

25 March 2005

California Tornado

Scott Little, an active member of the Society for Amateur Scientists (SAS), photographed a storm that spawned a tornado that damaged four houses in Fontana, California, on 4 March 2005.

Scott writes, "I have taken some photos of what I believe is the formation of a funnel cloud over Fontana, California, on Friday, 4 March, at approximately 12:00 noon. I and another engineer, Adan Ramirez, decided to go for a drive in the downpour that had just hit our area. I brought our digital camera just in case. There was a layer of dark clouds hovering over the landscape, with a portion forming what looks to be a funnel in the center. At the time it was raining very hard, so there are spots on the lens. On Saturday I found a newspaper article that said there was a tornado in the approximate time and place I took the photos. Like I said, the photos have water spots on them because it was raining so hard, and there was a tremendous amount of wind."

Scott's photos may have rain spots, but they may also be the only ones of the cloud that spawned the tornado. According to The Los Angeles Times (5 March 2005), the Fontana tornado struck at noon of 4 March, the same time Scott took the nearby photograph. The relatively small tornado caused no injuries but managed to cause an estimated \$20,000 in damage.

The lesson Scott's experience teaches citizen scientists is clear: Always have a camera available. And please send photos related to science to [The Citizen Scientist](#).

Forrest M. Mims III ●



This apparent funnel cloud was photographed at the same time a tornado in the same area damaged four homes. Photograph by Scott Little. Click image to enlarge.