

State and Local

Heavy storms add to damage in East Texas, Gulf Coast areas

PALESTINE (AP) — Heavy rains and more storms hit East Texas and the Gulf Coast Monday, stalling clean-up efforts and causing more damage in the aftermath of more than a dozen tornadoes that killed 10 people and injured more than 160.

Brutal thunderstorms pounded coastal areas Monday, killing a Texaco Inc. worker in Bay City, who fell from a drilling rig when high winds toppled it, Mike Cox of the Department of Public Safety said.

The National Weather Service's Fort Worth office tracked the storm Sunday.

Buddy McIntyre of that office said, "Most of the time you see severe weather during the spring months, April, May and June. But there is a second peak in the fall."

Damage from Sunday's tornadoes

was estimated in the millions of dollars, with Palestine City Manager Warren Driver reporting damage of \$8 million to \$12 million in that city alone. "It could go as high as \$15 million," Driver said.

More than 200 residences in Palestine suffered tornado damage, Driver said.

Gov. Bill Clements will visit Palestine and Jacksonville Tuesday, said Reggie Bashur, the governor's press secretary.

DPS spokesman David Wells said at least 16 counties reported damage from an estimated 20 tornadoes over a two-day period.

In southeast Texas Monday morning, winds ripped the roofs off an elementary school in Santa Fe and a Wal-Mart in Dickinson, but authorities reported no injuries.

More than 80,000 Houston Light-

ing & Power Co. customers were without service, mostly in an area between Houston and Galveston, spokesman Geri Konigsberg said.

At the utility's South Texas Nuclear Plant near Bay City, a guard's shack was blown over, and the guard was checked at a hospital but was not injured, Konigsberg said.

About 90 miles south of San Antonio, a twister cut a mile-long swath through the western side of Beeville, and an elderly woman was slightly injured when her mobile home was hit, Bee County Sheriff's Deputy Ronnie Olivares said.

On Sunday, the storms killed nine people in towns across East Texas and injured more than 160.

In Palestine, a city of about 16,000, officials said 86 businesses and at least 128 homes were damaged.

One person there was killed Sunday and police estimated 59 were injured, with about 32 of those seeking treatment at the local hospital, officials said.

Mayor Jack Selden estimated a few dozen people were homeless Monday.

"We're looking for temporary shelters," he said. "They'll find it with relatives. Most people stayed at their house. We saw them out there, and there'd be plastic over the open areas, but for some I don't know how much good it would do."

Of the damaged businesses, he said, "I'm not sure they're going to recover."

With about 50 national guardsmen standing by, some businesses reopened Monday despite heavy damage.

Gov. Clements appoints five to judicial panel

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Bill Clements has appointed five of the 15 members of the Joint Select Committee on the Judiciary.

The governor's appointees are attorneys W. Mike Baggett, who is from Dallas; Carol Dinkins and Albert Ebert Jr., who are both from Houston; Dixon Holman who is from Arlington; and Dee Kelly who is from Fort Worth.

The panel was created by the 1987 Legislature to review the state's judicial system.

"Texans have lost faith in their judicial system," Clements said.

"We must correct that."

"A review of the entire process is in order."

Professor: Election of board won't affect quality, duties

By Todd Riemenschneider
Reporter

Even though the failure of Proposition 1 in the Nov. 3 general election will allow the state board of education to be elected rather than appointed, the change probably won't affect the workings of the board, said Dr. Harvey Tucker, a Texas A&M political science professor.

Tucker said he is not sure the quality of the board will improve if the members are elected instead of appointed.

Because of the nature of the board's job, it usually isn't in the public eye, he said, and this situation will not change.

"They are still going to be invisible, even after they are elected," Tucker said.

He said that since the board is not

a full-time job, the members act more like a board of directors for a corporation.

"In theory they (the board of education members) have the ultimate power, but in reality they choose who the top managers will be and they review the performance of these managers," he said.

Tucker said people want to have an elected board because they have been taught the virtues of democracy.

"Americans, all their lives, have been taught democracy is good, voting is good and what is bad is when interest groups make decisions," Tucker said.

However, Tucker pointed out, released voting figures were for people who are registered to vote, not who are eligible to vote.

"Only 15 percent or fewer of the people eligible to vote chose elected boards over appointed boards," Tucker said. "When we have the elections in the future for these positions, the turnout rate for those elections will be between 10 and 15 percent."

Because of small turnout rates, Tucker said, the election results may not reflect how the people actually feel.

"It doesn't matter how many people vote," Tucker said. "The decision is made."

Tucker also speculates much of the turnout for this election can be attributed to the pari-mutuel referendum being on the ballot.

"While voters were in the polls, they decided to vote on some of the other issues as well," Tucker said.

Volunteer network rescues animals found stranded along Texas coast

By Tom Eikel
Reporter

The Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network is an organization of volunteers responsible for rescuing or salvaging dolphins, porpoises and whales found stranded along the Texas coast.

The network, formed in 1980 and headquartered in College Station, is divided into seven regions, from Sabine Pass to South Padre Island. Each region has a group of volunteers, headed by an area coordinator. The volunteers respond to any type of marine mammal stranded in their area, said Greg Schwab, co-coordinator of the network.

