

Most businesses take storm challenges in stride

BY AMBER NOBE
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TILLAMOOK — Businesses in Tillamook weathered last week's storms fairly well, having learned lessons from last year's disastrous flooding. The elements were worse, many agree, but only some businesses were unprepared for the intensified storm.

Sheldon Oil Co., operator of several Shell stations throughout the county, made good on its promise to better meet the emergency needs of the community. With new generators in place, most stations remained open throughout the storm. Though Portland TV news station KATU reported there was a fuel shortage in north county, a Sheldon spokeswoman said that was

incorrect. There were lines, though, sometimes up to a couple blocks in each direction.

Lodgings in Tillamook were booked all week with residents from the North County area without power, work crews repairing roads and power lines, news media and Red Cross workers. A full motel is generally good news, though managers took the opportunity to help the community rather than profit from it.

Ron Wallace, general manager of the Best Western, said the city's hotels worked together to fill every room as the need among displaced residents was high. Wallace said he didn't even think about raising rates. "You don't raise rates in times like this — you keep them as low as you

can," he said.

The Best Western suffered some wind damage, though Wallace said he was expecting more. The Shilo Inn suffered damage from high water, which it did not during the storm of 1996.

Grocery and hardware stores stayed busy as those without power streamed in from other communities. Kimmel's Hardware ran out of batteries, propane and other high-demand products on Tuesday but received a new shipment Thursday, enough for its own customers and those sent over from Safeway, which also ran out early in the week. Kimmel's sold 26 generators last Wednesday.

At the Food Basket in Garibaldi, transactions continued,

despite the lack of electricity. Owner Gunner Monson said they used pens, paper and calculators to sell batteries, propane and lamp oil, at first. As the week wore on without power, the popular items became cigarettes, beer and bread.

The Blue Heron French Cheese Co. was back in business Friday, having prepared for the storm with new brick landscaping and sand bags and moving vehicles, livestock and inventory to higher ground. "I'm sure putting brick around the property saved FEMA a lot of insurance money," owner Denny Pastega said.

Last year, the Blue Heron had half a million dollars worth of damage, lost six or seven animals

and missed 45 business days. This year, Pastega estimates around \$50,000 in damage, and lost just one sheep and less than a week of business. He praised friend Doug Rosenberg for spending last Monday inside the store, lifting inventory off the ground in case of high water.

Tillamook RV Repair was less fortunate. Bill Brislin reported 49 inches of water in one corner — twice as bad as last year's flood. He and the rest of the crew spent last week power washing the mud-covered office furniture, pouring more gravel in the puddle of a parking lot and drying out the shop. Brislin estimated \$50-60 thousand in damages.

Though his own business was suffering, owner Mike Borough

became a hero to some when he rescued a handful of RVs from the low-lying Wilson River RV Park on Hwy 6. Some residents, fearing the worst, returned to the park to find Borough had moved the RVs to the county Fairgrounds before waters rose.

Also on North Main in Tillamook, Rosenberg Builders Supply was protected with a water barrier constructed to keep water out of the store and parking lot.

Tillamook County Creamery Association reported minimal damage to its own facilities, though many area dairies were affected by the extreme winds. Vice President of Public Affairs Mark Wustenberg said the creamery missed just a half day of production.