

Roberts' last hours replete with tough decisions

SALEM (AP) — In her final few hours as governor, Barbara Roberts decided Monday not to commute the death sentences of nine convicted murderers.

"For me, this has been a wrenching choice, and I am not entirely comfortable with the outcome of my own, private deliberations," Roberts said. "I must also make it clear that with some of these applications, had the case come to me after all other appeal had been exhausted, my decision might have been a different one."

Roberts repeated that she is "personally, adamantly, opposed to the death penalty" and said she carefully studied each of the cases.

But she said she decided not to commute the sentences because all other legal alternatives had not been exhausted.

Opponents of the death penalty had hoped Roberts would commute the inmates' sentences to life in prison with-

out possibility of parole.

"We're gravely disappointed that she hasn't followed the enlightened lead of other governors like Gov. Celeste of Ohio and Gov. Anaya of New Mexico," said Mark Kramer, a Portland attorney speaking on behalf of the Oregon Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

Norm Frink, Multnomah County chief deputy district attorney, said Roberts "deserves to be commended for having kept her word and kept her faith to the electorate."

He added that he hopes Congress will do something this year to limit the appeals that can be filed by people facing the death penalty.

No one has been put to death since Oregon voters reinstated capital punishment in 1984.

None of the nine who sought clemency contended they did not commit the

killings. However, one of the nine, James Isom, has contended that his killing of a woman in a Portland motel in 1986 was an accident. The victim was stabbed to death.

Seventeen men are on Death Row at the Oregon State Penitentiary. Eight decided not to ask for clemency for varying reasons, Kramer said. Some felt clemency might hurt their appeals and others simply would rather die than face a life in prison, he said.

Roberts did grant a full pardon to one woman convicted of robbery 13 years ago and commuted the sentences of two others.

The pardon was given to Kathryn Ann Thompson, who was placed on parole in June 1982, a year after she was convicted of second-degree robbery. She has no other criminal record and, since she left prison, has been a responsible member

of society, Roberts said.

Roberts commuted the sentences of Shelly Ann Brimberry and Sandra Pollard Shook. Both will be released from custody but must continue to be supervised by authorities.

Brimberry has served two years of a five-year sentence for first-degree manslaughter after admitting she stabbed her boyfriend to death. According to a news release issued by Roberts' office, Brimberry stabbed the man while trying to stop a violent fight between him and another man.

The stabbing victim had verbally and emotionally abused Brimberry for many months, Roberts' office said.

Shook has served five months of a 16-month sentence for unlawful manufacture of marijuana. According to Roberts, Shook became involved in the manufacture of the drug to help raise money for her sister, who was dying of a brain tumor.

Coastal storm demolishes southwest corner of Oregon

GRANTS PASS (AP) — A Pacific storm pounded Western Oregon on Monday, toppling a tree that killed a state highway worker, flooding streets and homes and knocking out power.

The southwestern corner of the state was hardest hit, with more than 5 inches of rain reported in remote mountainous parts of

Coos, Curry and Josephine counties.

Flood warnings were issued through Tuesday for the South Umpqua River near Roseburg, the Coquille River in Coos County and the Tualatin River in rural Washington County.

Thad A. Bedingfield, 47, of Medford, was killed shortly

before noon when a tree fell on the pickup truck he was driving toward the Mount Ashland ski resort, state police said. A passenger, Lyle Stevens, wasn't seriously hurt.

The two state Department of Transportation workers were looking for downed trees and branches on the road leading to

the ski resort, which had closed because of the heavy rain, Sgt. Michael Buckman said.

Streets flooded in Grants Pass, Coos Bay and Brookings, where the 2.67 inches of rain from midnight to 6:30 a.m. set a record for the date.

Schools closed in the small town of Riddle in Douglas Coun-

ty, where Cow Creek was near flood stage.

A mudslide blocked Oregon Highway 238 east of the community of Applegate in Jackson County, causing a two-car wreck.

High winds knocked out power to about 5,000 people south of Klamath Falls, said Gary Donnelly of Pacific Power.

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Northern California readies for floods

GUERNEVILLE, Calif. (AP) — Judy Petrie was one of several Guerneville residents who packed up treasured belongings while keeping an eye on the Russian River as it roared over its banks.

