# Dust devil tornado momentarily halts traffic on Great Ancoats Street in Manchester



A remarkable meteorological phenomenon captured the attention of onlookers in Manchester last Saturday, as a dust devil tornado swept through Great Ancoats Street. This swirling column of dust, rising approximately 30 metres high, momentarily halted traffic and left pedestrians staring in disbelief. Witnesses struggled to comprehend the sight, with one bystander exclaiming, “What the...? What the hell? There is a tornado in the middle of Manchester... that's crazy.”

Among the captivated crowd was violinist Adam Riding, 30, who described his initial reaction as one of shock. “It was this dark cloud and at first I thought it was an explosion, but I didn't really hear any noise. I froze,” he recounted to Manchester Evening News. As the dust devil escalated, he instinctively recorded the moment on his phone, noting that the entire spectacle lasted only a minute.

The phenomenon wasn’t exclusive to Manchester; similar incidents have been reported across the UK, particularly in areas experiencing unusually hot and dry weather conditions. A dust devil was also recently observed in Warwickshire where it managed to lift hay and debris into the air for about 30 to 40 seconds. These formations, typically harmless, appear more frequently during heatwaves and can occasionally pose risks if they grow large enough to impact surrounding environments.

A Met Office meteorologist provided clarification on the nature of dust devils, explaining their formation process. Unlike tornadoes, which form from thunderstorms, dust devils arise from irregular temperature contrasts on the ground, leading to rotating columns of warm air mixed with dust and debris. “Dust devils grow upwards from the ground, rather than down from clouds,” the meteorologist noted, elaborating that they tend to last only a few minutes due to their reliance on surface temperature for sustenance.

Earlier this year, a dust devil in Prestatyn, Wales, was also filmed during Storm Franklin, underscoring the phenomenon's sporadic nature across the UK. Observations show that dust devils can range significantly in size, from a few metres in height to towering over 1,000 feet under exceptional conditions, often appearing in desert and semi-arid climates where the ground is exceptionally hot.

In Essex and Cambridgeshire, similar debris-lifting events were reported amidst hot weather, initially misconstrued as mini-tornadoes. This misunderstanding is common, as dust devils often exhibit dramatic behaviour capable of uprooting tents or breaking garden structures. Caution should be exercised, as they can inflict minor injuries if individuals are caught in their path, although they usually dissipate quickly due to the cooling of air intake from their base, limiting their duration and intensity.

Engagement with such natural phenomena serves as a reminder of the capriciousness of weather and its varying manifestations. As witnessed in cities like Manchester, the extraordinary spectacle of a dust devil can both awe and bewilder, standing as a testament to the ever-changing dynamics of our atmosphere.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1-3
2. Paragraphs 4-5
3. Paragraphs 6-7
4. Paragraphs 8-9

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14699421/moment-dust-devil-tornado-UK-city-Brits.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c97dwp1l4pno> - A dust devil was observed in a field in Warwickshire, UK, where it lifted hay and debris into the air. Richard Turnell, 46, captured the phenomenon on video during a lunchtime walk. The dust devil lasted about 30-40 seconds before dissipating. The Met Office describes dust devils as upward spiraling, dust-filled vortices of air that can vary in height from a few feet to over 1,000 feet.
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2022-08-16/watch-rare-dust-devil-caught-on-camera> - A rare dust devil was filmed by fire crews in County Durham, UK, following a large wildfire near Scripton Gill, Brandon. The phenomenon was caused by heatwaves that dried out many areas across the UK. Dust devils are usually harmless but can pose risks to people and property if they grow large enough. They form when a pocket of hot air near the surface rises quickly through cooler air above it, creating an updraft that may begin to rotate.
4. <https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/20241559.dust-devil-captured-video-sweeping-across-york-field/> - A dust devil was captured on video as it swept across a nature reserve in York, UK. Cheryl Quinn filmed the phenomenon when she was on Clifton Backies, observing winds whipping up mown grass into a vortex. The video shows her dog watching in puzzled fascination. The Met Office explains that dust devils occur when the ground gets very hot, causing strong convection that rapidly lifts dust or grass into the air. They typically last only a few minutes.
5. <https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/rare-dust-devil-phenomenon-captured-23172853> - A rare dust devil was filmed in Prestatyn, North Wales, UK, during Storm Franklin. The footage shows the phenomenon swirling in the wind at the Nova car park. Dust devils are strong, well-formed, and relatively short-lived whirlwinds, ranging from small (half a meter wide and a few meters tall) to large (more than 10 meters wide and more than 1,000 meters tall). They are usually harmless but can pose risks if they grow large enough.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clygzwlk2wpo> - Dramatic dust devils were spotted in Essex and Cambridgeshire, UK, during hot weather. The phenomena were initially believed to be 'mini-tornadoes' and were caught on camera. In Essex, several people sustained minor injuries when the column of air uprooted tents and gazebos during the Four Colnes Horticultural Society Programme. The Met Office clarifies that, unlike tornadoes, dust devils grow upwards from the ground rather than down from clouds and last only a few minutes.
7. <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/floods-storms-unbearable-heat-tornado-28368360> - In 2023, Greater Manchester experienced various extreme weather events, including floods, storms, unbearable heat, and a tornado. Storm Agnes brought 80mph winds and heavy showers, while Storm Babet caused significant disruption with a rare red 'danger to life' alert. The tornado in Stalybridge, Tameside, resulted in major damage to homes and vehicles, leading to evacuations. The Manchester Evening News provides detailed coverage of these events and their impact on the region.