

Marblemount, Rockport hit by big slides

ROCKPORT — This eastern Skagit County community and its neighbor, Marblemount, were virtually isolated today by a series of rain-caused slides which sent tons of debris, mud and rocks tumbling across Highway 17-A in several spots.

Reports coming out of the area early today indicated there were no injuries and no widespread property damage.

ROCKPORT, where a section of a Sauk Mountain bluff broke away was the hardest hit.

Mrs. L. K. Buchanan, Rockport resident, said the slide spilled mud, rocks and logs across Highway 17-A and rolled timbers and debris into the small business section of the community.

The slide blocked 17-A just where the Rockport access road leaves it and tumbled debris several yards down that access road. It also blocked 17-A near Benton's Store, just east of Rockport, almost in the exact spot where another slide occurred earlier this fall.

Mrs. Buchanan said the slide happened about 7:15 p.m. Sunday night and that no one apparently heard it until the debris started rolling down the access road and into the business section.

MRS. BUCHANAN said that most of the homes and businesses escaped serious damage. Benton's Grocery got some mud and water in it as did Gurnie's Tavern.

The slide knocked out water and lights in the Rockport area and telephone service was still out into Marblemount. No direct reports from Marblemount were available at noon today. Telephone service was expected to be restored this afternoon.

Mrs. Buchanan said another slide had blocked the highway at Jackman Creek near Van Horn. Jackman, as well as Swift, Sutter and other creeks in the area were over their banks.

Three light poles were downed between Concrete and Rockport.

Puget Sound Power and Light Co., State Highway Department and telephone crews were working quickly to get the debris cleared away and communications opened before fresh rains start.

The Skagit River, while not overflowing its banks at Rockport, was too high at noon today to allow use of the ferry which operates across the Skagit River and connects a part of the county to Rockport.

were blocked late Sunday and through the night.

Highway department crews cleared a circuitous link between the east and west sides through the state's midsection shortly after daybreak.

A woman motorist, Hazel K. Caddell, 64, of Leavenworth, Wash., was killed in a mountain pass accident. Scores of other drivers were trapped temporarily by slides in the Cascades.

NINETY passengers on a transcontinental train caught between slides were delayed 10 hours before they got out by bus over a one-way route.

Several small towns were being partially evacuated. Scores of farm homes were isolated.

The Civil Defense, Air Patrol, state agencies and military services joined in rescue work. Brig. Gen. William F. Cassidy, assistant chief of Army Engineers, telephoned from Washington, D. C., instructing regional officials to give full aid.

A TREACHEROUS combination of rain, wind and unseasonal warmth was blamed for the flooding. Rain has fallen for a week, climaxed by a 6.71 downpour in 24 hours at the mountain station of Stampede Pass, 60 miles southeast of Seattle, bringing the seven-day total to 13.52 inches.

THEN THE mercury shot up, reaching 45-50 at mountain stations where temperatures normally would be around freezing. Sunday a strong, warm shifting wind—called a Chinook in the West—hit the state. Water from quick-melted snow poured from the Cascades in torrents.

The forecast was for little rain in the next 24 hours but above average precipitation the rest of the week.

The major cross-state mountain passes — Snoqualmie, Stevens, Blewett and White — all were closed by slides and flooding. The White was partially reopened Monday, enough to be reached by connecting roads.

Three rail lines across the Cascades — the Milwaukee, Great Northern and Northern Pacific—were blocked by slides or by flood threats to bridges. All three re-routed traffic by a southern route via Pasco and Vancouver, Wash.

It was the Milwaukee's Olympian-Hiawatha, bound for Chicago, that was caught between slides near Hyak, Wash., 60 miles east of here. Buses from Ellensburg, Wash. reached the scene in early morning and took the 90 passengers to Spokane for transfer to a makeup train.

The Seattle Weather Bureau's observer at the town of Snohomish telephoned the bureau she was leaving her home as the Snohomish River gauge showed 29.9 feet, four feet above flood stage.