

# Awash, rinse, repeat

## Region reels from wind, record rainfall — and we're not done yet

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Just as sodden residents mopped, cleaned and tried to dry out Sunday, another round of rains splashed down on southern Wisconsin, closing roads and bridges, canceling at least one high school graduation and creating a run on sump pumps and bleach.

Baseball diamonds turned into lakes, front lawns transformed into ponds and roads became rivers in parts of southeastern Wisconsin as the National Weather Service issued flood warnings Sunday afternoon for much of the southern half of the state. No deaths or serious injuries were reported.

There might not be much of a respite for the waterlogged. The National Weather Service is forecasting occasional showers and thunderstorms for today and tonight. Rain is also predicted for Tuesday.

Late Sunday, Gov. Jim Doyle declared a state of emergency for 29 counties, allowing deployment of National Guard troops.

Many basements flooded either from backed-up drains filled with sewage and storm runoff or from rain pooling on saturated soil. Sump pumps suddenly became a hot commodity as numerous hardware stores sold out. Also hard to find: drain plugs and sandbags.

"Everything is in short supply," Ron Lingford of Lingford Construction said as he helped a flooded Oak Creek homeowner. "I went to three different hardware stores because we have a lot of basement drains backing up. I tried to find a pump and couldn't find one to save my life."

Doug Thiede looked out his back window Sunday morning and saw a large lake in his Oak Creek backyard with a pool, tool shed and playground equipment sticking up like islands.

"That's not a lake, that's grass," Thiede said Sunday afternoon while five sump pumps worked to keep the flood out of his basement. "I'm wiped out. I feel like a sponge."

Not far from Thiede's home on Forest Hill Ave. is Oak Creek, which quickly rose Saturday, flooding a small bridge, covering at least 200 yards of road and gushing into basements. The creek also took Dom Singleton's 2007 Scion tC out of action.

Singleton was driving to a friend's home around 1 a.m. Sunday and saw through his windshield wipers what he thought was a small puddle in the road on Forest Hill Ave. As he crossed the bridge over Oak Creek, he realized it was no puddle.

"Smoke was coming up out of the engine," said Singleton, who had to push his car through the flooded road to a driveway, where it sat until a tow truck operator came at 2 p.m. Sunday.

The storms Saturday and Sunday, which dropped rain so fast and so hard it sometimes felt like motorists were driving in car washes, were created by a warm, moist, unstable air mass converging with a strong, low-level jet stream, said Greg Davis, a National Weather Service hydrometeorological technician. Wind gusts of more than 60 mph were reported Sunday morning in Lake Mills and Watertown.

Rain totals topped 7 inches in some areas, and 4.39 inches fell at Mitchell International Airport on Saturday, breaking the previous record for that date of 2.44 inches set in 1916. Madison also broke rainfall records - the 1.9 inches of rain on Sunday broke the old record set on that date in 1874. The city also set a record for rainfall on Saturday with 2.23 inches, nearly a quarter-inch more than the previous mark in 1993.

As of 11 a.m. Sunday, Milwaukee's Emergency Operations Center had received about 480 reports of flooded basements and 230 reports of surface flooding, said Anne E. Schwartz, spokeswoman for the city's Police Department. Those numbers were to be updated this morning.

At the peak of the storm Sunday morning, about 11,000 We Energies customers were without power in the metro Milwaukee area. By 7 p.m., power had been restored to all but about 3,000. That doesn't include the 20,000 who lost power Saturday night from the first round of thunderstorms.

**Franklin:** Franklin High School's commencement, which had been scheduled for Sunday, was rescheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Milwaukee County Sports Complex, 6000 W. Ryan Road.

**Brookfield:** An estimated 200 homes and some commercial businesses were damaged by flooding.

**Cudahy:** Officials tallied storm damage at more than \$2.3 million. Mayor Ryan McCue, who said about 30% of the city's properties were affected, asked Gov. Jim Doyle to declare the city a disaster area.

**Waukesha:** The rapidly rising Fox River drew onlookers as city officials closed the Barstow St. and Madison St. bridges.

**Elm Grove:** Pilgrim Park Middle School will be closed today.

**Wauwatosa:** Residents flooded the Public Works Department with requests for sandbags, but the community had none to hand out. It did provide sand to people who wanted to fill their own. An emergency operations center was opened to handle the flooding.

**Town of Raymond:** A 70-year-old man was rescued from the minivan he was driving after it became stuck in about 3 feet of water on County Line Road near 43rd St. about 4 p.m., said Susie Conley, a dispatcher with the Racine County Sheriff's Department. After removing the minivan from the water, emergency personnel urged residents of 19 homes in the area to voluntarily evacuate, Conley said.

**Greendale:** Among those mucking out waterlogged basements Sunday was John Splude.

"Anything that got sewage water, we're throwing out," said Splude, who lives in the 6300 block of Parkview Road. "Everything's ruined. We lost the furnace and the air conditioning - that shorted out. They came last night and shut the gas off."

In the more than 10 years Splude has lived in his home, he has never seen flooding like this.

"I couldn't believe the water," he said. "The whole backyard is a lake. We've got *ducks* back there."

Along the Root River Parkway, an officer copied down the names and addresses of five young men who decided to go tubing in the swollen river. No one got tickets, but the officer made it clear that there wouldn't be a second warning.

"He told us, 'You guys are done for the day,' " said Ben Tweener, 21.

"There were lots of times we couldn't touch bottom," said Dan Mares, 19.

**South Milwaukee:** Wrecked rolls of carpet, sodden furniture and mattresses along with garbage bags - lots of garbage bags - filled with soaked and stinking possessions were piled up in front of many homes, including April Artrip's. She found out her basement was flooded when a neighbor knocked on the front door and told her to look downstairs. When she did, she saw lots of things floating.

"Oh my gosh. All of our stuff was down there. We have two kids - all of their toys. My wedding album was ruined," said Artrip, who was wearing yellow rubber gloves as she cleaned her basement Sunday afternoon.

Artrip's 6-year-old daughter cried when she saw her beloved stuffed animals under water. "She turns 7 on Saturday, and we told her she'd get new toys for her birthday."

The South Milwaukee school district's Web site announced Sunday that there would be no school for students or paraprofessional workers, but administrators, teachers and secretaries should report for work.

**Elsewhere in Wisconsin:** Residents in low-lying areas of Elroy and Mauston in Juneau County were told to evacuate because of high water and mudslides. On Sunday, blinding sheets of rain transformed the Kickapoo River into an angry rush of taffy-colored water, and officials warned it could crest 6 feet over flood stage sometime today.

Small towns along the Kickapoo River in southwestern Wisconsin have become isolated islands. Roads leading into La Farge were all but blocked, Viola was unreachable and low-lying areas of Soldiers Grove and Gays Mills - which were hit by heavy flooding last year - were underwater again, officials said.

The Wisconsin State Patrol sent troopers to northeast Grant and southeast Vernon counties to survey bridges and roads for damage, and the Department of Natural Resources was closely monitoring two dams for potential problems.

The governor's emergency declaration included these counties: Adams, Calumet, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Grant, Green, Green Lake, Iowa, Jefferson, Juneau, Kenosha, Lafayette, La Crosse, Marquette, Milwaukee, Monroe, Ozaukee, Racine, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Sheboygan, Vernon, Washington, Waukesha and Winnebago.

*Georgia Pabst, Ryan Haggerty and Darryl Enriquez, all of the Journal Sentinel staff, and the Associated Press contributed to this report*