

Apache Police Toil Long Night to Rescue Flash-Flood Victims From Homes

By Jamie L. McKeown
Lawton Bureau

APACHE — The tornado was one thing, but then there was the flood.

Within minutes after a flash-flood warning, while people still were checking tornado damage, Cache Creek bubbled over, pouring waves of water through a quarter-mile-square on the town's west side and forcing 165 residents from their homes.

All of it made for a long night for the four-man police department in this Caddo County town of 1,800 people.

Before D.C. Bradshaw, assistant police chief, could get back to town from investigating the tornado, he was wading armpit-deep in water to evac-

uate people from flooded homes.

One officer, who Bradshaw thought was missing, had spent more than an hour helping about 30 residents to the top of a carport.

"It happened so fast ... just happened so fast," said Bradshaw.

After police received the warning, "We were able to position people to watch the water," Bradshaw said. "Without that, we wouldn't have made it."

With help from farmers driving tractors, fireman and policeman evacuated 46 households.

The only injury occurred when a 15-year-old boy was bitten by a snake as he reached into rising water. The boy

was sent to an Anadarko hospital.

One woman and her family came home from a cellar after the tornado warning only to be warned by police of rising water.

Less than five minutes later, she said, their car could barely make it down the street.

"The water traveled that fast," she said. "Water was seeping into the car. We could feel the seat getting wet. I don't know how that car made it. The water was up to the headlights."

About 10 Red Cross volunteers from Lawton were summoned to the Apache Senior Nutrition Center, where all flood victims were sent. A small delegation arrived from the

Tulsa Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief.

Bradshaw's long night started about 7 p.m. Wednesday, when he investigated a tornado that hit near Lake Elsworth. On his way back to Apache, he found a stranded motorist and noticed the threatening water.

The creek already was lapping against four houses in northeast Apache.

After that, "I was by myself wading this deep in water," Bradshaw said, pointing to his armpit.

Water flooded the road in a matter of minutes, and he and his crew started evacuating families.

"It was just a very rapid rise in water. It went from ankle-deep up to the

car's headlights in less than a minute."

Farmers came in with tractors to aide the evacuation effort. "They were probably the reason we didn't have any fatalities," Bradshaw said.

Residents were hanging onto fence posts and trees to withstand the rush of water. Officers and others formed a human chain to pull some people across the flood, Bradshaw said.

"I'm a big man. I weigh about 350 pounds, and it was all I could do to stand in one place," Bradshaw said.

With the exception of one or two, all those who tried to drive cars out of the area lost their vehicles to the overflowing creek.

Water began dropping about 1:30 a.m., but the level was back up to within two feet of the previous night's crest by morning.

Community members and businesses donated food and clothing to help the stranded families, and three churches provided shelter.

County graders were available Thursday for families hoping to retrieve property from their drenched homes. Water was five feet deep Thursday afternoon.

But everybody hoped the worst was past.

"I felt like an Olympic swimmer after all that," said Bradshaw. "I'm ready for the Channel now."

NOTE: HOMES NW POOLED GROUNDS ON LEFT BANK XSECT BOX FLOOD CK



Fast-moving floodwaters left many Apache homes and vehicles surrounded by rising water.

— Photo by Jamie McKeown

Heavy Flooding Pushes Raw Sewage Back Into Bathtubs of Private Homes

By Jan Paschal

The elderly Oklahoma City woman wept into the phone and told Wanda Hill, executive secretary to City Manager Scott Johnson, that she was bailing raw sewage out of her bathtub with a paper cup.

Ward 8 Councilman Robert M. Frank's first phone call of the day was from a young doctor, whose home on Quail Creek Road got an influx of raw sewage.

By day's end, those names had been added to a list of 700 emergency calls.

"I've had two calls today from ladies who were just weeping. They were dipping water out of their tubs and through the bathroom window, just anything to try to keep the water level down," said Mrs. Hill, the city manager's secretary.

