



A practical jokester put up a sign yesterday in a flooded lettuce field on Riverside Road yesterday, warning fun-starved Watsonvillians from recreating there.

Kurt Ellison

Violent storm brings rain, hail, snow

Freak weather snarls traffic, eases drought

By EMILIO ALVARADO
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WHEN IT RAINS, it pours.

The adage seems to apply the Monterey Bay area as pounding rain, lightning, hail storms and snow all have hit the Central Coast in the last 24 hours.

A hailstorm in Prunedale just before 8 this morning caused about eight minor accidents, said

Mark Starr, of the California Highway Patrol. The storm lasted about 10 minutes, he said, but that was long enough to startle drivers. Starr said there were no reports of injuries in the accidents.

The CHP received reports this morning of two inches of snow on the ground in Carmel Valley. CHP officer Bill O'Neill said a sudden cold front swept through the Carmel area just before sunrise, dropping temperatures and leaving a blanket of snow on the ground.

Snow was also falling this morning in the higher elevations in the Santa Cruz Mountains. CHP and Caltrans workers were standing by

on Highway 9, ready to either close the road or clear it if the snow kept falling. Caltrans reported that all lanes on Highway 17 were open this morning.

Lightning throughout the area last night and this morning lighted up the sky, but caused no damage or injuries. PG&E reported two power outages this morning caused by fallen trees. In the Browns Valley Road area, 66 customers were without power. In the Trout Gulch Road area, another tree downed power lines. Power was expected to be restored by noon, said Dick Davein, a PG&E spokesman. He said last night's lightning did not strike power lines or disrupt service.

The State Department of Parks and Recreation reported several minor mudslides and two downed trees on beaches between Watsonville and Santa Cruz. The downed trees were caused by heavy rains, said Lynn Rhodes, a spokeswoman for the parks department. There no injuries and workers are clearing away the debris. All beaches will remain open today, Rhodes said.

Rains have flooded some roadways in the Watsonville area, the Santa Cruz County Public Works Department reported this morning. Highland Road between Spanish Ranch and Rider roads in

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Parents and students waited in the pouring rain this morning for a bus at

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RAIN

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the Eureka Canyon area, and Lee Road at Harkins Slough Road were closed because of flooding.

So far this year, the Monterey Bay area has surpassed last year's rainfall figures. Most areas show between 5 and 7 inches more rain than reported last year at this time.

The increase in rainfall has

prompted Santa Cruz City Water Department Director Bill Kocher to review the city policy of water rationing this summer, and, if the rains continue, could mean abandoning water rationing, at least for a time.

He said that rationing, in one form or another was "here to stay," and people should not think that drought troubles are over.

"Our water picture this day, March 26, is also identical of what it was last year," he said. "It's a little premature to say (rationing)

is all off." But he added, "It would be ridiculous to say that nothing has changed."

He said if Loch Lomond Reservoir gets about three or four feet higher from rain, rationing could be avoided. But he said rains would have to continue falling at the rate they have been falling the last few weeks for the water level at the reservoir to rise to that level.

Kocher said the city still plans to institute water restrictions on April 1. The restrictions ban such things as washing cars and limits outdoor watering. The city also plans to call for a 35 percent cut in water use this summer.

Weather forecasts call for rain

to continue throughout the day, with widely scattered showers. The rain is expected to decrease during the night.

Lows tonight should be in upper 30s to mid-40s, with highs tomorrow in the 50s under partly cloudy skies.

RAINFALL

	Last 24 hrs	Season Total	Last Year
Felton	1.27	30.19	28.92
Santa Cruz	0.16	N.A.	N.A.
Soquel	0.48	N.A.	N.A.
Aptos	0.75	19.35	12.25
Freedom	1.04	17.54	12.33
Corralitos	1.13	19.41	13.95
Eureka Canyon	1.32	27.27	20.91
Watsonville	1.10	16.41	14.81
Aromas	0.90	17.10	12.50
Pinto Lake	1.00	24.10	15.7
Prunedale	0.39	N.A.	N.A.