

# Selma residents shaken, autos damaged by tree

By Louis Galvan  
The Fresno Bee

SELMA — Kevin Chadwick was standing outside his automotive garage in Selma Tuesday when two giant branches from a eucalyptus split from the base of the tree and came crashing down in front of his eyes.

No one was injured, but the branches — casualties of the rain and windstorm that swept through the city — buried and battered nine vehicles and caused minor damage to a house.

"I couldn't believe it," said Chadwick, not having any trouble remembering what went through his mind when he saw the tree begin to split apart. "I thought we were going to get hit."

Yelling at his partner, Abel Gonzalez, to run for cover, Chadwick ducked into the shop where he and Gonzalez scurried to the deepest corner of the building and "hit the ground."

"I thought I was dead," said Gonzalez, 48, staring at the huge branches that came within a whisper of crashing atop the business, A.O.K. Body Shop & Towing at 10295 S. Highland Ave. in the north part of town.

"It's something I'll never forget," Chadwick said. "When they hit the ground, it was like the

"Most of them involved [power] lines and fallen trees," said Selma police Cmdr. Robert Johnson.

Fire Chief Roy Peak said an emergency command post was

**"It's something I'll never forget. When they hit the ground, it was like the whole building shook."**

— Kevin Chadwick,  
after seeing branches from  
eucalyptus tree crash in Selma

whole building shook."

Chadwick, 45, estimated the eucalyptus was 100 years old and 100 feet tall.

"It had three branches," he said. "As you can see, two of them came down."

Chadwick's landlord, Earl Crosswhite, 63, who lives next door to the shop at 10315 S. Highland, said he was taking a shower when felt the first branch hit the roof of his house.

His wife, Helen, was at work in Fresno.

"I ran out of there naked, put on some clothes and got out the house," he said. Just about then, the second branch hit the ground.

"It sounded like, man, I don't know, like a large boom."

Outside, the wind was blowing and the rain was falling hard.

The first thing he did, Cros-

immediately set up at police headquarters where police, fire and public works officials started dispatching crews to the most serious reports.

Peak said no injuries were re-

swhite said, was check on Chadwick and Gonzalez.

His next action was to check his property.

His roof, he said, didn't have too much damage.

But his nine vehicles — including two Camaros, two Buicks, a station wagon, a pickup truck and a camper — were buried under the two branches.

"All of them are pretty much gone," he said.

Crosswhite said he won't know the dollar loss until the branches are removed and damage can be assessed.

Gene Wells, owner of Wells Used Cars & Auto Wrecking on Whitson Street north of Floral Avenue, also took a beating.

Not only did a tree fall on three of the used cars at his sales yard, but another tree came down against a house he rents on Logan and Merced streets, causing minor damage to the structure and knocking down a fence.

Wells, who lives in Del Rey, said the storm also blew down two trees on his Del Rey property, damaging a barn and fence.

Selma city officials said the incident was reported at 8:57 a.m., one of 17 storm-related calls logged between 8 a.m. and 9:32 a.m.

ported and that it will be several days before the amount of property damage is estimated.

"I'm sure there were many other incidents that went unreported," he said.