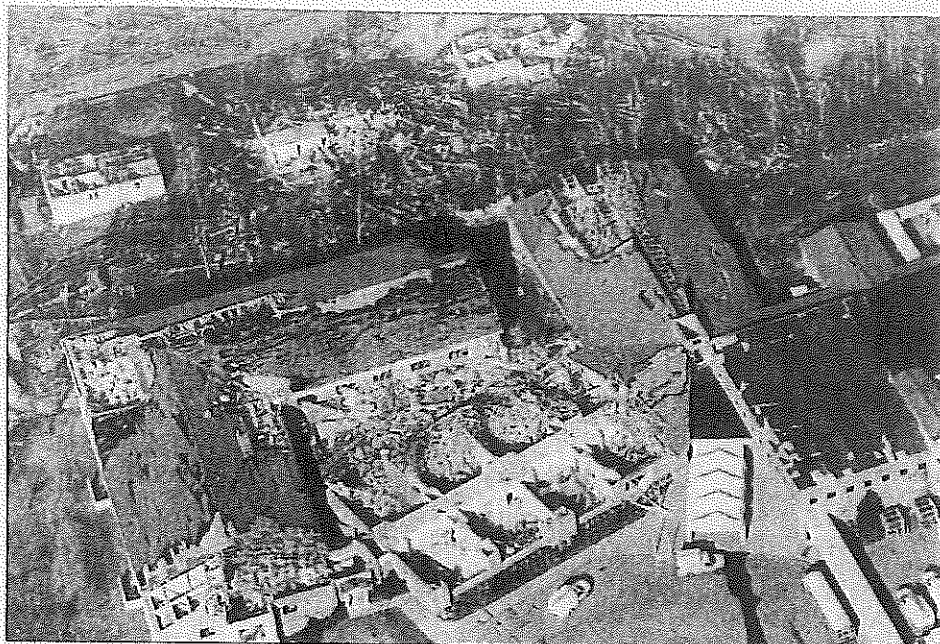
"We're blessed that school was not in session when these storms hit," Hammonds said. "But it's still a sad day for our county."

Students at Center Point Elementary, which includes kindergarten through second grade, will not have classes today, and neither will students from four other Jefferson County schools — Center Point High,

Erwin Elementary, Erwin Middle and Clay-Chalkville Middle. The latter schools sustained no damage from the tornado but were still without power Monday night, Hammonds said.

Sun Valley Elementary School in Birmingham also is closed today because of a power outage, but Sun Valley teachers were

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Center Point Elementary School sustained damage to about 80 percent of the building, as shown in this aerial shot, and will have to be razed, Jefferson County schools Superintendent Phil Hammonds said.

SCHOOL:

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told to report to the Lincoln Professional Development Center.

Damage at Center Point Elementary included the second floor of the 2007 addition collapsing onto the first floor, Hammonds said. The superintendent plans to meet with Center Point leaders today to discuss where the school will meet until a new school can be

built.

Center Point Mayor Tom Henderson said school officials have discussed convening classes in unused classrooms at Erwin Elementary and Erwin Middle. "They've found 34 classrooms," Henderson said.

School system officials are preparing the cafeteria at the middle school to handle lunch for Center Point Elementary students, he said.

Danielle Tinker, one of the kindergarten teachers at

Center Point Elementary, said she, too, is grateful the storm hit when school was not in session.

"I'm just glad they were not here," she said of the students after walking away from the mangled building Monday afternoon.

Tinker said she and other teachers are upset about the damage. "I'm thinking about the children who are used to coming to school here," she said. "It's a part of all of us and it hurts us when it's like this."