

More storms for the weekend?

■ City ready with more sandbags, just in case

By Paula Lloyd

Special to The Independent

Clovis may have "dodged the bullet" during Tuesday's storm, but Clovis Police and Fire departments and city public works crews remain braced for more storms over the weekend.

Police, fire and sandbag crews at the city's Villa Corporation Yard are operating on the expectation of a 50 percent chance of rain Feb. 6 and more rain over the weekend -- and the hope that the city will make it through the next storms as well as it did during the Feb. 3 rains.

Storm clouds dumped 0.77 inches of rain on the Clovis/Fresno area, bringing the seasonal total to 8.66 inches. That's ahead of the normal-to-date of 5.77 inches, but behind last year's 11.96 inches to date.

Crews at the city's Villa Corporation Yard behind Letterman Park filled



Mike Poore, foreground, and Ed Staub load sandbags from the city's Villa Corporation Yard at Letterman Park. More than 6,000 sandbags have been given out during the recent storms.

Dean Slagel/The Clovis Independent

and gave away 6,805 sandbags in seven days during the recent storms. Lisa Koehn, assistant public utilities director, said a steady stream of residents came to pick up sandbags, which still are available.

Although the rainfall for the week

packed less punch than predicted, the Police Department stood ready, said public information officer Micheline Golden. "We made sure all our officers had rubber boots and rain gear," Golden said. "We were ready to switch

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over to an incident command system and our officers knew it was possible they might be held over."

"It seems like things went pretty smoothly," said Tanya Geren, spokesperson for the Clovis Fire Department.

"There was no major flooding. There were some trees on power lines from the wind, but we have that any time there are [high] winds," Geren said. "The rain was consistent, but not the heavy downpour that really hurts us."

Clovis Police Chief Joe Maskovich said Clovis "definitely dodged the bullet on this one."

Golden reported flooding at intersections and in residential backyards, but no homes were flooded.

Even the flooded intersections didn't cause too much trouble, Golden said. "It was nothing you couldn't drive a car through."

Three streets around downtown Clovis were flooded by Tuesday afternoon (Feb. 3): Clovis Avenue north of Third Street; Fifth Street and Hughes Avenue; and Santa Ana and Minnewawa avenues.

According to Public Utilities Director Cecil Leonardo,

the intersection flooding was caused by the volume of rain coupled with wind-blown debris that clogged storm drains. City crews worked quickly to clear the drains, Leonardo said.

Although none of the precautions were needed for the recent storms, the police, fire and city workers remain in a state of readiness. "We're monitoring the weather and everything is still in place," Golden said.

The original rainfall predictions that anticipated up to several inches of rain brought back memories of the severe storm in March 1995 that caused flooding in the Brookside Terrace neighborhood east of the Clovis Rodeo when Pup Creek overflowed. Fifteen families were evacuated from their flooded homes and put up in a shelter established by the Red Cross in the Clovis Senior Center.

Pup Creek didn't overflow this time, but flood control officials were on guard. "We had a concern, so we monitored Pup Creek all night [Feb. 3]," said Jerry Lakeman, district engineer with the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District.

The 1995 storm was more intense, Lakeman said. The recent storm did not have the same volume of water, but even so FMFCD crews still had to divert water from Dry Creek, which converges with Pup Creek south of Barstow and Willow avenues.