

State Of Emergency Declared In Durant

Flooding Blue river knocked out Durant's water supply last night and authorities said it could be days before full service is restored.

There was hope that some water could be trickling back in the system late today — but there were no promises.

"We're going a step at a time," said mayor Troyce McGovern, who declared a state of emergency last night when pumps at the Armstrong treatment plant were cut off last night.

"We could have something going again late today," he said. "It obviously is going to take some time to refill the system, and lower sections of the city will see the first of it."

He appealed for residents to use water only for drinking and sanitary purposes until full service is restored.

The damage was done by fast-rising waters of Blue river at the Armstrong treatment plant — higher than old-timers could remember.

Three water tankers have been obtained from Civil Defense and the National Guard, and free water is available from them at the police station on S5. Lines began forming early this morning as word spread.

Blue river flooded both the raw water pumps at Armstrong — which lift water from the river to the plant, and then moved into the main pump room and submerged the huge electric motors that move water through the treatment system and into Durant.

C. O. Reese, water plant superintendent, said the electric motors have to be removed from their moorings, cleaned and dried out by heat before they can be used.

He hoped to have one river pump back on line this afternoon, and to use a diesel-powered pump to get some water moving through the system and into citizen's faucets.

While most Durant residents are without water, a few living in recently annexed areas of the city are hav-

ing no problems. They — and countians living to the west and north of Durant — are being supplied by Rural Water District 2.

Brown Mills, manager of the Blue River Valley Improvement authority said, "Rural Water District 2 is running normally and there

are no problems."

Early this morning city officials huddled with Mills to discuss the possibility of the authority feeding water into Durant mains but Mills said a hydraulic question halted that idea. "It would only be such a small amount that it (See DURANT, Page 6)

Area Asks Disaster Relief As Flood Cleanup Started

Blue river, fueled by deluges of rain all the way to its headwaters, roared out of its banks Tuesday afternoon, flooding homes, leaving Durant without water and drowning crops including ready-to-harvest peanuts.

Lt. Gov. Spencer Barnard was to arrive at Eaker airport at mid-afternoon for a personal survey of waterlogged southern Oklahoma. With Gov. George Nigh out of the state, it's up to Barnard to declare a disaster, paving the way for federal aid.

High water blocked highway traffic through the night as the crest moved slowly downstream on the Blue. It peaked at 11 p.m. at the bridge in Armstrong and at 5 a.m. at the US 70 crossing west of Durant.

Both roads were closed for hours while city police, highway patrolmen and highway department workers detoured cars and trucks. The SH 48 crossing was still under water late this morning.

At one point this morning, police chief Coleman Townsend said at least 15 homes, mostly in the southeast part of the city along Mineral Bay-

ou, had been flooded to some extent. His officers were continuing their check for other victims. Several others in the Armstrong area also were flooded and outbuildings swept away.

Civil Defense personnel evacuated one woman from Jones Trailer park on

Cemetery road after water reached the floor of her mobile home.

The high water in the Blue came from rains of more than 16 inches in Marshall and Johnston counties, as well as downpours in Bryan county.

Durant received an official (See WATER, Page 14)

Texoma Level Jumps More Than Six Feet

Water level of Lake Texoma rose more than six feet in a 24-hour period ending at 8 a.m. today. "It's the fastest anyone remembers it jumping," said reservoir manager Herb Smith.

"I just couldn't believe it." Tuesday's morning measurement put the level at 612.07 feet above sea level. This morning the gauge stood at 619.07.

Most of the water is being held for the time being because of downstream flooding problems.

"Our hydrology people were on duty all night and

predicted the rise. They hit it right on the nose," he said.

The Corps of Engineers forecasters are looking at a 619.93-foot crest Saturday.

"It could go higher," Smith said, explaining the hydrologists' prediction is based on river measuring stations. "There's a gauge at Gainesville on Red river they're checking right now," he said, "for the possibility it may be silted or is giving an inaccurate reading for other reasons."

The six-foot rise amounts to an average of three inches an (See TEXOMA, Page 14)

FRANTIC RACE AGAINST rising flood waters became a losing battle on Blue river Tuesday evening for two families, despite efforts of friends to help save their

belongings. A mobile home was swept into the US 69-75 bridge and shattered, and a steel quonset building housing Robinson's Body shop was washed away.

High Water Brings Plea For Relief Funds

(From Page One)

6.94 inches of rain — 2.3 inches to 7 a.m. Tuesday and another 4.64 inches after that.

The total was shy of the 7.68 inches in March of 1977, used by the federal government as the basis of its "100-year flood" statistics.

The highway water brought problems to other utilities as well. OG&E and Southeastern Electric crews were on the road all night replacing washed-out poles and restoring service.

Southwestern Bell reported numerous terminal boxes had been under water, and lost a 50-pair cable at the Blue river crossing in Armstrong.

Bell manager Sandra Gower said over 200 people were at work this morning, trying to dry out wet lines.

Heavy telephone use at the height of the flooding loaded down switching equipment, causing delays in getting dial tones.

State Transportation department employees remained on the job most of the night, county supervisor Bob Meade said, and engineers

spent some of the early morning hours checking for possible bridge damage.

The Blue washed the shoulder from US 69-75 at Armstrong, leaving only the old asphalt-covered Portland cement driving lane on one side.

The stretch of highway was reopened this morning, alternating north and southbound traffic.

DOT trucks and men were stationed at intersections, detouring traffic east and west of Durant until the Blue finally came up over the US 70 east bridge about 1:30 a.m.

Members of Durant's Headquarters Company, 180th Infantry, Oklahoma Army National Guard were activated at 9 p.m. Tuesday and 12 guardsmen assisted local authorities.

For several hours, they manned a roadblock at the

Blue river bridge at Armstrong to keep daring motorists from trying to cross the water-covered section of highway. The Guardsmen were released at 3 a.m. today but several were assisting with water distribution this morning at the police station, where two water tankers are located.

The guard is also providing a water trailer for Bryan Memorial hospital.

Activated Guardsmen included Capt. Bill Wilson and Sgts. Billy Mullens, Cecil Smith, Gary Self, Larry Self, Johnny Keithley, LaFray

Stackhouse, Pat Espinosa, Loyd Newkirk, Donnie Lemmons, Jerry Carlton and Kenneth Moore.

Durant and a number of other county schools, along with Southeastern State university, were dismissed for the day both to the water supply problem and headaches in getting buses over their routes.

It was a bonus holiday for the children — who already have a Thursday and Friday holiday in front of them for the Oklahoma Education Assn. meeting in Oklahoma City.

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