

'There was just no warning'

Residents question response; city says it did the best it could



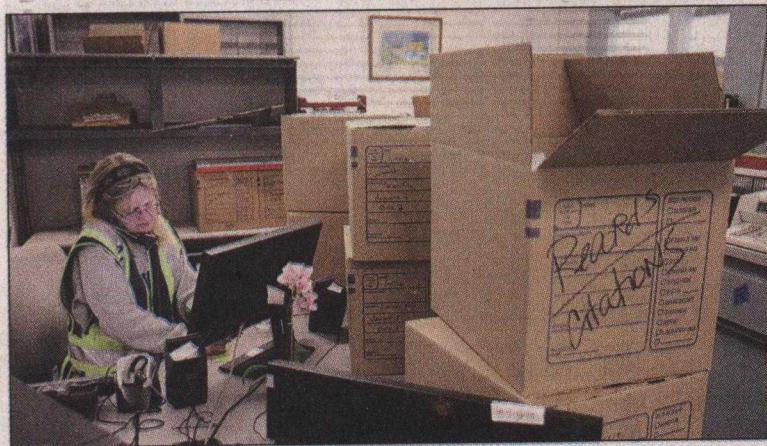
DAN COYRO/SENTINEL PHOTOS

Rod Caborn adds to the pile of ruined sheetrock, wallboard, insulation and wood he's ripped out of his building on Capitola Avenue on Monday as he joins other property owners in cleaning up the mess left by floodwaters.

RIGHT: Rod Caborn busts up the ruined hardwood floor in his apartments on Capitola Avenue.



BELOW: Capitola police administrative assistant Lorrie Wilson answers the phone at the department's flood-damaged office.



Capitola looking at weeks of repairs

Capitola - 2011 -

By TOVIN LAPAN

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CAPITOLA — Business and property owners in and around the village were in a fight against mold Monday, as wood, carpet, insulation, dry wall and anything else that got wet in two flash floods last week was being stripped out and removed as quickly as possible.

The other "m" word on people's minds was money, as in the still-undetermined cost of repairs and lost business. Then there is the question of who will pay for it.

The city, which declared a state of emergency Sunday, expects damage to reach \$10 million, Capitola spokesman Derek Johnson said.

The village, and the neighborhood business community, were still too busy cleaning Monday to gather a comprehensive damage estimate, Capitola-Souquel Cham-

ber of Commerce President Toni Castro said.

A drainpipe underneath Pacific Cove Mobile Home Park failed Thursday afternoon, breaking a hole in ground and flooding both the park and the village. On Saturday, more rain brought a second flood that damaged more homes at the park and inundated the village.

The floodwaters Saturday were higher than those Thursday, and once again those in the path of the rapids had little warning of the coming deluge.

"I've thought about it a thousand times: What else could I have done to get ready for Saturday," Public Works Director Steve Jesberg said. "We cleared (the culvert) as best we can. We prepared it as well as we could for any storm. I don't know what I would have done differently. There was only so much time."

CAPITOLA

Continued from A1

IN THE VILLAGE

Many residents and shop owners said more could have been done if they had not been caught off-guard Saturday.

"It was a nightmare," said Tatiana Lima, owner of the clothing store Euphoria on Stockton Avenue. "Thursday was fine. Saturday I was up to my knees in water. There was just no warning."

Many businesses and homes that escaped significant damage from Thursday's flood did not fare as well when the higher waters of Saturday's flood hit.

The Thomas Kinkade Gallery lost \$2 million of merchandise in the second flood, according to owners Steve and Tom Austen.

Still others have bills running into the thousands — to remove moisture and prevent mold — for dehumidifiers running around the clock, floor and carpet removal, and work on drywall and insulation.

While some businesses were working in concert with contractors and cleaning services Monday, Castro said some contractors' bids were wildly higher than others and getting an accurate and fair bid was problematic. While several people said Monday they did not have flood insurance, they were asking their insurance agents for assistance under their general coverage, considering the flood was the result of a broken pipe.

Tracy Blach, who lives on Riverview Drive, said she woke up early Saturday morning to see floodwaters creeping toward her front door. She asked two city workers nearby



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

The Capitola Police Department is moving to three trailers in the city parking lot while repairs are made to its flood-damaged offices.

for sandbags, but there were none available.

"My neighbor's boyfriend works for Las Animas Concrete and they came and helped, filling sandbags and helping to protect our homes," she said. "Without them, we all would have been much worse off."

The owners of Craft Gallery expect to be closed for at least a month while they pack up and move into a different village space.

"We got an emergency notice phone call around 9:20 a.m. Saturday, and by then the store was already under water," said the Craft Gallery's Daun Wallace. "I feel like (the city) dropped the ball Friday."

THE FAILED PIPE

After the 72-inch drainpipe that carries Noble Gulch Creek under Bay Avenue and the city-owned Pacific Cove Mobile Home Park failed Thursday, crews worked all day Friday to clear the path for water into the undamaged portion of pipe. Forecasts called for less than an inch of rain between Friday night and Saturday morning, but a total of 3 inches fell in four hours.

Crews were back to work around 5 a.m. Saturday, but just before 9 a.m., according to city officials, the creek once again overwhelmed the pipe. A worker was using an excavator to keep debris out of the channel, but eventually had to abandon his equipment to seek higher ground.

"The Saturday flood was a lot more damaging to the mobile home park than Thursday's flood," Jesberg said.

In addition to the four mobile homes red-tagged by building officials for structural problems after Thursday's flood, an additional five had to be tagged after Saturday's rain because the foundations were affected by the water.

Two residents living in one coach that was spared Thursday will now have to move out after the home was flooded and covered in mud Saturday.

"I didn't take anything out of the house on Friday because it all stayed dry," Bua Unjeen said. "The worst part is losing all the memories. This is our home, and we loved living here."

Unjeen and her roommate are looking for a new place to stay, and the city is working

with the owners of a vacant rental in the park to see if they can accommodate them. The city has committed to furnish housing assistance to the mobile home park residents for two weeks, and by then hope the park can be reopened.

"I can assure members of the public that the city is sparing no expense in resolving this problem," Mayor Dennis Norton said. "We will stay with this thing until it's done and we are actively trying to get financial aid."

Declaring a local emergency was the first step in the process of seeking state and federal emergency aid.

"I don't know how anyone would expect us to know this would happen," Norton said. "It's the volume of water we are talking about. Our own facilities flooded too."

The police station was flooded both days, as was the city hall annex and fire station. The police have moved to modular buildings in the Pacific Cove parking lot. The repairs to the police station, including new floors, carpeting and furniture, could take four to eight weeks, Johnson said.

The city hopes to install a 300-foot new piece of pipe in the park by the end of the week to reconnect the two ends of the drainpipe and hopefully prevent further flooding.

Rod Caborn, who was using a crow bar to remove the wood flooring in his vacation rental on Capitola Avenue on Monday, said he'll be keeping an eye on the repairs.

"I need to hear it's been fixed," he said. "Until then, there is no use putting in new floors. We could flood again. I want to get this place ready for high season, but I'm waiting to hear from the city."