Another woman, a resident of the Gatewood neighborhood near Oklahoma City University, said she woke up about 6 a.m. Thursday "to the sound of blub-blub-blub ... someone turned on a water faucet and then there was

raw sewage in the basement."

Al Blakely, superintendent of the city's line-maintenance division, said 60 of the 153-plus emergency calls involved backups of raw sewage inside someone's home.

"We're giving those first priority over those where a sewer line has broken in their yard," Blakely said.

Four city crews, each consisting of three men, began working "around the clock" shortly after 4:30 p.m. Wednesday to cope with the growing list of sewer-repair calls created by three days of torrential rains.

"We only have enough sewer-rod (cleaning) equipment for four crews. And we've got four other crews out inspecting sewers," Blakely said.

In many areas of the city, the sanitary sewers are not large enough to handle the normal daily flow of sewage, Blakely said.

When heavy rains saturate the ground and overflow into city sewers, that washes raw sewage out of the lines and sometimes in-

to private homes.

"The real problem, in a lot of areas of the city, is that the sewer lines were built years ago out of concrete and over the years, the sewer gases have eaten up the concrete. So there's nothing left there for us to even repair," Blakely said.

"If ever anybody was against this sales-tax increase, gosh, today, they should be able to see the need for it. Just anything to help fix our sewer system would help. Major replacement is the only thing that will help in a lot of places."

The Oklahoma City Council on Tuesday set Nov. 22 as the date for a special election so voters can decide whether to increase the local 2-cent sales tax by another penny to finance public improvements like sewer and water-line repair.

About \$40 million per year could be raised by the extra penny tax.

However, \$450 million in water-line and sewer repairs have been identified as "urgent needs."

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By Chris Brawley

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Heavy Flooding Washes Out Bridges and Closes Many Oklahoma Roads

By Covey Bean and Jan Paschal
Numerous roads were closed by floodwaters late Thursday as runoff from heavy rains continued to disrupt travel throughout central and southwestern Oklahoma.

Highway Patrol district headquarters at Altus, McAlester, Lawton and Oklahoma City reported roads closed by high water. Central Oklahoma was hit particularly hard.

Flooding occurred on two interstate highways, I-40 east of Oklahoma City and I-44 north of Lawton, the Department of Transportation reported.

High water had halted one lane of westbound traffic on I-40 at the Dale exit east of Oklahoma City in Pottawatomie County Thursday afternoon and I-40 access roads were closed at the SH 277 intersection, also in Pottawatomie County.

I-44 was closed because of flooding north of Lawton near Fort Sill and was hazardous because of accumulated mud, but still open at mile marker 72.8 in Grady County.

Other major highways were reported closed in Oklahoma, Cleveland, McClain, Lincoln, Canadian and Pottawatomie counties in central Ok-



This Norman motorist needed an amphibious vehicle to navigate Main Street, between W 36 and W 48.

lahoma and in Cotton, Tillman, Comanche, Kiowa and Grady counties in the southwest. Other closings were reported in Seminole and Okfuskee counties in the east.

The Highway Patrol district office at McAlester reported the North Canadian River was sending water four feet deep across SH 48 two miles south of I-40 in Okfuskee County.

With more rain expected into the night, the Highway Patrol reported closings in the following regions:

Southwest — SH 19 from Warren to Roosevelt; SH 9 from Mountain View to Carnegie;

SH 6 from Grandfield to SH 5; SH 9 from Gotebo to Carnegie; SH 44 north of Olustee; SH 5 at the Red River west of Tip-ton; SH 19 at the Kiowa County line near Coopertown; SH 183 north of Mountain Park; SH 9 between SH 54 and SH 115 and between SH 115 and SH 58 in Kiowa County; SH 53 east of Walters; SH 19 at the Red River; U.S. 62 north of SH 277 in Comanche County; U.S. 281 south of Apache; SH 65 north and south of SH 7 in Comanche County; SH 7 east of Lawton; I-44 north of Lawton; SH 81 and SH 62 in downtown Chickasha; SH 5-A, SH 5-B and SH 53 two miles

west of Stephens-Cotton County line.

