

HUGO — It may have been a day like Monday in Choctaw County when James Taylor wrote his number one hit, “Fire and Rain.” Add to that wind and hail, and you have the effects of a big thunderstorm that rocked the area shortly before five p.m., blowing down trees and starting house fires.

Hugo firefighters responded to a house fire in the 900 block of East Bluff Street at 5 p.m. The fire began a few minutes after a massive bolt of lightning struck nearby. Substantial damage was done to the rear portion of the home which was promptly brought under control by Hugo firefighters, who were backed up by members of Sawyer RFD. HFD officers responding to the blaze included Ron Cloud, Shannon Lester, Vince Casella, Galen Ridenour, Andy Castelano and Danny Terrebonne. Sawyer firefighters assisting included William Eaton, Nathan Wallace and Cary Owens.

It was the second day in a row that firefighters responded to house fires believed to have been caused by lightning. Another home in the 1100 block of East Duke Street also suffered fire damage, possibly from a lightning strike Sunday.

A few blocks away on east Jackson Street, power crews responded to two telephone poles near McDonald’s restaurant, which had been snapped by high winds.

In downtown Hugo, the long burned-out Shelton Apartment complex shell succumbed to the high winds with the south portion of the skeleton caving in, forcing city officials to rope off the remaining portion of the shaky building.

Several other businesses reported awnings were ripped from their moorings and doors were damaged from gusting and swirling winds.

Hugo Lake Manager Kent Grimes reported more than 90 trees were blown down just in the “mow line” of roads within Kiamichi Park, forcing the Corps to close the northern portion of the park, north of J-Neck. Grimes said trees were down in roads, across electric camping pedestals and even ripped up water lines when the tree’s root ball was uprooted.

Grimes said the Corps would be hiring contractors to clean up debris from the storm, but added that it was fortunate no campers were affected by the high winds.

Few residents throughout the county were left without power, according to local electric companies.

Public Service of Oklahoma reported close to a thousand customers without power from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m., while Choctaw Electric Cooperative reported less than 50 people without power for four hours in Choctaw County, with the majority of their outages recorded in Pushmataha County.

According to the utility companies, all power has been restored.