

Gov: State of emergency after severe flooding in Marion County

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Gov. John Kitzhaber has declared a state of emergency in four Oregon counties, including Marion County, because of flooding.

There are at least 29 streets in Salem closed because of flooding, the city of Turner has been shut down and the already full Willamette River is not expected to crest until 4 a.m. Friday.

Weather forecasters say heavy rain has stopped for the evening, but say more rainfall may pelt the already soggy Mid-Valley tomorrow morning. They said more than 2 inches of rain had fallen in Salem by this afternoon.

Throughout the Mid-Valley residents are being forced from their homes, homeowners were filling sandbags and drivers were faced with high water and flooded streets.

About 4:15 p.m., severe flooding began threatening businesses and residences on Turner Road SE. According to initial reports, Salem police are working to evacuate residents from a mobile home park to an Elks lodge where Cherriots buses are waiting for evacuations.



TIMOTHY J. GONZALEZ | Statesman Journal

Brian Crist calls out to the driver of a pickup truck while they work to rescue the car of one of their commuter van riders in the State of Oregon motor pool, off of Airport Road, on Thursday, Jan. 19, 2012.

Earlier today in Turner, between 80 and 100 families were evacuated. Only one road into the city was passable, and officials have asked people to stay away from the city.

They say it could be days before residents are back into their homes.

The city of Salem has activated its Emergency Operations Center because of flooding.

Five creeks monitored in Salem were all near or above "high water watch" levels, which indicates flooding could be occurring.

- Mill Creek at Turner Road was at 13.4 feet, above the 10.8 HWW feet level.

- Pringle Creek at Pringle Park is at 13 feet, four feet above HWW level.

- Glen Creek at Wallace Road is 9.7, above the 8.9 HWW level.

- Battle Creek at 13.5 feet, above the 9.3 HWW level.

- Clark Creek at Ewald Avenue is at 5.5 feet, slightly below the 6.1 foot HWW level.

The Willamette River was most recently measured at 21 feet and is expected to reach 29 feet on Friday; 28 feet is considered flood stage and 32 feet considered major flood stage.

Extensive flooding prompted schools to ask parents to pick up their children early and state officials to ask drivers to move their cars from flooded parking lots.

Veterans' Affairs spokeswoman Nicole Hoeft said drivers had been notified to move their cars by 10 a.m. About 100 cars are parked in the garage, she said.

Drivers moved their cars from basement parking. Human Services, North Mall, State Lands and Employment Well all have been asked to evacuate their cars, in addition to Veterans' Affairs.

"They're putting up flood gates," Hoeft said.

HandsOn Mid-Willamette Valley is seeking volunteers to help the area's emergency management teams, and the Red Cross is working to establish shelters for those who are being displaced.

A shelter for those evacuated from Turner is in place at Bethel Baptist Church on Cleveland Road in Aumsville.

Residents in South Salem woke up to flooded streets this morning causing some to take action to help each other.

Neighbors in the Doral neighborhood near the former Battle Creek Golf Course banded together place sandbags outside homes.

Kay Rentchler who lives along Battle Creek said this was the worst she had seen flooding in the 15 years since she moved in.

“After a few season of this I decided I would just have to live with it,” she said.

Bryce Eckles said he woke up to find his neighborhood in South Salem under several inches of water.

Eckles who also lives near Battle Creek said he is used to seeing high water, but Thursday was out of the ordinary.

“Our neighbors have water in their garage and all around their house.” he said.

Sandbags are available at the public works shop on 1410 20th Street SE at Mission Street. The city will set up satellite locations at heavily impacted locations.

The City of Salem has established a non-emergency information line for the public to call in order to obtain general information about the current situation: (503) 540-9015.

Road closure information is now available to be viewed on the City of Salem website at www.cityofsalem.net