



WEATHER

Weather just can't leave Weiser be — flooding swamps homes, damages businesses

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The Weiser River, jammed with ice, overflowed early Friday morning Feb. 10, 2017, flooding areas south of the river near Cove and Couper roads. Homes in the area were evacuated as well as several businesses. Flood water covered a portion of US 95 BY DARIN OSWALD

The [severe flooding that plagued much of Southern Idaho](#) Thursday spread west on Friday, with Washington and Payette counties [suffering yet another round of weather-related damage](#).

The Weiser River reached some of its highest levels in years early Friday morning, rising to an apparent 12 feet at 2:30 a.m. The cause: An ice jam that broke loose at roughly about midnight and swept down the river's southern bank, swamping the area of Couper Lane and Cove Road less than a mile southeast of the city of Weiser.

The U.S. Geological Survey says the river level reading is tentative and may have been affected by ice. A team plans to take measurements along the Weiser and Payette rivers Saturday to confirm readings in those areas.

At least six to 10 homes appeared cut off and/or inundated with water Friday morning. In addition, the bridge carrying U.S. 95 over the river just south of Weiser was closed to both traffic and pedestrians pending a structural inspection.

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“It impacted their lives and their livelihoods,” said Brown.

The region’s onion crops took a major hit in the snow and cold weather. More than 250 million pounds of onions — including 100 million in Idaho — must be destroyed by April 15 to prevent infestation by onion maggots. For context, onion maggots severely damaged the onion business in the 1960s.

Otter said he’s hoping for moderately warm days and cool nights to avoid a quick thaw in the area.

“The worst thing we could have is 75 degree days at the end of February,” he said.

Jack and Karyn Kyle live about a quarter-mile away from the flooded area. They moved there in 1996 and have witnessed flooding four or five times since.

The water has been higher, noted Jack Kyle. But “this was the first time we had ice and snow.”

The river’s overnight peak, if accurate, was about 2 1/2 feet above flood stage (which is 9 1/2 feet), as measured at a gauge just east of town. That’s not on the level of, say, 1997 — a horrific year for floods across Southern Idaho, when [the Weiser River gauge hit 17 feet](#). But it was enough to [qualify as “moderate” flooding](#) under the definitions used by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Four flooded homes just east of Weiser were believed to have occupants in two of them. Washington County sheriff’s deputies stood across the flooded area midday Friday and called out to the possible occupant of one of the buildings with a bullhorn bullhorn.

One man in one of the homes told the deputies he did not want to be evacuated. At the other, deputies couldn’t get a response — but it wasn’t clear if the man believed to be inside was in trouble, or just didn’t want to acknowledge them.

Later Friday, an Idaho National Guard Blackhawk helicopter was dispatched to assess damage and to fly over the house of the man who didn’t respond to authorities, said Steve Penner, Washington County’s disaster services spokesman.

Working with three members of the Boise Fire Department Water Rescue Unit, the Idaho Army National Guard rescued a 68-year-old man who had been in his flooded home. Maj. Chris Borders, guard spokesman, could not confirm it was the same man deputies had tried to contact earlier in the day. The man was brought to the Weiser hospital.

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Roads on the outskirts of Weiser are experiencing flooding, Washington County Disaster Services officials said Friday. The National Weather Service issued a flash flood warning for the Weiser area about 4:30 a.m. Friday.

BY DARIN OSWALD

Water is covering U.S. 95 for about a mile south of the bridge, and a number of businesses in that area appear to have been impacted by floodwaters, said Mayor Diana Thomas.

Among them are Hometown Motors, which moved its stock of cars out of the advancing water and brought them into town, Thomas said.

Other structures affected include an agricultural machinery services company, a state liquor store and a church.

The area is [under a flood warning until 11 a.m. Saturday](#). Further south, there's a flood advisory through 8 p.m. Friday in Payette County, where water was flowing over Big Willow Road near Dry Creek Road as of 9:20 a.m. Friday. No homes were in imminent danger of flooding, however, according to that county's sheriff's office.

The Payette River is rising but is expected to still be below flood stage when it crests Saturday, authorities say.

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That area is between Gold Fork and Whoop-Um-Up Park N Ski lots. No information was available on when it would re-open.

There was also an ice jam causing flooding on Robie Creek Road. The road is still open but it's causing minor flooding. The Boise County Road Department is working on that.

Mores Creek is running very high, but it's not over Highway 21.



The Weiser River peaked at 12 feet deep early Friday, Feb. 10, 2017, about 2 1/2 feet above flood stage. Here's a look at it late Friday morning, when it sat about 1/4th-foot below flood stage (as measured as a gauge upriver).

BY DARIN OSWALD

STREAMS, RIVERS MANY TIMES NORMAL FLOW

The [U.S. Geological Survey's real-time streamflow map](#) shows a number of southern Idaho streams and rivers well above their normal levels for this time of year.

Measured near Payette on Friday morning, the Payette River was about 3 1/2 feet below flood stage. Near Weiser, the Snake River was about 160 percent of its mean average flow for February, though still well below flood stage.

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A number of small creeks and streams feeding these rivers are much more swollen. Measured at a spot in northern Owyhee County, for example, the Bruneau River is about 2 feet above flood stage, a whopping 3,577 percent of its average flow this time of year.

For real-time stream information, [visit this link](#) or text the gage number to waternow@usgs.gov.



