

December 8, 1982



One-day flood

Despite a deluge of rain—more than seven inches this past week and more than three inches Thursday night and Friday—high water was minimal in most places. Among

the exceptions were the Tillamook River (above) and downtown Nehalem (left) (Staff photos by Katherine Palmer and Don Cullimore)

Storm last week leaves one death in wake

Authorities reported no serious damage from Friday's storm but a Tillamook man was killed when high winds forced his three-wheel motorbike off a farm road and into a utility pole.

Sheriff's deputies identified the dead man as Terry Wade Grimes, 21, of 3250 Fraser Road. The incident occurred about 1:30 p.m. Friday on the Rudolph Penk farm just west of Tillamook.

Deputies said Grimes was riding the motorbike on a dirt road to check a field pump house when winds gusting to more than 60 mph apparently pushed the vehicle off the road and into the utility pole. Grimes was killed instantly, deputies said. It was the only serious incident in Tillamook County in connection with the storm that struck the North Oregon Coast early Friday.

"I understand that Clatsop County and other areas had a lot more damage than we

did," said H. Thomas E. Dye, Tillamook County emergency management coordinator.

"We were fortunate," Dye added. "It was just a typical winter storm without severe flooding—one of those situations where, if we had gotten any more rain, it could have been much more damaging."

Winds gusting to 70 knots per hour (80.5 mph) were recorded at the Garibaldi Coast Guard Station Friday morning, with steady winds of 40 to 50 knots per hour (46 to 57.5 mph) occurring throughout the day.

KTHL Radio in Tillamook recorded winds gusts of 65 mph about 10 a.m. Friday, with steady winds of 40 mph. More than 3.4 inches of rain fell at the station during a 24-hour period that ended at 4 p.m. Friday.

The winds and rain combined to cause flooding in some lowland areas of the county, but authorities said there have been no

reports of major damages being caused by the storm.

Downtown Nehalem and the stretch of Highway 101 that runs through it flooded Friday afternoon when the Nehalem River, running two feet above flood stage, was backed up by an above-normal tide-high tide.

Highway 101 was also flooded just north of Rockaway and south of Bay City Friday afternoon, but was passable, sheriff's deputies said.

The floodwaters and large amounts of drift did tear loose part of the temporary scaffolding being used by workers at the construction site of the new Nehalem River bridge. The damage is not expected to cause any serious delay in bridge construction.

The high tides Friday were running about two feet above normal, said Garibaldi Coast Guard personnel.

Four of the five rivers that empty into Tillamook Bay were above flood stage Friday, said Dye. These were the Wilson, Trask, Miami and Kilebas rivers. The Tillamook reportedly did not go out of its banks.

Some short-term power outages occurred early Friday, but telephone service was not interrupted.

"We had a few isolated areas where power was out for a short time," said Bruce Stacey, PUD's director of customer services. "One of the worst problems was with a 115,000 volt BPA (Bonneville Power Administration) transfer line feeding Hebo and Beaver substations in the south county area. But these areas were out of power for only 20 minutes until PUD crews performed the necessary switching operations," he added.

Miami River Road has been temporarily

closed while Pacific Power and Light crews are rerouting power lines from a slide area just above the road at mile post 5, noted Dye.

"Whenever it rains, that slide moves," Dye noted. He said the road should be open again within a short time.

During the storm Garibaldi residents and officials also kept a wary eye on the steep slopes that have been cleared behind the community. Heavy rains and runoff from the slopes last January caused large mud slides in residential areas and flooding in the business district.

"Fortunately, the storm didn't create any major problems, just a lot of little ones," said Dye.

Three motorists were lucky to escape with minor injuries Friday evening when they drove their vehicles into huge holes that had been washed out on Highway 53 in Clatsop County and on Old Scenic Highway 101 in Lincoln County.

Two drivers and their vehicles were plunged 40 feet down when they hit a 100-foot wide washed out area on Highway 53, which runs between Nehalem Bay and Necanicum Junction at Highway 26. One of the drivers was identified as Cecil Werner of Molalla. Identity of the second driver is not known.

Douglas R. Davis of Miroco, a small community near Depoe Bay, drove his van into a washed out area of Old Scenic Highway 101 just south of Cape Foulweather, ending up 100 feet down from the roadway.

Davis escaped with minor injuries but lost his van and a number of items in it.

The storm that washed out the scenic highway dumped nearly four inches of rain in the Newport area.

Gray whales swim by

Gray whales can now be seen along the Oregon coast on their annual 6,000 mile trek from the Bering Sea off Alaska to Baja California.

The southward migration, which involves thousands of gray whales, lasts from December to early February, according to Bruce Mate, Oregon State University Extension marine mammal specialist.

The whales are headed for lagoons off the coast of Baja where they will breed and give birth to young.

Unlike most whales, grays stay near land during their migration, commonly traveling about three miles from shore. Some scientists theorize that gray whales may not be good navigators so they follow a shallow-water route to avoid getting lost.

"Whatever the reason for hugging the coastline, the grays offer a splendid opportunity for coastal sightseers," Mate says.

In the last few years, whale watching charterboat trips have become popular, giving people a close-up view of these giant mammals which reach 45 feet in length and weigh as much as 45 tons.

For the shorebound viewers, high coastal headlands jutting into the ocean offer the best vantage point. Binoculars or spotting scopes are recommended.

The telltale blow, a spout of vapor rising as high as 12 feet, is the first sign to alert the whale watcher. Once the geyser-like cloud appears, keep watching in the same area for more. Mate advises. The best time to watch for whales is in the early morning when the sea is calm.

The gray whale gets its name from its blotchy pattern of coloration, which is caused by barnacles growing in the skin and by scar tissue where barnacles have been.

Two OSU Extension publications explain more about whales. Single copies of "Gray Whales," SG 52, and "Watching Whales," SG 53, are available without charge from the Bulletin Mailing Service, OSU, Corvallis 97331.

People who miss the southern migration of gray whales will have another chance to see them during the northern migration beginning in late February and lasting until June.

From March 21-26, 1983, the OSU Extension Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program will conduct whale watching activities at the OSU Marine Science Center in Newport. More information is available from Don Giles, OSU Extension marine education specialist at the Marine Science Center, telephone 867-3011.

Tourism group sets meet

State Sen. Dell Isham (D-Lincoln City) will again host a travel conference in preparation for the 1983 Legislative Session. Industry representatives and Legislators will meet Dec. 11 at the Inn at Otter Crest south of Lincoln City. The conference will focus on the role of government in the growing travel industry.

A morning panel discussion entitled "The Many Facets of Tourism" will feature Luke Handle, marketing director for the Eugene Performing Arts Center; David Hersch, general manager for the Portland Beavers; Dick Mathew, director of the Washington

County Museum; and Jerry Gillespie, president of the IPT Corporation in Lincoln City.

The afternoon will be devoted to 1983 legislation relating to tourism. The main topic of discussion will be the future of travel promotion in the State of Oregon.

Past conferences hosted by Isham have resulted in significant legislative action. The Senate Interim Task Force on Travel and Cultural Industries in 1980 was a result of the 1978 conference. The tourist industry legislative package which was introduced in 1981 grew out of that task force and the 1980 pre-session conference.