Howling winds from the west brought with them pounding rain and hail to the Holyoke and Amherst area Thursday night, June 18, leaving

destruction and crop losses in their wake.

Many people in the area, particularly in Amherst, were awakened at approximately 10:30-11 p.m. that night by the wind, rain and hail. Those heavy sleepers who missed all the action the night before, awoke Friday morning to downed branches, standing water and stripped fields.

According to Phillips County FSA executive director Ron Koberstein, the north portion of the county was hit especially bad, and in some cases, resulted in total crop losses.

“It was unbelievable,” said Amherst resident Laura Krogmeier, who witnessed the squall. “I have never seen a hail storm like it before in my life.”

Though no hail was recorded 10 miles southwest in Holyoke, local trees still took a beating from the high winds, and Holyoke City crews had a big mess of branches to clean up on Friday.

But it was the wheat farmers who took the biggest loss. With recent weather conditions perfect for wheat growing, the crop before Thursday night was looking especially good as harvest time approaches. That all changed the night of June 18.

Out of the 104,000 planted wheat acres in the county, 3,000 were destroyed by the storm. Sixty thousand more were damaged, leading to a total bushel production loss of 1,206,000. That amounts to $5,788,800 profit loss for county farmers.

Corn crops were also affected. Out of the 102,000 planted acres in the county, 2,000 were completely destroyed and 20,500 damaged, leading to a percentage loss of 6.3 in Phillips County. This amounts to a $2,673,000 loss to county farmers.

A total of 250 farms were affected by Thursday night’s storms. Ten farms reported physical damage to dwellings and buildings amounting to $20,000 total.

Unfortunately, the 27 percent loss of wheat does not meet the 30 percent required for the federal disaster assistance program, said Koberstein.

He added, producers who have suffered a loss due to disaster-related conditions are required to complete a manual CCC-576 form and file an acreage report within 15 days of the loss on the failed acreage in the FSA office. This allows the FSA to conduct a field visit to verify the crop was planted with the intent to harvest, and that the crop acreage failed due to natural disaster related conditions.

Failure to complete these actions may result in denial of program benefits. Phillips County FSA can be contacted at 854-2812, Ext. 2 during its normal business hours of 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Friday.