

Weather



Mike McCollum

Jim Boud, of the public works department, works to clear drains at a car wash on Long View Drive.

Drought-watchers elated by latest storm

Staff and wire reports DEC 29 1992 within the city limits.

Cable television viewers experienced occasional interference, and some trees lost the occasional branch, but otherwise no wet-weather damage was wrought by the boisterous storm drenching Watsonville and its environs.

Yesterday's downpour, accompanied by gusty winds, early this morning evolved into a howling tempest that overnight deposited 1.2 inches of rain

When the rain comes down fast and furious, as was the case yesterday, gutters on local streets run full, and that kept the city's skeleton holiday crews busy clearing drains clogged by debris.

A couple of workers from the city's parks and recreation department were enlisted to assist the three public works department staff members attending to storm detail, said Embert Knauss, department supervisor.

Except for some fallen limbs reported behind the Watsonville Senior Center on Fifth Street, the storm, for all its bravado, hardly left its mark.

"We've had no serious problems," Knauss said. "I haven't heard of anything major."

At the Watsonville Fire Department, a spokesman reported no incidents of "environmental damage" had been called in, a situation experienced by other fire station staff.

On the high end of the gauge readings, Corralitos recorded 3.25 inches of rainfall, Eureka Canyon, 3.19 inches and Pinto Lake 2.3 inches.

For the season, Watsonville has received 6.24 inches of rain. At this same time last year, only 0.64 of an inch had fallen.

Elsewhere in Northern California, heavy rain and snow closed down three major highways over mountain passes and caused at least one death.

See STORM / back of section ►



Kurt Ellison

Fernando Rodriguez was busy sawing up his large loquat tree that blew down early this morning during the storm. The tree fell through a fence and blocked an alley between Fifth and Sixth streets.

STORM

► From Page 1

Meteorologists said more than 1½ inches of rain fell in the Sacramento area, with similar totals recorded throughout much of the rest of Northern California.

More than two feet of new snow were reported at Lake Tahoe, and heavy snow was reported down to 3,000 feet in the Sierra Nevada.

"We're looking at rain off and on throughout the week," said Margaret Nordberg, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Sacramento.

In Quincy, a town of 7,000 in Plumas County, about 110 miles northeast of Sacramento, 43-year-old Wiley Joe Murphy was crushed to death in his home by a falling pine tree. His wife and three children escaped injury. Officials said the tree was toppled by "severe winds."

In Tuolumne County, east of Modesto, rescue workers tried to reach a car that went off Old Priest Grade Road near Moccasin and plunged into a canyon that had become filled with rushing water last night. It was unknown how many people were in the vehicle.

Officials said the Moccasin fire that devastated that area in August left the slopes bare of vegetation, hampering the rescue efforts.

Accompanying the wet weather were winds gusting up to 80 mph in the upper Sierra, which created whiteout conditions in some areas. The National Weather Service issued winter storm warnings in both the Sierra and Siskiyou mountain range.

"We have cars lined up for chains," said Beth Holm at the Truckee Shell station at Interstate 80 and Highway 89.

Interstate 80 was closed between Applegate and the Nevada line, while U.S. Highway

closed between Pollock Pines and Meyers. State Route 88 was closed between Kirkwood and Pickett's Junction.

Interstate 80 was expected to reopen by noon today, and Highway 50 was scheduled to resume operations later this morning. Highway 88's reopening was not known.

Early today, automobiles were lined up on the highways waiting for them to reopen.

A series of minor accidents yesterday on I-80 in the Sierra caused traffic delays as long as four hours in both directions during the day, said California Highway Patrol Officer Bill Williams in Truckee.

"There's been a whole bunch of accidents, accidents everywhere on I-80," Williams said.

He said the snowstorm was expected to last through New Year's Day. "It's just starting," Williams said. "If you don't have to come, don't come — unless you want to

get stuck up there."

On Interstate 5, chain controls were also in effect between Castella and Weed and from Hornbrook to the Oregon border, said Caltrans spokesman Jim Drago.

At Squaw Valley, winds were gusting as high as 80 mph on the upper slopes, said resort spokesman Pete Bansen. Temperatures were in the upper 20s and low 30s, he said.

Many skiers yesterday were undeterred by the wind.

"Actually, there's more people than we expected," said Jacqui James, spokeswoman for Royal Gorge resort. "I guess people are just hungry for the snow. We're just advising people to bring chains and wet-weather gear."

The wet weather cheered state water officials.

"Every drop counts," said George Deatherage of the state Drought Center. "We are very thankful to have some rain and

some snow.

Deatherage said the Sierra snowpack, which provides spring runoff for water supplies later in the year, was about 95 percent normal. However, he said storage in the state's major reservoirs was still less than two-thirds average.

"We've got a long ways to go to get out of the drought, but we're working on it," he said.

RAINFALL

	Last 24 hrs	Season Total	Last Year
Felton.....	01.0	16.16	13.52
Santa Cruz★.....	0.95	N/A	N/A
Soquel.....	0.70	07.17	01.43
Aptos.....	02.0	09.05	07.50
Freedom.....	1.24	07.62	04.18
Corralitos.....	2.80	13.35	06.34
Eureka Canyon.....	3.19	17.02	10.29
Watsonville.....	1.20	06.24	00.64
Aromas.....	1.30	08.10	05.05
Pinto Lake.....	02.3	11.95	06.05
Prunedale★.....	N/A	N/A	N/A
Castroville★.....	0.91	N/A	N/A
Grn. Val. Rd.★.....	1.48	N/A	N/A
La Selva Bch.....	N/A	N/A	N/A

★ Readings taken at midnight