

University, Lane County seek federal assistance

■ A state agency is deciding whether windstorm damage will require federal aid for repairs

By John Liebhardt
Oregon Daily Emerald

Falling trees, flying branches and crashing debris from the Feb. 7 windstorm caused at least \$60,000 in damage to the University, according to preliminary reports.

The report is part of a claim the University — along with other Lane County agencies — will make to Oregon Emergency Management in hopes of convincing Gov. John Kitzhaber to ask for federal assistance.

OEM is a state agency that plans and prepares for disasters and attempts to manage those disasters once they hit the state.

Linda Cook, emergency management supervisor for Lane County, said OEM is currently "number crunching" and should give Lane County its decision within the next two weeks. If the OEM board decides the storm requires federal assistance, it will be left up to Kitzhaber to attempt to convince federal authorities.

Representatives for the OEM board could not be contacted by press time.

George Hecht, director of Campus Operations, said the University moved quickly to document physical destruction and tally the damages.

"We will give them a pretty good picture of what was going on after the storm," he said.

Tom Fitzpatrick, director of public safety on campus, said his office has met with state and federal officials twice since the storm and expects to see federal officials again within the next week to 10 days. Don't expect any decisions soon, he said.

"We'll be working through this thing over next several weeks, if not months," he said.

The damage report claims the University will have to spend \$40,000 to replace 14 fallen mature trees and \$20,000 to repair broken windows and damaged roofs caused by flying branches and other debris. Some of the damages include patching 20 holes in the roof of the Robinson Theatre and repairing part of the Many Nations Longhouse roof. Also, wind blew off two doors on the south side of Prince Lucien Campbell and shattered two windows in Lawrence Hall.

The windstorm, bearing 70 mph gusts, downed trees and hurtled broken branches through area windows and roofs as it

descended on the Eugene-Springfield area. The damage was so quick and severe that the Eugene Water and Electric Board could not restore power to some Eugene areas, including the neighborhood directly west of the University, for nearly 72 hours.

EWEB announced that it incurred more than \$1.5 million in damages from the storm, including broken poles, power lines, electric substations damage and overtime, according to EWEB spokesman Lance Robertson.

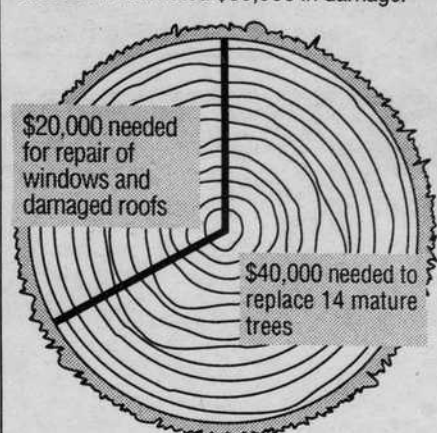
Operations manager Ron Bloom said 20 people worked until 10 p.m. Thursday night to clear pathways and fallen trees. At least 10 of those workers returned at 4:00 a.m. the next morning and worked through the weekend.

"We don't plan for anything like that in 40 years," he said. "These kinds of things are impossible to predict."

Bloom said his department has nearly finished cutting and removing the fallen trees. While the wet ground is their only remaining obstacle, operations hopes to reuse the wood for remodeling projects around campus such as replacing doors, walls and building cabinets in different buildings.

Storm damage

University officials report the Feb. 7 wind storm caused an estimated \$60,000 in damage.



Source: Office of Communications

Scott Abts Emerald

"We try to do as much as possible to recycle the wood," Bloom said.

E-mail community editor John Liebhardt at johnliebhardt@dailyemerald.com.

Watari

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High School on the way to a birthday party. The officers were following up on an investigation of a high school shooting several weeks before involving a group of Asians, she said.

"They told us to get out of the car and join the lineup," Watari said. "I'm from the suburbs. I didn't realize these kinds of things happen."

Years later, Watari paved the way for the formation of the Oregon Students of Color Coalition, a group of students from the seven OUS schools, Lane Community College, Rogue Community College and Oregon Health & Science University who advocate greater access to higher education for students of color.

She served as co-chairwoman of the group.

"She pushed that program to get it started," Simas said. "And it found its place last year."

So did Watari.

Gov. John Kitzhaber appointed her in June to a spot on the State Board; her term expires in June 2003. The board, composed of nine members appointed to four-year terms and two student members who serve two-year terms, sets tuition costs and adjusts funding for OUS schools, among other duties.

"It is a huge challenge," Watari said. "At first it seemed overwhelming."

Diane Vines, OUS vice chancellor for corporate and public affairs, said she has watched Watari mature quickly in her first year from a quiet observer to an active participant.

"As I got to know her, I appreciated her willingness to do her homework and research issues the board is dealing with," Vines said. "She would not just go along with the majority. She became more of her own person."

Watari was the only member to vote against the State Board search committee's process to select a replacement for OUS Chancellor Joe Cox, who is retiring. Watari believed the selection process was too exclusive and that students and faculty should offer more input earlier in the process. Vines said Watari ultimately had to compromise with the board.

"It was not everything she wanted," Vines said. "Whether you agree with her or not, her willingness to stand up and push on that was important. The board grew



WATARI

Erin Watari, State Board

Year: Senior

School: Southern Oregon University

Hometown: Gresham, Oregon

Position: Appointed to serve a two-year term as a student member of the state board that sets tuition costs and adjusts funding for OUS schools, among other duties

On the job: "It's a huge challenge. At first it seemed overwhelming."

stronger because of that."

And Watari grew stronger — but not just in her professional life. This weekend she was at her home in Gresham being strong with and for her family. Her grandfather Dean Nixon, 79, died of cancer on Valentine's Day.

"Grandpa used to take me to their cabin on the coast," Watari said. "That's where I learned to drive — on a riding lawnmower. We would eat TV dinners together. But my grandmother is still with me."

Her passion for politics is also

still with her. She hopes to one day work full-time as a public servant, though she isn't quite sure in which sector.

Fellow student board member Tim Young, who also was a vocal critic of the chancellor selection process, said Watari could succeed anywhere.

"She is the smartest, most passionate person I've ever known," he said. "She really cares about what she does."

E-mail reporter Eric Martin at ericmartin@dailyemerald.com.

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