

The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

January 1, 2009

Snow birds



A Varied Thrush (left) and a Robin enjoy a tree with left over fruit on one of the recent snowy days in Vernonia.

Heavy snows blanket the Nehalem Valley

Vernonia, most of Columbia County and many other areas, saw a very snowy winter storm come through starting with snowfall on December 14. Vernonia and St. Helens declared states of emergency on December 22 (retroactive to December 15). After such a declaration, the Governor decides whether to accept the declaration before funds can flow to the affected area to help offset the costs associated with digging out from such storms.

Power went out in some areas with the first snowfalls and was still out in some outlying areas on Monday, December 29. West Oregon Electric Cooperative (WOEC) General

Manager Marc Farmer said on Monday that power was still out on the Lower Nehalem, Hagg Lake, Timber Rd., Strassel Rd, Scofield Rd, and Apiary Rd. All were expected to have power restored Monday. WOEC anticipates having all smaller outages repaired by the end of Wednesday, December 31. Inside the city of Vernonia, power was off for a few hours, December 20-21, was on Monday, December 22, then off again the afternoon of Christmas Eve and was not restored until the early hours of December 27.

Oregon National Guardsmen from the 116th Air Control Squadron provided manpower, equipment and supplies to help

people throughout Columbia County during the storm.

Working with civilian agencies in Columbia County, they responded to 103 fire, medical and public assistance calls, conducted 164 welfare checks, and provided 11 medical transports. They also delivered heater meals and cases of water to isolated residences in the Nehalem Valley, and a generator to provide drinking water for the Fishhawk Lake community.

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**Top 10 Items you
need to survive a
Power Outage**

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Vernonia 2008 Year in Review

- Jan. 4 – U.S. Senator Ron Wyden holds Town Hall.
- Jan. 5 – Vernonian Mackenzie Carr crowned queen of 2008 Columbia County Fair & Rodeo Court.
- Jan. 7 – City Administrator M.R. "Dick" Kline resigns in letter dated Jan. 7; effective 30 days from Dec. 18, 2007, "voluntarily resigning due to dire financial circumstances" of Vernonia. Council immediately puts him on contract as Financial Manager while Planner Aldie Howard continues as Interim City Administrator. Planning Commission and Council hold Flood Public Hearing.
- Jan. 17 – 47J School Board holds Town Hall style meeting to discuss future of schools. City holds illegal meeting when quorum of Council attend study session with Planning Commission without following legal notification procedures.
- Jan. 22 – Norm Brown, Ben Davis, and Dean Smith given Lifesaving Award, at City Council meeting, while 31 others receive certificates of appreciation for volunteer efforts following the flood.
- Jan. 24 – 6-inch gas line behind Washington Grade School accidentally cut while installing modular classrooms, school evacuated. Gas turned off without incident.
- Jan. 28 – Council announces M.R. "Dick" Kline's last day will be February 28.
- Jan. 31 – Flood Town Hall at Washington Grade School with FEMA representatives on hand.
- Feb. 6 – All students back at school in Vernonia (after many attend classes in Scappoose facilities)

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Banks area home destroyed by fire

A fire was ignited December 22 at the home of the Barth family on Pihl Road, when a tree fell on a power line. Fire equipment was unable to get to the home for some time due to bad road conditions caused by the snow storm. The family was safe, although their home was a total loss.

John and Jill Barth and their three children, age six to twelve, spent the first few nights after the fire at a hotel and have now moved into a

temporary home.

The Banks Fire Department, the North Plains Fire Station and the Hillsboro Fire Station are all drop-off spots for donations for the family. They now have enough clothing, but still need beds and bedding, blankets, towels, pots/pans, dishes, silverware and knives, a sofa, kitchen table and chairs, dresser and hangers. Cash donations may also be made at any US Bank into the "Barth Fund."