

NEW DECADE TAKES GRAND RONDE BY STORM

A powerful storm wreaked havoc throughout the Pacific Northwest in early January kicking in the new decade with a bang. The storm winds reached 88 mph on the Oregon Coast and 60 mph in the mid-Willamette Valley area. 2.75 inches of rain fell in Salem the day before the storm hit. Many communities reported downed trees, blackouts, dead phone lines and numerous accidents.

Weather-related accidents claimed the lives of six people throughout the Northwest, including three Oregonians. Two people died and two people were seriously injured on the 7th. According to reports, 90,000 Portland General Electric customers lost power in the state. 12,000 PGE customers in Salem area lost power.

Along the Oregon Coast, massive waves as high as 14 feet pounded the coast and winds over 80 mph forced the Coast Guard to close Yaquina and Depoe Bays to all but non-commercial traffic.

Wind uprooted as many as 15 trees at Western Oregon State College in Monmouth and damaged the roofs of the Instructional Technology Building and the Campus Estates housing complex and the ventilation system on the new Physical Education building according to spokeswoman Judy Niesslein.

Flood warnings had to be issued for the Coquille, Yamhill, Tualitan, Luckiamute, Nehalem, Wilson, Siletz, Alsea and Suislaw rivers. The State Health Division even issued a warning on the harvesting of the shellfish, clams and mussels from the Yaquina Bay because of raw sewage overflowing at the Toledo wastewater treatment plant.

The heavy rain and winds caused a freight train to derail and ripped into Rattlesnake Ridge on the Hanford nuclear reservation in Southcentral Washington with gusts up to 92 mph. The Pacific Power and Light Company gauge in Astoria recorded gusts of 94 mph. Many schools had to be closed in Oregon, Washington and Idaho because of transportation and electricity problems.

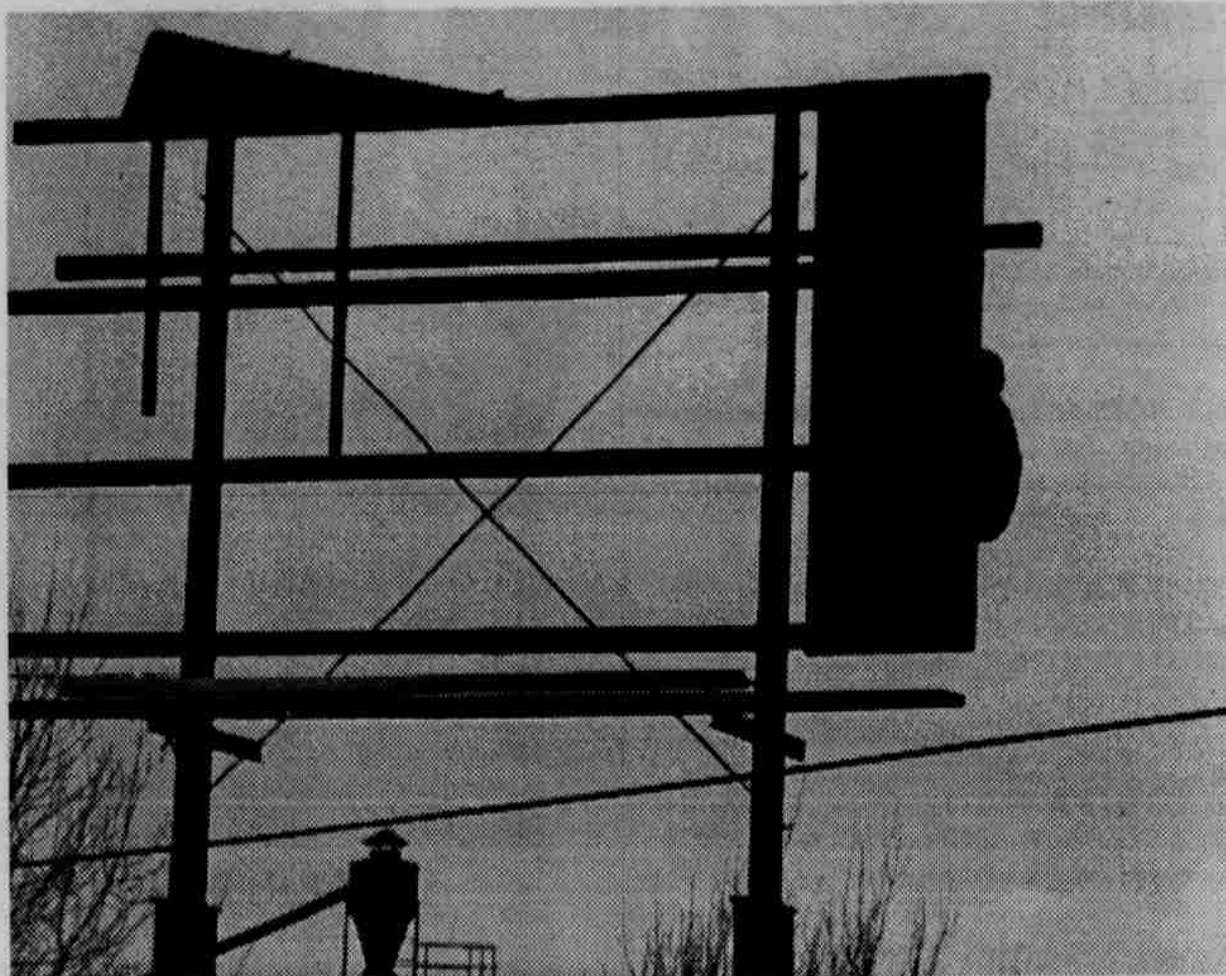
As of Monday, January 8th, 25,000 damage claims had been filed in the region for an estimated \$12.5 million according to four leading insurance carriers in the Northwest. On Tuesday, January 9th, Gov. Neil Goldschmidt declared Tillamook County a disaster area. In Polk County, the Luckiamute River reached its 27 foot flood stage. The Nehalem River crested at 24.9 feet, which is 13 feet above flood level.

In hard hit Grand Ronde, the rain has been sustaining the Fink family. They rely on electricity for the farm's well and without it they have been relying on the rainwater to sustain the family and their livestock.

The storms were reported to have damaged an estimated 140 million board feet of timber in the Willamette National Forest. If all that timber milled into lumber, it would provide enough wood for more than 10,000 three bedroom homes.

Also on the 11th, President Bush declared Tillamook County a disaster area because of the damage caused by the three days of storms. The President's disaster declaration meant that the state and local agencies could apply for federal aid to repair damaged public works. Oregon Governor Neil Goldschmidt has estimated the damage to public property in Tillamook at 2.5 million.

Closer to home, Tribal Forester Cliff Adams said that there are three particular areas on the reservation that had at least 25 trees blown down by the high winds. "We haven't looked at the entire reservation, but I think the amount of damage suffered was insignificant." Adams said the timber can still be used. "We'll be able to salvage all the blow down so there probably won't be any value loss."



This was all that was left of the Lincoln City's Kite Shop billboard along Highway 22 on the way to the coast.



This local timberjack cleared Ford Road for traffic.



This billboard behind the Grand Ronde Shopping Center was just one of the casualties of the storm.



The high winds caused considerable damage all along Highway 22. Powerlines were knocked over by falling trees.