

Flooding causes evacuations in California



NATIONAL

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The worst rainfall in nearly a decade continued its deadly assault across the state Tuesday, forcing the evacuation of 20,000 residents in northern Sacramento County and sending waves of mud into homes in Southern California. At least six deaths were blamed on the storm.

All 20,000 residents of Rio Linda, 15 miles north of Sacramento, were ordered evacuated when Dry Creek, a tributary of the American River, spilled over its banks. Hundreds of people were sent to shelters in elementary schools and churches.

"Water is almost to the top of street signs in some locations," said sheriff's spokeswoman Sharon Telles.

Army National Guard Chinook helicopters plucked residents out of hard-hit Guerneville, about 60 miles north of San Francisco, as the Russian River crested at 17 feet above flood stage.

Brothers Brian and Dave Ridley were on one of the first flights out, both of them cold and hungry.

"Our house is gone," Dave said. "I've been inside my truck for three days."

At least six deaths were blamed on the storm over the past two days, five in Northern California and one in southwestern Oregon.

In Southern California, a body was found in the raging Ventura River but it wasn't immediately known if it was that of a homeless man reported missing.

Nearly 200,000 utility customers were reported to be without power across the state, and repairs were often difficult.

"A lot of times they're under water, and mudslides and landslides are blocking the way," said Diana Gapuz of Pacific Gas & Electric Co.

In Southern California, at least 20 people were pulled from the Ventura and Santa Clara rivers, some by helicopter; three were hospitalized for hypothermia, authorities said.

Many of those rescued were residents of homeless encampments along the river bed. They had been warned on Monday to move to higher ground, but few listened.

"I was coming close to dying," said George Struck, draped in a blanket and shaking violently after he was pulled from the water. "I felt it. I felt it."

In Santa Barbara, 43 residents of a convalescent home were evacuated to a hospital as runoff waters invaded their home before dawn, said police Sgt. Brian Abbott.

The rainfall turned Los Angeles' morning and evening commutes into even more of a nightmare, flooding intersections and littering freeways with fender-bender accidents, spinouts and overturned vehicles.

Ninety miles of railroad track between Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo were submerged, forcing cancellation of Amtrak service.

Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu was closed because of a thick coating of mud and rock. At Las Flores Canyon, motorists abandoned vehicles as they filled with water.

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Trial will tell shocking information, present domestic abuse testimony

LOS ANGELES (AP) — O.J. Simpson's lawyers have hinted they will argue that wife beaters aren't necessarily wife killers in an effort to limit the amount of domestic violence evidence put before jurors in his murder trial.

In a hearing that begins Wednesday, prosecutors are expected to ask to introduce a host of potentially explosive evidence, including Simpson's no-contest plea to a spousal battery charge and Nicole Brown Simpson's dramatic 911 call for police help.

The result is expected to be such a torrid revelation of details about Simpson's life that his jury was ordered to be sequestered before the hearing begins.

Court papers relating to the hearing remain under seal, but the defense has suggested in previous statements it adheres to a common legal theory that abuse evidence would amount to little more than usually inadmissible character evidence.

How much of the evidence will later be presented to the jury is up to Judge Ito to decide. Legal analysts expect a mixed ruling, with both sides getting a little of what they want.

Simpson is accused of the June 12 slayings of Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman. If the hearing wraps up this week, opening statements in his trial could begin Jan. 18.

The defense probably will argue at the hearing that domestic violence evidence would only make Simpson look bad, and a tried-and-true legal principle is that prosecutors can't try to prove a case by suggesting bad people do bad things.

"Even if he engaged in spousal abuse, it's irrelevant," said Columbia University law professor George P. Fletcher on Tuesday. "The premise that wife beaters tend to kill their wives is simply false."

At a hearing last week, defense attorney Gerald Uelmen urged the judge to consider statistics showing that while 2.5 million batterings occur each year in relationships, there are only 1,500 spouse or partner murders a year.

"By a simple statistical tabulation, you can actu-

ally come up with a computation of the statistical probability that a battering is going to be related to a subsequent homicide," Uelmen said.

Prosecutors likely will argue the opposite: Wife beaters can become wife murderers, and any sign of violence in the Simpsons' relationship points to the identity of the killer and a motive for the crime.

Advocates for victims of domestic violence support that position.

"When women are killed by their partners or ex-partners, there is more often than not a history of abuse in their relationship," said Marissa Ghez, spokeswoman for the Family Violence Prevention Fund in San Francisco.

By this reasoning, prosecutors want the jury to hear all the torrid details — the 1989 New Year's dispute that sent Ms. Simpson to the hospital, her tearful pleas for help to a police dispatcher in 1993 as Simpson crashed into her house and allegations that Simpson bashed in a car window.

There also are photos of a bruised Ms. Simpson — taken after the 1989 fight — that prosecutors seized from a safety deposit box.

Previous cases provide guidance for the judge, and one case in particular may be of interest because of its eerie similarities to the Simpson slayings.

In that case, a California appellate court upheld the conviction of George F. Zack, who was accused of beating to death his wife in 1982 and leaving behind a bloody trail of footprints.

The appellate court ruled the jury was properly told of prior assaults by Zack on his wife, the last of which left her with two black eyes. Zack also allegedly threatened to kill her.

The court ruled that the evidence pointed to the identity of the killer and a motive for the attack.

"(Zack) was not entitled to have the jury determine his guilt or innocence on a false presentation that his and the victim's relationship and their parting were peaceful and friendly," the court said.

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Dan Quayle will compete in 1996 presidential race

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Vice President Dan Quayle is going to compete for the 1996 Republican presidential nomination and will be out on the campaign trail as soon as he recuperates from surgery, a Republican pollster said Tuesday.

"He's running," Texas-based pollster David Hill said in a telephone interview from what he called "Quayle headquarters" in Indiana. "I'm going to help Dan on his campaign for president. I wouldn't be here if there wasn't a campaign."

Quayle was released Monday from the hospital after undergoing an appendectomy. "We're finding out how quickly he can get back in the swing of things," Hill said.

He said Quayle would be appearing in Iowa and New Hampshire, sites of the first party caucuses and the first presi-

dential primary, probably by the end of the month. In addition, Mark Goodin, a GOP operative who most recently worked for Virginia Senate candidate Oliver North, would join the Quayle campaign as communications director, he said.

Hill has polled for 16 years for Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad, making him an expert on the state and its Republicans. "That'll be one of the first places to do business when he (Quayle) really gets totally geared up again," Hill said of Iowa.

The Republican field is taking shape rapidly with the approach of a primary season telescoped largely into a two-month period at the beginning of 1996. Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas and former Education Secretary Lamar Alexander are sure bets, with Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas a potential contender as well. California Gov. Pete Wilson might also run.

Injustice, not kiss, is central idea in movie

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — Glenn Close says too much attention is being paid to a kiss she shares with Judy Davis in an upcoming TV movie about a gay military woman.

"It's basically not what the movie is about," Close said of the scene in "Serving in Silence: The Margarethe Cammermeyer Story."

"The movie is a very, very personal story ... the kiss is just something that comes at the very end."

One citizens' group reportedly asked NBC not to air the kiss. The group's name was not immediately available.

The film is not about homosexuality but about the injustice of firing an outstanding officer after decades of service, said co-producer Craig Zadan.