Central — SH 74 north of Edmond at Deer Creek Bridge; SH 18 from three miles south of Chandler to Meeker; SH 102 south of U.S. 66 to I-40 in Pot-

tawatomie County; SH 18-B east of SH 18 in Lincoln County; U.S. 66 Loop through Wellston; SH 102 south of SH 9 in Pottawatomie County; SH 9-A north of I-40 in Pottawatomie County; U.S. 77 north of Lexington in Cleveland County; SH 39 east of Lexington in Cleveland County; SH 24 north of Washington in McClain County; SH 74-B between SH 76 and

SH 74 in McClain County; SH 152 four miles east of SH 81 in Canadian County; U.S. 177 five miles north of U.S. 66 in Lincoln County; Harrah Road, two miles north of SH 9 in Cleveland County, bridge out; I-40 at the South Dale Exit westbound, right lane closed; I-40 access roads at SH 277 in Pottawatomie County; SH 152 east of Union City; U.S. 66 at Banner Road; SH 130 near Newcastle; SH 74-B west of Cole; SH 39 west of Purcell.

East — SH 99 west of Little in Seminole County; SH 48 two miles south of I-40 in Okfuskee County.

The Transportation Department said undamaged roadways would be reopened as the water recedes.

In Oklahoma City, raging storm waters washed out 11 Oklahoma City area bridges and flooded 22 intersections or portions of area highways.

"Basically, these are streets without any drainage," said Charles Turnbull, communications supervisor for the city's Emergency Operations Center.

Bridges were reported "out" at the following locations: NE 23 and Midwest Boulevard; NE 36 and Midwest Boulevard; NE 23 and Sooner; SW 89 and Morgan Road; SW 179 and Pennsylvania Avenue; Bryant Avenue and SE 34; Choctaw and SE 19; Douglas Boulevard and NE 68; Indian Meridian and SE 19; SE 149 and Luther Road; and SE 149 and Peebly Road.

Turnbull said barricades also were erected because of high water at the following intersections or on segments of these streets and area highways:

Northeast — Air Depot Road and NE 23; Douglas Boulevard and NE 36; Grand Boulevard and NE 1-44, the southbound lane; Midwest Boulevard from NE 36 to NE 63; Sunnylane Road from NE 4 to NE 10;

Northwest — Broadway Extension and NW 50, Broadway Extension and Wilshire Road, County Line Road and NW 164, Eagle Lane and NW 10; Grand Boulevard and NW 32, Independence Avenue and NW 32; Lakeshore Drive

and Wilshire, and NW 220 and Portland (outside city limits). Roadway north of NW 178 and Rockwell and NW 178 and Council Road is closed.

Southeast — Choctaw Road and SE 149, Dur-

land Road and SE 15; High Street and SE 15; Lynch Road from SE 59 to SE 74.

Southwest — SW 149 (Highway 62) and May Avenue; SW 119 (Highway 62) and Portland; SW 133 and Pennsylvania, SW 152 and Pennsylvania

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Flooding

From Page 1

their front yards.

County and state offices closed early.

Many major highways were closed or made hazardous by pockets of deep water.

County roads were a muddy mess and water sometimes climbed over them, isolating communities completely.

loose at a gas distribution firm and gas began leaking into the basement of the hotel and two nearby banks, police said.

Also in Chickasha, police officer Bob Hauger said robbers took advantage of phone lines shorting out — which caused burglar alarms to malfunction — by

Four Guard members and one Guard truck were called up to help residents battling the heavy rainfall in Lexington, Reid said.

Two more Guard trucks and four more Guard members were activated in Lawton to help residents in the Lake Ellsworth area, he said.

In Tuttle, the police called the governor's office late Thursday to ask about borrowing road barricades from the transportation department to close some roads and bridges in the Tuttle area, Reid said.

The governor's office said officials are concerned about rising water in creeks and rivers

MEN'S RUBDOWN