

# The Wrath of Nature

## Violent Prairie Storms

*"Nobody saw this tornado. Nobody saw it coming."*-Buck Causey, Barton County Sheriff, describing the F4 Tornado that struck Hoisington in 2001.

The evening of April 21, 2001, an F4 tornado with winds approaching 260 mph tore through Hoisington. The tornado killed two people, injured 27, and damaged more than one-quarter of the town's homes and businesses.

Hoisington has emerged from the devastation, rebuilt and reinvigorated. In 2007, the Greensburg F5 tornado killed eleven people and destroyed 95% of that community. The storm eventually passed over a portion of the Byway, causing one death in Stafford County and millions of dollars in damage.

A natural part of prairie life, powerful storm systems can dump massive amounts of rainfall that quickly overwhelm the region's wide, shallow creekbeds. On the afternoon of June 14, 1981, a series of intense thunderstorms produced 5 to 20 inches of rain in about 12 hours near Great Bend. Four feet of water swept through the city, forcing the evacuation of numerous Great Bend residents.



Hoisington 2001  
Great Bend Theatre



1882 Blizzard/Kansas State Historical Society

### Blizzards of the Great Plains

On the prairie, a day that dawns a balmy 60 degrees may plunge below zero with driving snow by nightfall. The blizzards of 1885-1886, among the state's deadliest, brought temperatures of -25° F, heavy snow, and high winds that killed an estimated 100 people and devastated the region's cattle industry.



Clafin 2007/Barton County

### Motion and Change

The United States suffers more tornadoes than any other nation. Over 1,000 tornadoes occur here each year, the majority in springtime. Roughly one-third of these tornadoes, including the most powerful ones, sweep through Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska, an area known as "Tornado Alley."