

Damage widespread across county

By JOSEPH CURL

Severe flooding in the county caused at least \$200,000 damage to roads and forced the evacuation of residents near Lake Jackson dam as a precautionary measure.

Losses suffered by 15 households and businesses and to the town's newly completed ball field during an early morning flash flood in the Town of Dumfries may amount to as much as \$1 million dollars, town officials say. (see related story.)

While there was substantial damage in the Dumfries area, most of the damage and flooding occurred in western Prince William County.

"Almost all the (secondary) roads suffered some damage," said Harry Glenn, Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Assistant Resident Engineer for Maintenance. The damage ranges from washed-out gravel roads to shoulders completely obliterated by the flooding.

During the storm, more than 100 VDOT employees worked to clear flooded streets and re-route motorists, said Glenn.

Melanie Eller of Dale City was stranded in a tree for more than two hours after she attempted to cross the flood-swollen Powells Creek at the intersection of Minnieville Road and Running Creek Drive.

"All of a sudden, a big wave came across the road," said Ms. Eller, who tried to cross the intersection about 11:30 p.m. Friday night. After her car was pushed into the creek, by a current estimated at 20 miles per hour, she tried to open the door, but couldn't because of the rushing water. When she finally did get out, she was pushed under the car but was able to grab a branch of an overhanging tree.

"The car pushed that tree over" as the car rushed down-river, she said.

After she grabbed a branch and climbed up out of the water, rescue personnel were called.

"I just yelled real loud," Ms. Eller said.

Fire and rescue personnel called for a helicopter, but all units were being used in other rescues. They finally decided to float a boat out to Ms. Eller after anchoring it with a rope to a fire truck.

"Yes, the water was very cold," she said.

More than 4 1/4 inches of rain fell

south, killing at least 21 people and injuring more than 100 as it raged from Texas to Virginia.

E-Z Cruz, Inc., a marine supply store at 15713 Jefferson Davis Hwy. (U.S. 1), suffered \$50,000 damage to the building and inventory. Neabsco Creek, directly behind the store, backed up at the underpass on Va. 1 and flowed across the street.

"The highway department is supposed to keep (the underpass) clear, but it got clogged up" because of the quickness of the storm and flooded the store with mud and debris, said an employee.

VDOT crews worked round-the-clock to clean up Purcell Road near its crossing at the Purcell Branch stream, a tributary of the Occoquan River. The road suffered major damage as the stream roared across the road, washing out shoulders along the road.

Parts of Lake Jackson Drive, Lucasville Road and Godwin Drive in Manassas, and Neabsco Road in Dumfries were closed for most of the weekend because of the flooding.

Mike Haddon of the Fire Marshall's Office reported that the county's fire and rescue crews made 78 calls on Friday, including three rescues, all after 10 p.m. The squads responded to 91 calls on Saturday, including six rescues, four between 12 and 1 a.m.

Safety during thunderstorms

During a thunderstorm, lightning is most likely to strike on a hilltop and under a tree. If you are outside during a thunderstorm, protect yourself by learning the following guidelines from the Virginia Department of Emergency Services:

- Take shelter in a building or covered vehicle.
- If you are in a forest, take shelter in a low-lying area under thick, small trees.
- If you are swimming or boating, get out of the water immediately.
- If you are in an open field, head for low ground—a ravine or a valley.
- Do not touch metal objects such as fences, umbrellas, bicycles or golf clubs.
- Do not go near overhead wires, metal pipes, water, clothes lines, poles or large trees.

day, and streams and rivers began to swell to flood proportions as runoff from hills and sporadic rain continued through the weekend.

The storm began in the midwest Thursday and swept across the

- Use the telephone only in an emergency.

For more information, call the Virginia Department of Emergency Services at 804-674-2499.