

PROVINCIAL EMERGENCY COORDINATION CENTRE SEVERE WEATHER EVENT OVERVIEW

Friday, November 17, 2006 1800 hrs

SUMMARY

Since November 5, 2006, record rainfall in areas along the south coast of British Columbia, combined with snowmelt in the south coast mountains, led to rapidly rising water levels and reports of flooding.

More recently, a complicating weather event created power outages affecting over 200,000 people. Boil-water advisories were also in effect for as many as two million people living in Nanaimo, Chemainus, Vancouver, Burnaby and North and West Vancouver.

The storm event of November 15, 2006 is one of the most intense weather systems to impact south coastal B.C. in several decades. Recovery and damage assessment activities continue throughout impacted areas of Vancouver Island and the south coast.

At the height of the response, five local government Emergency Operations Centres were activated. Two Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centres and the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre were activated and staffed to support local response.

B.C. Ministry of Transportation and road maintenance contractors continue work to restore services to communities. BC Ambulance Service had an operations centre activated for Vancouver Island due to the extensive traffic and communications disruptions. B.C. Ministry of Forests continues to assist Comox Strathcona Regional District with replacement of a bridge into the community of Tahsis

Utilities such as BC Hydro and Telus continue work to restore services to those communities and areas that are without services.

Local governments were faced with emergency supply issues, re-establishing critical services and caring for evacuees since the storm first struck the coast. Several volunteer Search and Rescue Teams were activated to assist with response actions in Parksville, Port Alberni and Cowichan Valley. Emergency Social Service volunteer programs continue to assist evacuees in Qualicum, Coombs, Duncan, West Vancouver, Squamish and Lions Bay. The province is assisting Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and provided assistance to Nitnat Village, which was isolated by road washout and had no power or phone service.

Coordination of the provincial response and support to local governments continues to be provided through the provincial emergency management structure.

COMPLICATING FACTORS

Weather forecast for this event underestimated the actual intensity of the winds. The storm knocked out power and phone services to hundreds of thousands of customers almost immediately.

Many roads were closed due to flooding and downed trees, initially making travel impossible for response vehicles into certain areas.

It is expected that critical infrastructure, utilities and services may take weeks to restore to normal operational conditions in some areas. Recovery for individual homeowners, businesses, non-critical local government services and secondary roads may take longer.

The direct damages, response costs, recovery costs and economic impacts from this event are significant.

IMPACTS - DAMAGES ASSESSMENT

GREATER VANCOUVER-HOWE SOUND-FRASER VALLEY

Almost 200,000 homes and business were reportedly without power immediately after the storm's impact. The bulk of the outages occurred in Surrey, Langley, Abbotsford and Chilliwack on the mainland, and Port Alberni, Campbell River, Parksville and Qualicum on Vancouver Island.

The Greater Vancouver Regional District issued a precautionary boil water advisory for hundreds of thousands of water system users due to high turbidity.

Approximately 25,000 customers continue without power, including the community of Lions Bay. There was widespread wind throw and damage reported in West Vancouver, North Vancouver and Lions Bay.

Preliminary reports from the District of Squamish indicate that over 20 homes may have suffered flood damage. A municipal road washed out cutting off access for approximately 500 homes. Emergency repairs continue.

VANCOUVER ISLAND

Approximately 30,000 customers continue without power on Vancouver Island as necessary repairs take place.

Through the Alberni Valley, streets were flooded, schools were closed and power was knocked out to as many as 17,000 homes.

Telephone service outages continue for Port Renfrew, Quadra Island, Hornby Island, Kyuquot, large areas of Port Alberni and the Parksville/Qualicum areas.

Several communities have no road access due to washouts. These include: Gold River, Tahsis, Muchalat Inlet, Nitnat Village (FN), and Fair Harbour. Strong winds and heavy rain temporarily cut off Port Alberni, Tofino and Ucluelet from the rest of Vancouver Island.

Nanaimo Regional District reports that it still has up to 75 people receiving services through the Emergency Social Services program due to extensive flooding in a trailer park near Parksville and due to flood damages to a number of homes at Coombs. There are no summary numbers of damaged structures from either of these locations at this time.

Port Alberni/Alberni Clayoquot Regional District summary damage estimates indicate: 200 to 400 homes and 50 to 100 businesses damaged by flooding.

The Cowichan Valley Regional District reports that 75 to 100 homes have been impacted by flooding.

The Capital Regional District reports that one or two homes may have impacted by flooding.

The Comox Strathcona Regional District has not completed its damage assessment at this time, however, it is known that the road to Zebellos has been damaged.

The City of Nanaimo issued a boil water advisory for its system due to high turbidity in the water system

B.C. Ministry of Forests reports that a number of forests roads on Vancouver Island have been heavily damaged.

The Province assisted Vancouver Island Health Authority with emergency supply of propane to the Bamfield clinic. Due to road outages, the propane had to be delivered by barge from Port Alberni.

The Province has provided sandbags to many communities on Vancouver Island to replace those used in this event.

It is expected that it may take several days or even weeks to complete damage assessments, and longer for some of the restoration work.

INTERIOR

The Carpenter Lake Road west of Lillooet was closed by a number of small slides. This cut off access to the communities of Gold Bridge, Bralorne and Gunn Lake. Ministry of Transportation continues working with BC Ambulance Service and the RCMP to ensure that emergency services are available to those communities as required.