



Bruce Eien/Contributed Photo

Trees are down in front of Wallowa High School on Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, following a severe storm that rolled through Wallowa County.

Damage:

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“Of course, there were a lot of people who got hit but didn’t seek treatment,” he said.

Eien said around 4 p.m. Aug. 11, the power went out in Enterprise and about the same time, his wife received a text from her parents in Wallowa.

“We lost everything,” he recalled the text saying. “We immediately got in the car. We didn’t know what that meant.”

Eien said as they reached Wallowa, the damage sharpened into focus — cars with shattered windows and windshields, downed trees and homes with severe damage.

“There was a tree that hit a house, some trees in front of the high school went over,” he said. “Telephone lines, power lines went down.”

More than 5,300 customers in Enterprise and Wallowa were without power late in the afternoon Aug. 11. Power was restored in Enterprise and Joseph before 8 p.m. on Aug. 11.

Paul Karvoski, emergency services director for Wallowa County, said the power came on in Wallowa about 10:20 a.m. on Aug. 12. Only residents in outlying areas remained without power at midday, he said.

Karvoski, whose purview also includes fire-fighting in the county, said

no fires had been reported as a result of the storm.

Plunkett said the storm was a perfect chain of events to cause the large hailstones.

“We had really strong updrafts and then we had really strong wind shear that allowed an organized supercell thunderstorm to develop,” he said.

Supercells are the least common type of thunderstorm, but they have a high propensity to produce severe weather, including damaging winds, very large hail, and sometimes weak to violent tornadoes, according to the National Weather Service website.

The storm took about 90 minutes to pass through the county, Plunkett said, and once it crossed into Idaho, the storm weakened significantly.

Plunkett said the expected 50 mph wind gusts did not materialize. There were reports of 60 mph gusts at the La Grande/Union County Airport.

“We did not have any confirmed wind gusts in Wallowa County,” he said.

Plunkett also said there is not a lot of data available on supercells in Wallowa County. The last recorded event was a tornado with a rating of EF2 that hit June 11, 1968. EF means “enhanced Fujita scale,” and a 2 on the scale means gusts of three seconds of 111-135 mph. The Western Regional Climate Center, he said, reports that tornado came with golf-ball sized hail.



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Solar panels on the longhouse of the Nez Perce Tribal Homeland Project at Wallowa show damage from the Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, wind and hail storm.

Help:

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He did mention 1917 Lumber in Joseph sent sheets of plywood for residents and businesses to board up their windows. Also, the M.J. Hughes Construction Co. workers, who were in Wallowa doing work for the Oregon Department of Transportation, jumped in and helped residents and businesses board up windows.

M Crow of Lostine — known for its pizza — sent pizza to feed first-responders at the triage unit set up at the Wallowa Fire Hall.

Wallowa Mayor Gary Hulse said Boise-Cascade donated plywood for residents to board up broken windows.

A meal site also had been set up at the Wallowa Senior Center, said Paul Karvoski, county emergency services director. City Administrator Carolyn Harshfield confirmed Aug. 15 that Community Connection will operate the meal site, but because of a shortage of volunteers, it will only be operating Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Churches, too, are helping the needy, as groups from the Presbyterian churches in Lostine and Joseph, Tenderfoot Christian Fellowship in Joseph and Enterprise Christian Church sent groups of volunteers to help Wallowa residents over the weekend, and the Wallowa Assembly of God opened its coffers to provide funds for those in need, Hulse said Aug. 15.

Hulse said the city is in the process of establishing a fund at Community Bank where people can donate to help residents of Wallowa.

He said help has also been coming from the county, the Oregon Department of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service.

“People have really stepped up to help,” he said, adding that many people come to town, help and leave before they’re even acknowledged.

“Right now, I have more



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Randy Frash dumps a load of leaves he just picked up from a yard Friday, Aug. 12, 2022, in Wallowa. Leaves and branches were strewn all over town after a hail and wind storm passed through Wallowa on Thursday, Aug. 11, and residents quickly began repairing the damage.



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Windows are boarded up to keep out the weather after being broken by the hail storm Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022. Local businesses have donated the lumber and screws and volunteers have put the boards in place since the storm.

volunteers (offering help) than I have people in need,” Harshfield said.

The vast number of damaged vehicles has created another need — people who need to get to work outside of Wallowa. Community Connection is running a work bus and a shopping bus. The work bus leaves the Wallowa Senior Center at 7:15 a.m. and leaves Enterprise at 5 p.m.

Anyone interested in making use of either bus can call 541-426-3840.

Harshfield and Hulse have been fielding phone calls of offers to help and request need almost constantly since the storm struck.

The city plans to establish an emergency help line, but for now, the City Hall phone number will serve: 541-886-2422.

Ever since the storm, residents have been active all over town cleaning up the mess the storm created.

Leaves and branches littered yards and streets and people were just trying to get back to normal.

“I just came in and mowed this yard yesterday and it looked pretty good,” resident Randy Frash said. “Look at it now.”

Hulse said on Aug. 15 that six to 10 people suffered minor injuries when they were struck by hail, which reports said ranged from the size of ping pong balls to baseballs. He said he knew of one person who was hospitalized, but did not know that person’s status.

Hulse began the process of declaring a state of emergency Friday, Aug. 12 for the city, which will start the work to obtain federal or state aid. He said Friday the city attorney was working on the declaration. The declaration must be in place before government aid can be forthcoming.

He said the Federal Emergency Management Agency

isn’t likely to get involved, as FEMA requires a minimum of \$8 million in uninsured damage before it is mobilized. Hulse said he believes most of the damage in town was insured.

In the days since the storm, Hulse said he and other city officials have been going around town to make sure residents are all right and no one is just toughing it out rather than asking for help.

One of his main concerns is the extensive damage caused by the shards of glass from broken windows.

“A lot of people don’t realize those beds have shards of glass that are impossible to get out,” he said.

He urged residents to have beds, carpeting and furniture that may have glass in them replaced.

Hulse said he has yet to see the approximately 300 electric meters expected from Pacific Power & Light to replace those damaged by the hail. Most residents have either gone ahead and turned on the power or done without.

He said about 400 homes and businesses in town are PP&L customers.

For now, the city is working to assess damage. Likely next week, officials will begin actually reaching out to the state for assistance, Hulse said.

Roberts said Aug. 12 that although the county doesn’t “have a pile of cash” sitting there waiting for such emergencies, the county will help.

“We’ll help out any way we can,” she said.



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