

*Editor's Note: This article was written by Shannon Hinson about her and Harold's experience during the major Downburst that pummeled the Northern Neck on 12 July 2009.*

This afternoon, we went to Capn Tom's in Bertrand on River Rd/Rt. 354 (Lancaster County, Northern Neck, VA) to pick up some steamed crabs; when we left, some serious clouds were moving in. We left and about 2 miles down River Road/t. 354, it started raining so hard, we couldn't see where we were going. There was a small car in front of us and a pick-up truck behind us. My husband decided we needed to get off of the main road asap ~ he was going to turn at the next opportunity ~ the car in front of us turned onto Western Branch and we followed the car, and the truck turned as well. We couldn't see where we were going ~ my husband saw two white fences that looked like they were marking a driveway...he pulled in about 50 ft. into the driveway, but not close to the house ~ the car and truck kept going down the road. Then, the storm hit; leaves, branches and debris started flying by our SUV; then the quarter sized hail started and I thought it would never stop; it was raining and hailing so badly, it was a white out, we couldn't see a thing. I was so frightened, I just laid my head in my lap and started praying ~ I have never been so frightened in all my life. My husband kept saying, it's going to be alright, over and over. The beating of the hail was so loud, we couldn't hear anything else ~ our SUV, which is quite heavy, was being moved by the winds ~ it was very frightening! When all finally got quiet, and it was just raining, we looked around.....the house we were sitting in front of had lost its roof and a glassed-in Florida room on the back of the house ~ and the road was totally full of downed trees, debris and power poles and the electrical lines were down. We couldn't budge. My husband went to the house to make sure the people were OK ~ only the lady of the house was home and she was fine. Then we started walking up the road.....the car and truck that we were initially traveling with were both crushed by falling trees and the people were trapped in their vehicles. The local fire dept. in Ottoman, Lancaster Co. was having a clean up today, so they were close to the scene and arrived very quickly after we called 911. Unfortunately, due to some of the massive trees that were downed, they weren't able get to the people trapped in their vehicles as quickly as they would've liked. My white SUV was literally green with teeny tiny pieces of torn leaves. It was about an hour before we could get out and the ambulances were still trying to navigate through what looked like a total disaster. My husband and I agreed, if it was not a tornado, we certainly do not EVER want to see one!