This video posted to the Elmore County Sheriff's Facebook page is from the Oasis area.

BY ELMORE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

AVALANCHE HAZARDS

Rain that followed the snow has created serious avalanches across the state, trapping many and killing at least one.

A [Friday morning avalanche outside McCall](#) trapped the residents of Burgdorf and Warren inside their towns. It brought trees and boulders down with it across Warren Wagon Road, covering it about 7 feet deep and making it even more challenging to clear, said Larry Laxson, parks and recreation director for Valley County.

The avalanche also diverted water from a nearby creek, pushing three feet of water across the road.

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High winds, above freezing temperatures and rain on the snowpack has caused numerous large avalanches in the upper and lower elevation areas, according to the advisory in the area. The National Weather Service did forecast a 20 percent change of snow and showers on Saturday, but Sunday is set to be dry.

Continued rain and snow is not predicted on the forecast for Weiser, Nampa and Boise over the weekend, according to the NWS.

[Josh Roth](#), a Wyoming snowmobiler, was killed Thursday in a Bonneville County avalanche. The 35-year-old was caught in an avalanche in the McCoy Creek area, near Palisades Reservoir and the Wyoming state line, according to the Post Register.

REGIONAL ALERTS, DAMAGE

At least two south-central Idaho ski resorts remain closed because of the weather, [the Times-News reports](#). In addition to Soldier Mountain and Pomerelle, Sun Valley has closed Bald Mountain until conditions improve. Both Sun Valley and Soldier said they hope to fully reopen Saturday.

Around midnight, the weather service issued a flood warning for the Bruneau River in Owyhee County, likely affecting state highways 51 and 78. Those roadways are among many in the region with reported flooding issues Thursday.

Flooding from the Bruneau River caused state transportation officials to close Highway 78 just outside Bruneau Friday afternoon, Owyhee County Sheriff Perry Grant said.

“We’re just going to have to wait for the flow to go down and assess the road afterward,” Grant said. He said there are homes in Bruneau that are in distress, including one that appeared surrounded by water.

Highway 51, about 17 miles from Mountain Home, also closed between Davis and Ruth roads on Friday afternoon.

Grant said flooding is affecting access to CJ Strike Reservoir. The best way to access the reservoir is the Black Sands turnoff, he said.

Little new rain is expected in the Weiser area, Ada and Canyon counties Friday, with “a couple of hundredths” of an inch expected in the evening, meteorologist Josh Smith of the National

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To the east, [the Magic Valley was particularly hard-hit Thursday](#) by flooding and mudslides, reports the Times-News.

A canal was partially breached overnight near Castleford and Buhl, displacing several families. Districts in Filer, Buhl and Minidoka County closed schools in the middle of the day. A car that bypassed a police barricade in Twin Falls County was swept away by violent floodwaters west of Buhl. Segments of some roadways simply disappeared, ripped apart by rushing water.

Authorities reported no deaths or serious injuries but pleaded with motorists to stay off water-covered roads.

The American Red Cross has moved an emergency shelter for flooding evacuees in Twin Falls to Eastside Southern Baptist Church, 204 Eastland Drive N. It will open at noon Friday, according to the agency.

A Jerome Red Cross shelter is on standby and will open when needed at the Jerome County Fairgrounds at 2005 N. Fir St.

Elmore County sheriff's deputies were out in force Thursday afternoon trying to help residents trapped by flooding at the subdivision near Mayfield in the Soles Rest Creek area, an Elmore dispatcher said. No injuries were reported, and officials were able to reach and help the residents. As of Thursday afternoon, the sheriff's office reported many roads were still blocked.

On Friday, Elmore County Commissioners declared a local disaster emergency.

"Elmore County residents need to understand the severity of this weather," a release issued late Friday afternoon said. "This was not a normal winter like we're all used to dealing with. This situation is more severe and an abundance of caution is required of us all."

Gov. Butch Otter on Thursday added Ada and Boundary counties to the list of those in an official state of emergency. All together, seven Idaho counties are now listed in the State Disaster Declaration, including Ada, Boundary, Canyon, Custer, Elmore, Payette and Washington counties.



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Times-News reader Denver Hunsaker submitted this video on I-86. BY DENVER HUNSAKER

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BY RUTH BROWN

JANUARY 08, 2020 12:23 PM



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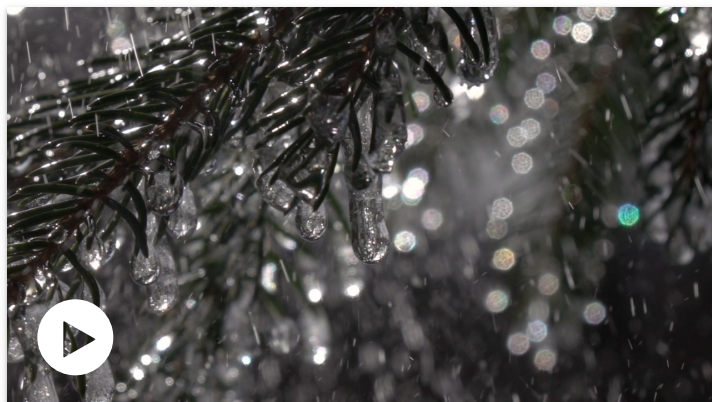
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