

Understated storm soaks area

SANTA CRUZ — The weatherman's prediction of 10-20 percent chance of showers Friday and Saturday was extremely cautious as it turned out.

Instead of a chance of showers, Santa Cruz got over three inches of rain in a steady downpour that lasted into the evening.

About an equal amount of rain is being predicted for this morning, according to the National Weather Service, but the rains should taper off this afternoon.

The forecast is for partly cloudy weather, without rain, for Monday and Tuesday.

Saturday's storm dumped 3.94 inches on Scotts Valley between 8 a.m. Friday and 5 p.m. Saturday, the heaviest rainfall reported in the county. Happy Valley ran a close second with 3.8 inches.

But the storm was benevolent, doing none of the damages of the Jan. 4 storm of four years ago, according to emergency services agencies.

The devastating storm of 1982 caused millions of dollars in damage and killed 22 victims. It flooded the town of Soquel, collapsed a portion of the Soquel Avenue Bridge in Santa Cruz, that is still being repaired, and buried a small neighborhood of houses in the Love Creek neighborhood of Ben Lomond.

This time, there were no serious mudslides or floods and no injury accidents on the rain-slickened roads. There were a number of fender-benders but no injuries.

San Lorenzo River began to look more like a real river as Saturday wore on, getting its early-year cleaning from the fresh rains. Some areas of the county saw flooded intersections as water rolled off faster than drains could handle.

"It was a lot of rain," said John Delury in Lompico as he reported that his area got 3.3 inches.

Swanton recorded the least amount, at 1.75 inches.

Even with the Saturday deluge, this season's rainfall is less than the 13 to 29 inches that fell in areas of this county by this date last year. However, this season is running ahead of normal.

Santa Cruz has 13.96 inches compared to last year's 17.15 inches. The normal rainfall is 11.56 inches by this time of year.

Bonny Doon has 19.66 inches compared to last year's 27.41 inches and Capitola has 14.14 inches compared to 20.19 inches.

According to the National Weather Service, this morning's storm will be fairly heavy.

Predictions include the possibility of thunder showers, but national weather forecaster Sam Bowman told Associated Press that the rain should slow by daybreak and should stop entirely by the afternoon.

A traveler's advisory remained in effect Saturday night for the Sierra Nevada north of Yosemite in antici-

pation of the second storm. The snow level remained between 6,000 and 7,000 feet.

Although the rain indicated a promising start for January, the weather Service said there was only a 50-50 chance of normal precipitation for the balance of the month.

With the snowpack diminishing, the major water storages are reported far below capacities. The last

three weeks of December rainy season, were virtually dry.

State flood control specialist William J. Helms said the water content of the snow at even the highest mountain areas was far below expectations. The mountains above 6,000 feet are usually hidden by thick snow mantles this time of year but the slopes are bare in many places, according to AP.

Helms pointed out, however, that major storms between February and mid-March could, if they materialize, fill the reservoirs with spring runoff.

Helms estimated that the state's biggest reservoirs, from Shasta Dam on the Sacramento River to Isabella Dam on the Kern River, are up only to 55 percent of capacity — 25 percent below average for this time.

REFERENCE

SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL
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