

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

# Accounts of an historic storm

Storm from Page 4A

The storm was to hit the coast on Sunday. Most school districts canceled school for Monday and prepared their buildings. I remember that the sky was clear and calm for a very long time that Sunday. When the storm finally hit, the heavy winds sounded like a train that went on for hours. Trees and cell towers toppled and the power was out for many days.

On Monday morning, the winds were still raging but I went out to check in at the emergency operations center at the Seaside Police Department to determine the overall damage. I then checked on the schools. Downed trees blocked streets. Trees were blown down at each school.

I was very impressed and thankful that a number of community members checked in on their neighbors, bringing chainsaws and needed supplies. After several days, food in freezers began to thaw. I know of at least one good Samaritan who had a portable generator and would provide an hour or so of additional power to refreeze refrigerators. Personally, natural gas allowed us to use our fireplace, stove, and hot water heater — so we were better off than many.

After experiencing the lack of communication during the aftermath, I had all administrators and supervisors take ham radio classes and bought



Trees down in front of a Seaside home in the wake of the storm.

TOM HORNING

them portable ham radios for emergencies. One other thing we have noticed is there are a large number of fifth-grade students who will be turning 10 about the same time this year.

## Keith Chandler

We have a gas-powered pump for the fish at the aquarium. When the power went out, we had to man that pump for five days, for 24 hours a day. Every two hours and 15 minutes it had to be refueled. The more challenging part was getting gas to run the pumps, because there wasn't power to any of the gas stations either. Fortunately, a

former employee who had a landscaping company, Tom Thies, had several gas cans at his house and he brought them over for us to use. He wasn't mowing lawns that week. He knew our situation with our power out, and he brought us all his gas.

We used that, then we siphoned the gas out of our trucks.

After the second day, Fred Meyer got power, so we could go to Fred Meyer and get gas.

As long as the pump was working, the circulation worked for all the fish. The seals, they were fine. We have a system set up where we ac-

tually use city water to fill the seal tank. But after five days of not being able to pump water from the ocean, we were getting low on the reserve. That was a concern too.

We were always watching the outside of the building. Our biggest concern was the big sign that hangs out on the Prom. There was one point where the bolts started to come loose. We had to hang out of the windows upstairs and bolt those back in. I had someone else hanging onto my feet so I would not be blown away.

I camped out here for a day and a half before my co-worker came in to relieve me.

# Looking back at the storm from Gearhart

## Clearing roads after 100 mph winds

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

Gearhart Fire Chief Bill Eddy was on duty during the storm of 2007. Looking back, he described "microbursts" — small pockets of winds up to 100 mph. "You could actually hear it coming," he said.

Like last year's hurricane in Manzanita, the winds cut a swath, hitting some properties but leaving others untouched.

While phone service was down, firefighters could receive local calls. Teams went out in trucks with chainsaws and worked their way through the fallen trees.

The areas of the Highlands and Surf Pines were especially hard-hit, Eddy said, "where nobody could get out and nobody could get in."

Fortunately, he added, contractors that lived up there with some heavy equipment.

After clearing the bigger areas, crews started to look at individual driveways.

The houses in Gearhart actually fared pretty well, he said. "The trees didn't, but the houses did."

Police Chief Jeff Bowman conducted welfare checks, Eddy said, while firefighters cleared roads in case they needed to get apparatus through.



GEARHART FIRE DEPARTMENT

Firefighters Tony Como and Chad Sweet clear fallen trees after the 2007 storm.

Without power, freezers gave out and homes and restaurants emptied their stocks.

"We ate better than we ever had in our lives," Eddy said. "Even though I worked my butt off I gained 10 pounds."

Lessons learned?

"We learned that the communications were terrible down here," Eddy said.

Another thing firefighters discovered was the need for fuel. Fortunately, Eddy said, Seaside Fire gave permission for Gearhart trucks to fill up there.

"We found out that the community is a lot more resilient than we give them credit for," Eddy said. "They did a

very good job. We didn't have any whiners."

Jeff Ter Har remembers the Columbus Day Storm of 1962. "I lived through that — that was scary but this one was phenomenal," the Surf Pines resident and business owner said.

So many trees fell he and others in the Gearhart community were trapped without phones or power. "Literally no communications."

Ter Har's main concern were his parents in downtown Gearhart. "I couldn't get to them or talk to them," he said. "It was just really scary."

It was a minor disaster, he said.

"It made people start to pre-

## Always have a plan

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

What lesson did the city learn from the Great Coastal Gale of 2007?

According to geologist Tom Horning, now a city councilor, while the threats of storms and those of earthquake are very different: but they both require planning. "What we learned was that the meteorologists were able to predict the storm two days in advance, with accuracy and following the exact path it took," Horning said.

While damage was mostly limited to fallen trees and power lines, many homes were damaged, particularly those without strong reinforcement.

Powerful earthquakes will be the warning of an impending tsunami. Everyone should know that they will have only 20 minutes to evacuate to safety, Horning said. That adds to the urgency to have a viable safety strategy before the event happens.

pare better for other future disasters," Ter Har said. "It made you think about having gas in the car and ready to go. It does make you think.

# Getting out, reaching out in the aftermath of the storm

By Nancy McCarthy  
For the Seaside Signal

Toward the end of the week there were rumors that cell service had returned to Seaside. The highway had been cleared, so I decided to go there.

I'll never forget what I saw: My first impression was, "This must be what it would be like during an apocalypse."

I went to the Safeway store. Since they were working only with generators, the lights were dim. Yellow caution tape was draped across the frozen food aisles. Many shelves were empty (no supplies could get through because of the downed trees). Shoppers were quietly walking through putting the food that was available in their shopping carts; they looked like they were still in shock. I guess the cash registers were working, but it was

sketchy because there was so little electrical power.

Next door to Safeway, there was a long line of people with shopping carts outside the Rite Aid. I couldn't figure out what was going on, so I checked it out. They were waiting for bags of ice to be loaded into their carts. Ice was the only way we could keep anything cold. I thought for sure they would be charging a lot per bag (supply and demand, you know), but they charged only \$1 a bag.

At the Chevron gas station, vehicles were crowded around the gas pumps, and they extended into the street. A television camera crew was interviewing drivers. It was the first time gas was available since the storm began. I think they were also working with generators.

Anyone who wasn't at Safeway, Rite Aid or the gas

station was at the Cove in Seaside. People were walking on the rocks or balancing on the logs, cell phones to their ears, reassuring family and friends that they were OK. It was the first time in nearly a week that

they had been able to communicate with anyone outside their local communities.

Nancy McCarthy is the former editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.

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