

# Flooding inundates Eastern Oregon

By GILLIAN FLACCUS  
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Severe flooding in Eastern Oregon closed a major freeway on Friday, forced evacuations and stranded at least one family on their roof as other parts of the Pacific Northwest also braced for more flooding and landslides from relentless rain and rapid snowmelt.

Images showed massive big rigs foundering in feet of water that had poured over Interstate 84, a major freeway linking Idaho and Oregon, and a small bridge collapsed as the Umatilla River overran its banks. Smaller rivers and streams in northeastern Oregon roared with water from a rapid snowmelt, leaving at least one family stranded on their roof and authorities scrambling to rescue residents from a mobile home park.

The Umatilla River crested at more than 19 feet just before 10 p.m. Thursday in Pendleton, nearly four times the average height for that date, the National Weather Service said. Several other historic river level records fell in both Oregon and Washington state.

Gov. Kate Brown declared a state of emergency on Friday for Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties due to the severe flooding.

“This area’s totally compromised,” Pendleton Police Chief Stuart Roberts told the East Oregonian. “There will be property damage and vehicle losses.”

Tom Roberts, the Umatilla County emergency services manager, said the National Guard provided aerial aid late Thursday as roads near the Umatilla River filled with water.

Evacuation shelters were open in Pendleton and at a warming station on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation usually used for homeless people.

“We’re getting as many resources as we can. Please don’t put yourself in harm’s way, don’t cross moving water,” he said.

I-84 was closed for nearly 200 miles westbound from the Idaho border and was also closed eastbound for a six-mile stretch, authorities said. Multiple smaller roads around the region were also closed as flash flooding hit.

Elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest, officials braced for more flooding and landslides from relentless rains.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee issued an updated emergency proclamation for 20 counties because of damage from storms that are forecast to continue into the weekend. King County Executive Dow Constantine signed an emergency declaration Thursday to speed up response and a small number of National Guard troops were assisting residents near hard-hit Carnation, Washington.

Seventeen rivers in west-



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Nate Fuller and Archie Morrow await rescue on the roof of a home in Thorn Hollow outside of Adams. The pair were stranded when they attempted to rescue the elderly couple who were stuck in the house as waters from the Umatilla River began to rise. All were rescued by helicopter that evening.

ern Washington had reached flood stage, authorities said. Near Walla Walla, Washington, just north of the Oregon border, the Mill River crested at more than 20 feet, setting a record, the National Weather Service said.

In western Washington, a tree fell on a car on State Route 18 west of Issaquah on Thursday night, blocking the highway for hours. No one was injured. People living in an apartment building in Issaquah were evacuated Thursday after Issaquah Creek breached its banks and began running under the building.

In northeast Oregon, a storm that dropped up to 2 feet of snow in the Blue Mountains was followed by a warming trend that brought two days of heavy rain, melting the snow rapidly. The combination overwhelmed the rivers, said Dan Slagle, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Pendleton.

Resident Chantel Fuller told the East Oregonian that she watched the water rise Thursday until it filled her home in a matter of hours.

Her neighbors’ home in rural Thorn Hollow was underwater and other neighbors were stranded, she said.

“Our neighbors are stuck in their house and my husband and a friend went to go help them out and now they’re stuck on the roof. I’ve never seen it like this,” she said in a video clip posted on the newspaper’s website. “It flooded good last year — which is the highest I’ve seen it — and this year tops (that).”

Those on the roof were rescued late Thursday but authorities were still canvassing a mobile home park Friday in nearby Pendleton that was devastated by the rising waters.

Snow levels will drop and heavy snow is expected in the Cascade Mountains through Saturday morning, the National Weather Service said. Winds are expected to pick up, too, they said. Snow is also expected in the Blue Mountains, with lower temperatures that should ease the snowmelt, Slagle said.

Associated Press writer Martha Bellisle contributed to this report.



Oregon State Police

Severe flooding spills over to Interstate 84, linking Idaho and Oregon near Hermiston on Friday.

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