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Mudslides in Colorado isolate residents inside

DENVER (AP) — Heavy rains sent full-grown trees, massive boulders and rivers of mud rushing across charred hillsides in southwestern Colorado on Wednesday, isolating hundreds of residents in their homes for the second time in less than a week.

No one was in immediate danger but roads near Durango were blocked by debris 10 feet high and boulders weighing several tons apiece, said La Plata County sheriff's Lt. Dan Bender.

"What used to be a pine forest next to an upscale home is now a gaping hole and a boulder field," Bender said.

One to 3 inches of rain had fallen in the area since Tuesday afternoon. More rain was forecast later Wednesday, and authorities were bracing for additional mudslides.

Bender said the rain sent mud, trees and boulders rolling down hillsides that were left barren by the 70,485-acre Missionary Ridge wildfire in June.

"It was almost running like whitewater," Bender said.

There were no reports of mud moving into homes but several driveways were buried under boulders and gouges were cut

across several properties as the mudslides literally changed the course of creeks, Bender said.

Mudslides hit the same area Saturday. At least five families had to leave their homes because of the damage, and another 12 families had heavy debris inside their homes.

The burned landscape is especially susceptible to mudslides because there is little vegetation to hold the soil in place.

Residents say the mudslides are one more nightmare in a summer marked by disaster.

"We call it the summer of hell," said Shirley Andersen, who has lived in the Durango area for 36 years. "This is the worst."

Andersen said there were mudslides on both sides of her house along County Road 250 on Wednesday, but her home was spared from damage.

"We were up all night. It rained real hard all night and I could hear the plows and stuff trying to clean up the mud," she said.

Bender said the area about nine miles north of Durango along County Road 250 was the hardest hit, though mudslides

also forced road closures in the Vallecito area several miles away.

Heavy equipment Wednesday cleared debris from roads and used it to makeshift dikes and culverts to steer future debris from homes.

By afternoon, the road was reopened. But said residents were to remain on alert for evacuations, as they have for most of the summer.

The area remained under a flash flood warning Wednesday. National Weather Service hydrologist Brian Avery said the rains were remnants of Tropical Storm which came ashore Saturday.

"More rain is still coming hasn't let up," Avery said. "Weather could return this end, he said."

Bender said residents see problems for one to years, until the vegetation had sufficient time to grow.

The land will be marked years beyond then. "The that was scattered Saturday will be here decades," Bender said.

Study shows that surgery lessens cancer recurrence

(AP) — For the first time, a study clearly shows that surgery for early prostate cancer can reduce the chance of dying from the disease, cutting the risk almost in half.

The question of whether to remove cancerous prostates in early-stage disease has been debated because the cancer typically grows slowly and strikes older men, who may die of other causes before it spreads.

Moreover, removal of the prostate — a doughnut-shaped gland which surrounds the male urethra — can cause serious side effects, including impotence and incontinence.

In the latest study, conducted on 695 men in Sweden, Finland and Norway, the risk of dying from prostate cancer fell from 9 percent to 5 percent during the six years after surgery.

However, deaths from all causes were similar between the men who got prostate surgery and those who did not. The researchers said it could have been a matter of chance that those who escaped cancer death were somewhat more likely to die of other things.

"We now have better evidence that radical prostatectomy diminishes your risk of prostate cancer recurrence. And so we have a possibility to alter the natural course of the disease by radical surgery," said Dr. Lars Holmberg, lead author for the paper.

A companion study also published in

Thursday's issue of the New England Journal of Medicine found no difference in quality of life between the groups, though it suggested a study might find such differences.

The cancer spread elsewhere in the body of the men whose prostates were removed immediately, compared to those who waited.

"watchful waiting" is what Dr. Patrick Walsh, director of urology at Johns Hopkins University, called Holmberg's landmark paper.

"It was surprising to see an effect from cancer deaths so early," he said. "It's certainly too soon to see an overall effect on survival." But, he thinks such an effect is likely with longer low-up.

It may be the first study for any cancer in which patients were assigned at random to get surgery or no treatment — what doctors call "watchful waiting" or "expectant observation," he said.

Walsh is an advocate of early surgery and developed a technique used to preserve the nerve that control the penis's ability to become erect

NEWS IN BRIEF

Judge will decide which beauty queen voluntarily resigns
WILMINGTON, N.C. (AP) — A judge said Wednesday he wouldn't force the Miss America pageant to continue recognizing two Miss North Carolinas but agreed to quickly decide whether one of the beauty queens voluntarily resigned.

U.S. District Court Judge James Fox denied Rebekah Revels' request to extend a state judge's order that had allowed her to join preliminary Miss America events in Atlantic City, N.J.

Revels sued last month, claiming she was forced to give up her crown in July when a former boyfriend told pageant officials he had two topless snapshots of her. Misty Clymer, the first runner-up, then assumed the title.

Fox said Wednesday he would try to make a decision Thursday afternoon, after closing arguments in Revels' case. The pageant ends Sept. 21.

George Bauer, interim president of the Miss America Organization, said after the hearing that Revels would not be removed immediately, despite the expiration of the state order Wednesday night.

"The Miss America Organization will treat Rebekah Revels with every courtesy and treat her as a VIP guest," he said.

Fox has suggested to Bauer that she seek financial compensation if not allowed to compete. But Nakell has said there's not enough money to make up for not being allowed to compete in the Miss America pageant.

Fox told Nakell on Wednesday that his client's claim seems to rest with the state pageant.

"I fail to see where your client has a contract with the Miss America Organization," he said.

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