Time is crucial when a live animal is found, Schwab said.

"Once the animal is out of its environment, factors such as gravity and heat lessen its chances of survival, so it's important that we begin caring for it as quickly as possible," he said.

When members of the Network arrive, they administer first aid and attempt to transport the animal to one of two treatment facilities, Schwab said. Live strandings along the upper coast are moved to Sea Arama Marineworld in Galveston, while those along the lower coast are taken to the University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas, he said.

"Caring for live mammals is a very

time-consuming process, because the animal is immediately placed under 24-hour medical observation," Schwab said.

The animals are given antibiotics and other medications to fight infection and relieve stress, Schwab said. Their bodily functions constantly are monitored and various cultures and samples are taken to find out what is ailing the animal, he said.

"If the animal survives the first 24 hours, we offer it food," Schwab said. "If it does not respond then we begin force-feeding."

Unfortunately, most mammals found stranded are either dead or too weak to survive the ordeal. But, dead or alive, these animals provide information valuable to both education and research, Schwab said.

"We look for anything and everything," Schwab said. "Because there is so little known about marine mammals, their habitats and things like that, any type of data we can get is valuable."

If the deceased animal is in fairly good condition, the body is saved

and transported to a laboratory at Texas A&M for a necropsy (autopsy), where a pathologist works to discern the cause of death, Schwab said.

A great deal of information is collected on all strandings, particularly on those animals not transported for necropsy. Besides recording things such as size, weight, sex and location of the stranded animal, network volunteers pull teeth to determine age and take over a dozen tissue samples including muscle, liver, kidney and lung, Schwab said.

"Right now, we're storing these in hopes of getting toxicological analyses done on them to use as an indicator of pollution in the ocean environment," Schwab said.

"The dolphin is one of the highest marine animals on the food chain, and basically what a dolphin eats is what you eat from the sea," he said. "So if it's directly affecting their health, in theory, it could also be affecting us."

"Data collected along the coast comes here where we process and

store it. We send copies of our data to the Southeastern Regional Stranding Network headquarters in Florida and they in turn send this information to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C."

The Smithsonian is the top of the stranding network hierarchy and is the collection point for data on strandings from all over the United States.

"There are many different reasons why these animals strand," Schwab said. "Pollution has been a cause for a few strandings."

"We actually had a mammal (a pygmy sperm whale calf) that ingested plastic bags, which plugged up its stomach causing a peritonitis infection which killed the animal." Various parasites, as well as viral and bacterial infections also are believed to weaken mammals, causing them to become stranded, Schwab said.

Whatever the cause, network volunteers are on call 24 hours to deal with reported strandings, Schwab said. Since 1980, this non-profit organization, which gets most of its money in the form of private donations, has responded to 517 strandings. Fifty percent of these have occurred in the last three years, he said.

"This can be attributed to greater public awareness," Schwab said. "People now know more about what to do if they come upon a stranded animal."

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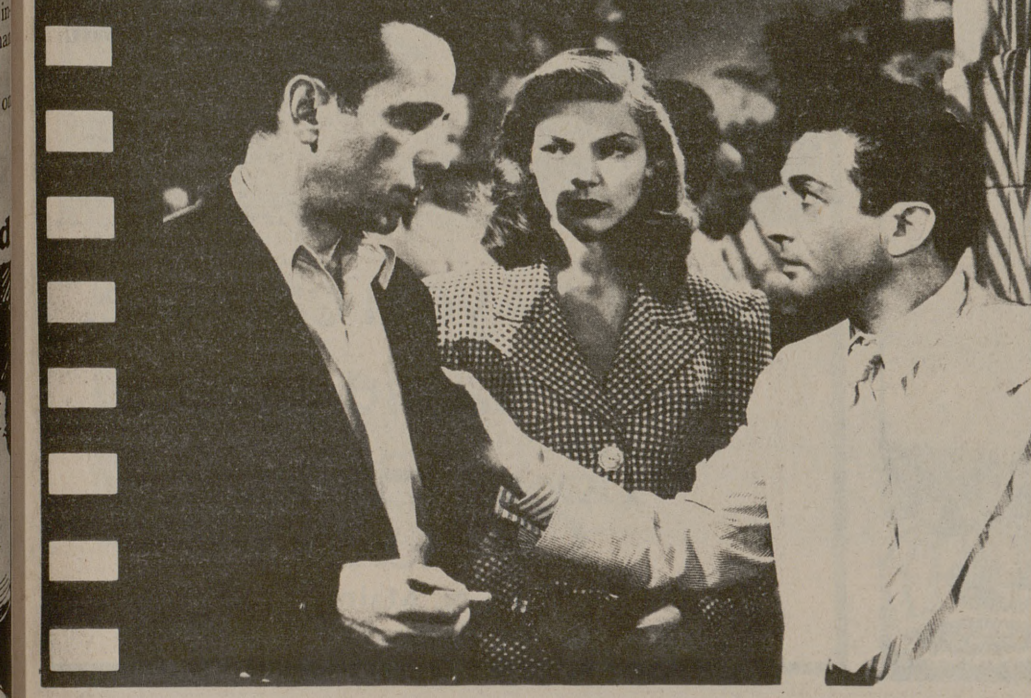
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