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NEWS FROM THE NORTHWEST

Wet, Oregon winter takes its toll

■ **WEATHER:** A let-up in the heavy rainfall gives people a chance to get dried out

(AP) — Heavy rain spread across northwest Oregon again Wednesday, raising the prospect of more flooding along already brimming streams and of new landslides on hills saturated by a month of wet weather.

Flooding that closed roads and prompted Gov. John Kitzhaber to declare a state of emergency in Tillamook County eased today. Schools reopened in the county, although slides along the Wilson River highway and the Trask River road just east of Tillamook kept the roads closed to all but local residents.

Rainfall slacked off, with only Astoria reporting more than an inch in the 24 hours in the last few days. At least a half-dozen Western Oregon cities had more than an inch overnight Monday, and Astoria reported 3.66 inches.

Seaside residents were still being advised to boil their drinking water because of flood waters flowing into the water supply. The city of Portland pumped water from wells to make up a shortfall after slides knocked out two of three conduits carrying water from the Bull Run watershed. A state of

emergency remained in effect in Yamhill County.

State Transportation Department spokesman Dave Davis said most roads were reopened in the hardest hit northwest corner of the state. But he said a storm pushing onshore early today likely would produce new problems.

"They're starting to get rain again, so who knows what's going to happen," Davis said. With the forecast calling for up to 3 more inches of rain, "the possibility is good to have another slide somewhere," he said.

Davis said highway crews hoped to reopen Oregon 6, the Wilson River highway, by Wednesday night. Slides late Monday stranded dozens of motorists overnight and blocked access to Tillamook for residents along the Wilson River and nearby Trask River.

Kitzhaber's emergency declaration allows the Transportation Department to use highway safety money for emergency road repairs. It clears the way for National Guard troops to assist in flood cleanup and security, though no troops had been called out.

High wind warnings were in effect for northern and central coastal areas. Flood watches continued for many northwest-

ern Oregon streams, though a flood warning for the Umatilla River in northeastern Oregon was canceled.

East of Portland, flooding around the Clackamas River near Carver, Eagle Creek and Estacada forced some evacuations, but receding flood waters allowed most people to return home by Tuesday evening.

Toni Hirbeck waded through about a foot of water in front of her home on Eagle Creek Tuesday.

"God has a strange way of making people realize just how fortunate they are — that he can do this to you just like that," she told KOIN-TV. "I'm just really glad we're alive and we still have a home."

One bridge on Oregon 224 at the confluence of the Clackamas and Roaring rivers was closed after bridge pilings were damaged.

In the Portland suburb of Milwaukie, the manager of an apartment complex that was flooded in a storm three weeks ago watched anxiously as waters rose in Johnson Creek once again.

"We left the sandbags up," Teena Hval said. "We were supposed to have them taken out yesterday but we decided to go ahead and keep them."

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