

U.S. twisters' death toll rises to 55

by UPI

JACKSON, Tenn. -- The death toll from a rash of tornado-riddled storms that lashed the southern United States rose to 55, state officials said in a Thursday report. Late Tuesday and into Wednesday, the storms killed 31 people in Tennessee, 13 in Arkansas, seven in Kentucky and four in Alabama, CNN reported. Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen flew over his state's disaster zone Wednesday and said he had never before seen a tornado wreckage path like that. "(The twister) didn't skip like a lot of them do ... It's just 25 miles of a tornado sitting on the ground," he said. U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff ordered the deployment of Federal Emergency Management Agency teams to the affected states on Wednesday as U.S. President George Bush announced he had pledged federal support to governors of the affected states. Mississippi's director of the state's Emergency Management Agency, Mike Womack, said there had been no fatalities in that state but estimated 20 to 30 tornadoes had swept through northern Mississippi, CNN said.

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