"You think about it, but when the time comes, you're not ready," Petrie said Sunday as she and her husband tried to decide what to bring with them if they were forced to leave their home.

The latest in a series of powerful storms pounded Northern California on Sunday, causing flooding in many low-lying areas. Rapidly rising waters on the Russian, Petaluma and Napa rivers forced the evacuation of several hundred people.

The National Weather Service issued flash flood warnings for Marin, Napa, and Sonoma counties. The warnings meant that flooding was occurring or imminent.

Meanwhile, authorities in Sonoma and Napa counties declared local states of emergency.

And there's no end in sight, National Weather Service meteorologist John Burkhardt said today.

"As far down south as the central coast ... and all the way up the San Francisco Bay area and northwestern California ... we have rainy and windy (conditions) for every day for the short-term forecast, which is through Tuesday. For Wednesday through Friday ... there will be periods of rain, heavy at times, mild and windy. That means rain every day."

A section of the Russian River near Guerneville, about 60 miles northwest of San Francisco — had reached flood stage — 32 feet — by Sunday afternoon, and hit 38 feet late Sunday night. It was expected to reach 48 feet today.

That prediction reminded

some residents of the flood of 1986, known as the Valentine's Day Flood, when the Russian River was measured at a record 49.5 feet.

Shirley Sullivan, 76, was plucked from the roof of a house during the 1986 flood. This time, she wasn't taking any chances — she grabbed her cat and headed for a Red Cross shelter in Sebastopol.

"I'll just have to make do," she said.

Andy Dalton said her Guerneville Five & Ten was out of batteries as residents stocked up on supplies.

But she noted that longtime residents were less concerned. In the 1986 flooding that inundated downtown, the river rose to 46 feet, she said.

"This will only affect the people who get flooded every time we have a storm," she said.

Authorities in Guerneville did not call for mandatory evacuations, but many people left their homes. About 30 people checked into the shelter set up at the Veterans Memorial Building in Sebastopol.

Flooding was also reported along the Russian River in Healdsburg, east of Guerneville. The fire department reported that flood level in that city is 19 feet and the river had reached 24 feet. No formal evacuations were ordered.

Officials in neighboring Napa County were also keeping a wary eye on the Napa River, which was expected to crest near flood levels.

About 40 people were evacuated from their homes in Calistoga and authorities planned to evacuate about 75 elderly people from a mobile home park in Yountville near the Napa River.

To the south, some 200 homes and 75 mobile homes were evacuated in Petaluma, located about 35 miles north of San Francisco.

Schools were ordered closed today in many districts affected by the flooding, including Petaluma, Calistoga, Stinson Beach, Healdsburg and Sebastopol.

"Many roads are closed and the high tide could swamp other roads," said Don Armstrong, superintendent of the Shoreline Unified School District, which covers Bodega Bay, Pt. Reyes, Inverness, and Tamalpais.

"School is being closed as a precaution, so as not to jeopardize the safety of students, teachers and staff," he told radio station KCBS.

Fire Capt. Tim Riddle said the Petaluma River started to rise after Sunday morning's high tide.

"There was a massive amount of water that had nowhere to go," he said.

A shelter was opened at the Petaluma Community Center.

Jan Null, lead forecaster with the Weather Service, said his agency and the U.S. Geological Survey also issued mudslide warnings for Napa, Sonoma and Marin counties.

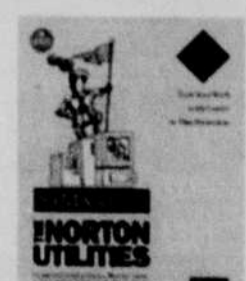
Pacific Gas & Electric Co. said customers were experiencing scattered power outages along the coast, but said 9,000 people in Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino and Lake counties were without power Sunday night. About 1,500 customers in the Santa Cruz Mountains south of San Francisco also had no electricity.

Interstate 80 across the Sierras was closed briefly Sunday when a storm-spawned blizzard knocked down a PG&E power line. Numerous other roads were closed because of flooding throughout the region.

The weather service said a string of powerful storms will continue to hit the Northern California coast through early next week.

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