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## Supercell strikes like lightning

Cathy Alexander

The thunderstorm that struck Canberra on Tuesday night was a rare and highly destructive type of storm, the Bureau of Meteorology says.

"It was probably one of the most intensive storms we've seen," Kenn Batts, from the Canberra Meteorological Office, said.

Canberra has become Australia's storm capital this season, with seven severe storms in two months. The bureau says there are probably more to come in autumn.

On Tuesday Canberra was hit with a rare rotating storm called a supercell thunderstorm so rare that Canberra has not experienced one for at least a decade. Supercell storms are dangerous and powerful, and can cause tornadoes, winds of 200km/h, torrential rain and huge hailstones.

Manager of weather services for the bureau's NSW/ACT branch Rob Webb said Tuesday's storm was caused by moist, warm air from the east, which had been sitting over the ACT for the past three weeks.

This humid air had caused the regular thunderstorms of recent weeks.

On Tuesday the wind changed and cooler air arrived, which pushed the humid air rapidly up into an unstable atmosphere, causing the storm. The storm began to rotate about 9pm, turning it into a supercell thunderstorm.

Hailstones were created in the minus 30 degree temperatures as the storm grew to a height of 8km. When the hailstones fell to the ground in Canberra, they were up to 5cm in diameter.

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