

**Opinion**

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**COMMUNITY  
BRIEFS**

**Cancelled breakfast**  
The Montford Cove Community Center breakfast scheduled for Saturday has been cancelled due to the severe weather.

**Bereavement class**  
Hospice of McDowell County will offer adult bereavement sessions for grieving individuals on Sept. 9, 14, 16, 21 and 23 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

**Computer classes**  
The Marion public library will offer free computer classes during the month of September. The classes will be held on Thursdays at 5:30 and 6:30 p.m.; and Saturdays at 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. The scheduled dates include today, basic mouse skills and Windows software, and Saturday, basic word processing and MS Word skill building.

**Color Me Healthy**  
Color Me Healthy is an innovative program using color, music, and exploration of the senses to teach children that healthy food and physical activity are fun. The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service is offering free training today from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Partnership office for teachers and child care providers who work with preschool children.

**Childbirth classes**  
The McDowell Hospital will offer the next series of eight consecutive weeks of childbirth classes beginning today from 6 to 8 p.m. Women in the last trimester of pregnancy, and their partners, are encouraged to attend. For more information, call 828-669-2200.

Marion Family Moose Lodge is extensive. About 60 RVs,

# Frances unloads on McDowell, WNC

By RICHELLE BAILEY  
Assistant Editor

Emergency officials say it will take days — and, in some cases, longer — for residents to recover from the fury Tropical Storm Frances unleashed on McDowell County Tuesday night and Wednesday morning.

Gusty winds and rapidly rising waters sent some folks fleeing to shelters and left others wading waist-deep in their own homes as nearby creeks, streams and rivers overflowed their banks.

Emergency Services Director Carroll Hemphill said, as of late Wednesday morning, weather watchers measured 12.7 inches of rain at the Old Fort Golf Course, 10 inches on Vine Street in Marion and 7.5 inches at the

city of Marion Corpene Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Pounding rains made for some tricky situations.

McDowell County Rescue Squad Chief David Cable said Frances spawned one of the most "touchy" rescues he's ever experienced when water completely surrounded a man's double-wide mobile home on North Cove School Road Wednesday morning and slowly tore it apart.

"We watched that double-wide come apart right there in front of our eyes and there was nothing we could do," Cable stated, estimating the water speed at 30 to 40 mph at the time of the incident. "We finally tied ourselves to poles so we wouldn't go under, then we got to him and pulled him out. But as we were coming



A mudslide just inside the McDowell County line closed I-40 at Old Fort Mountain a few hours early Wednesday morning. The mud covered all four lanes of the interstate, scattering the concrete barriers like pebbles. (Photo by Peggy Rowe)

out, transformers were blowing over our heads."

He said the man was on the phone with a 911 operator when the last pieces of the mobile home

broke apart.

"He somehow got out the back door to the vehicles, and we met

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## By the minute

### Tuesday

**5 p.m.**

Flood reports on Mill Creek, U.S. 70 West and Parker Padgett Road

**7:30 p.m.**

Evacuation of Mad Mama's Campground on U.S. 70 West

**9 p.m.**

Local and N.C. officials declare state of emergency

**9:30 p.m.**

Evacuation of Lake Tahoma area

### Wednesday

**3:30 a.m.**

Swift-water rescue in Wal-Mart parking lot

**5 a.m.**

Mudslide on Old Fort Mountain

**5:30 a.m.**

Swift-water rescue in North Cove

**Late morning to early afternoon**

Downpours lessen to showers



When the Catawba River came knocking on Steven Gouge's door on U.S. 221 Business early Wednesday morning, he decided it was time to find safer ground. Following safety precautions, Gouge is wearing a life jacket while walking in the unpredictable water. (Photo by Bonnie Byrd)

night.

Park owners waded into the water to help them find a safe path back up to the highway, high above the low-lying campground on N.C. 80. Their truck and camper s plashed through 3 feet of rushing current as they struggled to make it out of danger.

"If we went the wrong way, we could've gone down the river," said Linda.

The couple, on vacation from Gloucester, Va., thought they were safe at the Wal-Mart parking lot, where they bedded down for the night with friends Joe and June Zaccari of Fountain Valley, Calif., who didn't have time to get their own RV out of the campground.

"That little tiny creek just became a roaring river," said June.

But Wal-Mart wouldn't prove much safer, as water filled the lot overnight, rising about a foot per hour, according to Wayne's calculations. Shortly after midnight — and several more moves to higher ground — water was nearly high enough to come in. The Sheriff's Office and emergency workers rescued the couples, using rowboats to carry them out of the shopping center parking lot.

The Zaccaris and the Breedens, along with their dog Maggie, all ended up at the Red Cross shelter at Marion's First Baptist Church day care.

•••

Carroll and Norman Smith watched the water lapping at their porch at the Marion Family Moose Lodge Wednesday afternoon.

The tools and gas cans they moved out of the flooded yard were beginning to drift across the deck. A floating boat seat made a makeshift step outside the front door.

In front of them, an RV tipped onto its side in muddy, chest-high water. Pieces of docks, boats and Jet Skis floated through what used to be their yard all morning.

They used stones to measure the lake, which was rising some eight

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