

# The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

December 13, 2007

## Flood of 2007



Peter O'Leary's mail truck got bogged down in flood waters on the corner of Grant Ave. and North St. and had to be towed out by Curt Bernal's truck.

## Flood of 2007 hits Mist and Birkenfeld

Residents in the Mist, Birkenfeld and Fishhawk Lake areas are still digging out after more than 10 inches of rain caused devastating floods on December 3. Approximately half of the homes in the area were flooded.

Disaster victims have been helped by the National Guard,

state prison inmates, and "tons of volunteers" residents said. To help get supplies to those in need, the Red Cross has organized a Distribution Center through the M-B Main Fire Station and Birkenfeld Community Church

Other fire districts – Banks, Columbia River, Scappoose,

Tualatin Valley and more – have sent equipment and personnel so M-B could get some rest or so those whose homes were flooded could start work on their own recovery.

Community spirit is strong, as evidenced by a full turkey dinner hosted last night by the Natal Grange.

## Alternative heating methods can carry health risks

Public health officials in the Oregon Department of Human Services are warning that burning alternative fuels in homes and using gas generators for back-up electricity is dangerous.

It is not safe to burn alternative fuels inside the house (such as barbecues, hibachis, stoves, or camp stoves that use gasoline, kerosene, propane, diesel, charcoal). If you use a gas generator for back-up electricity, locate it away from the house and from any attached garage to avoid toxic fumes entering the home.

These devices produce carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless and lethal gas that can build up in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces. If peo-

ple breathe too much of the gas, they are poisoned because red blood cells pick up carbon monoxide faster and hang on to it tighter than they do oxygen. Thus, red blood cells are unable to carry oxygen to the tissues in the body leading to tissue damage and death.

Health officials advise:

- Never use any kind of gasoline, kerosene, propane, natural gas or charcoal burning device inside your home or

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## Vernonia floods after 10 inches of rain in 24 hours

Over 10 inches of rain fell on Vernonia and the surrounding area in less than 24 hours, starting on Sunday, December 2, and causing extensive flooding. Many people left town the morning of December 3 before it became apparent that the area was flooding and then couldn't return after high waters closed Highway 47 and the Scappoose/Vernonia Highway by about noon.

By about 1:00 p.m. the town of Vernonia was bisected by high waters from Rock Creek flowing over Bridge Street at Adams Avenue. Shelters were set up on both sides of Rock Creek by volunteers sent out from the Incident Operation Center at the Vernonia Rural Fire District offices. Volunteers with boats and trucks went out on rescue missions.

Fire Chief Paul Epler and Vernonia Police Sergeant Mike Kay directed operations for the first two days, assisted by many volunteers. The Oregon State Fire Marshal, as emergency procedures dictate, came in and took over the Operations Center at 6:00 p.m. Tuesday.

The first shelters were set up at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Cedar Ridge and Lincoln Grade School. It has been estimated that 200 people spent the night in the shelters the first night, and that 40-60 were still staying at the shelter at Cedar Ridge on Monday, December 10.

Food was removed from Vernonia Middle School by volunteers, some wading through hip high water to put it in trucks, to take to Cedar Ridge so a community kitchen could be opened.

Then the power and phones went out. West Oregon Electric Cooperative's office flooded and so did both Vernonia substations. Luckily, the weather was unseasonably warm due to the tropical nature of the storm that hit this area with rain, and hit the coast with high winds. Cell phones became the only mode of remote communication, other than the ham radios that were being manned by volunteers at the Fire Hall.

The waters were still rising when the sun went down Monday and did not crest until around 11:00 p.m. By about 2:00 a.m. December 4, high trucks could again get across town.

When morning came and the roads were once again open, the extent of the flooding and damage could be clearly seen. Hawkins Park and the school grounds had bleachers in odd places, even one on the Linear Trail near the bridge to Anderson Park. Anderson Park had asphalt pieces picked up and moved totally off the roadway and a car was stuck in trees over Bear Creek. The water was still deep on Bridge Street in front of the Senior Center, Country Kitchen, and

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### EDITOR'S NOTE:

We apologize for this late issue and are sorry for any information that is missing or incorrect. Like so many homes and businesses in the Vernonia area, our office received extensive damage on December 3 from flood waters and mud. This caused a loss of information and a delay in publishing. We expect to be back on schedule for the December 20 issue, with the deadline for submissions being Friday, December 14.

We regret any inconvenience this delay may have caused.