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Almost no part of Northeast Ohio was left untouched Monday by damaging **flood** waters – the slushy leftovers of Friday's foot-deep snowfall, boosted by two to three inches of rain overnight.

Massive snowdrifts, liquidated by 50-degree temperatures and then, accelerated by the rain, rushed into storm sewers, streams and rivers – and then basements, yards and streets – throughout Northeast Ohio, from Lake County west to Lorain County.

"This was a regionwide problem, really a statewide problem," said Hugh Shannon, assistant director of the Cuyahoga County Emergency Management Agency, referring to flooding in Mansfield and Findlay late Monday.

"We won't know all of the local details until all the reports are in sometime early today, and then we'll know whether we can qualify for FEMA funding or not."

Among the casualties Monday: A century-old dam blown out on the Chagrin River in Gates Mills and a drowned falcon at the inundated Metroparks **Zoo**.

Floodwaters also overwhelmed Ohio's largest wastewater treatment plant in Cuyahoga Heights, caused hundreds of residents to be evacuated along the Grand River in Painesville, the Chagrin in Eastlake and the Cuyahoga in Valley View. Farther to the west, Lorain County officials also declared a state of emergency as the Black River kept rising.

Gates Mills dam is washed away

The 6-foot-high, 110-foot-wide concrete dam on the Chagrin River collapsed just before 10 a.m. Monday - sending a surge of water downstream toward Lake County, said Dave Biggert, Gates Mills service director.

Eastlake firefighters standing on a bridge on Lakeshore Boulevard about 10 miles north, saw a crest roll by on the surface of the river about a half-hour later, said Lake County Emergency Management Director Larry Greene. The short-lived pulse, however, didn't cause any farther

downstream damage to parts of the Lake County town already under water, an Eastlake fire official said.

But the dam collapse did send water pouring into the basement of St. Christopher's by the River Episcopal Church on Old Mill Road in Gates Mills. Residents and volunteers grabbed racks of clothes from the basement, stored for the church's clothing sales, and sloshed upstairs with them.

Worse problems might show up later, officials said.

Bridges over the still-swollen river at Wilson Mills and Mayfield (U.S. 322) roads will be inspected in the coming days to make certain the water surge didn't damage supports, an Ohio Department of Transportation spokeswoman said.

"While we don't see any damage to the integrity of structure at this point, we have the equipment and the personnel with drysuits to get under the water once it recedes to make sure the bridges are OK," said ODOT's Amanda Lee.

The dam on the Chagrin River used to supply water to a rake factory and a grist mill inside the village, possibly as early as the 1800s, village officials said. A state spokesman later said, however, that the dam was built in 1906.

In any case, it's too early to determine whether the village will rebuild it, Biggert said.

The village had sent a letter to state officials in 1997, citing some deterioration in the dam. But because the dam is so small, it was not in the state's jurisdiction.

One group was thrilled with the dam's demise, however: Anglers hoping to catch steelhead trout, now that they can move farther upstream on the Chagrin. "It's a very good thing," said Dan Pribanic, owner of Chagrin River Outfitters. "It opens up a lot more river and provides much more access."

Water overwhelms Metroparks **Zoo**

Cleveland Metroparks **Zoo** officials said they would reopen Tuesday after 4-foot-deep **flood** waters destroyed an employee service building and killed a peregrine falcon Monday.

Crews had been working overnight, and by 3 p.m. Monday, the floodwaters had receded, leaving the wreckage of the service building, picnic tables in the parking lot and mud everywhere.

Big Creek runs through the **zoo**, which spokeswoman Sue Allen said has three distinct elevation

levels. The lowest level, which includes parts of the parking lot and the African Savanna area that begins on the right after visitors go through the main entrance, **flood** more frequently than other areas.

Zoo officials keep the animals at the higher elevations to keep them safe. Still, the one-winged falcon died when an amphitheater filled with water and the bird couldn't get to safety.

Allen said Monday's **flood** was among the worst, and the earliest, she has seen in her 21 years with the **zoo**. "We've had floods here before," she said. "Yesterday, the **creek** looked fine. By 4 a.m. it was overflowing its banks."

Two drivers rescued from floodwaters

In North Olmsted, Dave Konold backed out of his driveway in the 6:30 a.m. darkness onto Bellevue Drive and was startled to find his car in water up to the headlights.

He managed to drive quickly to a dry spot before seeing that a large part of his neighborhood along Interstate 480 was flooded. Boulder-size chunks of snow floated in the pond "like icebergs," he said.

"We could have gone fishing," said neighbor Ron Berna, who joined Konold with shovels and trash barrels to clean the debris and sopping wet clumps of leaves left by the floodwaters.

In Valley View, acting Police Chief Glenn Dugas said one man had to be rescued by boat when his truck stalled on flooded Canal Road.

Another car on Canal Road was swept away in the water with the driver in it, he said. The car became stuck and Officer Bradley Dalton and employees of All Erection and Crane Rentals reached out to grab the driver using a front-end loader.

More than 40 residents of Charles, Frances, Fosdik and Murray roads were evacuated when icy water spilled into their homes or submerged their gas meters and regulators, bringing a risk of excess gas starting furnace or appliance fires. Fire Chief Tom Koscielski said most were taken out by raft.

Troy Janashak, 17, rowed to dry land with his beagle Gunner to watch rescuers go house to house to check on or evacuate residents.

"The cleanup is the worst part," he said. "All the pine needles, leaves and dirty water. We'll have to spray the walls with bleach."

In Garfield Heights, police called it some of the worst flooding since 1994.

Broadway, from the Maple Heights border to Cleveland, was under water. In some spots, police said, residents estimated that about 3 feet of water covered the road.

"It was the perfect storm," said Garfield Heights police Lt. Tim Capretta. "Everything came together to cause this mess."

Emergency in Lorain, recollection in Lake

Lorain County officials declared a state of emergency, as several roads in Lorain, North Ridgeville and Elyria sustained flooding, county officials said.

Ford Motor Co. spokesman Todd Nissen said water got inside the automaker's Avon Lake van plant. But he said pumps were able to keep the area dry, and Ford did not lose any equipment or production time.

In Lake County, more than 100 residents in Painesville - many within view of the now-shuttered Gristmill Apartments that had water up to the second floor in a July 2006 **flood** - were told by police to leave their homes when the Grand River crested.

To the west in Eastlake, the Chagrin River was also breaching its banks, forcing residents out of their homes near the FirstEnergy power plant off Erie Road.

One Lake County resident, however, took notice that when the Grand River broadened from about 50 feet to 300 yards across, it also brought birds to his yard usually seen only along the lakeshore.

"We have both an eared grebe and a horned grebe (females) as well as a red-breasted merganser hanging out all day just east of the bridge on Blair Road in Perry," said James R. Eisenberg of Perry.

Reporters John Caniglia, Dave Davis, James McCarty, Robert Schoenberger, Rich Exner and Patrick O'Donnell contributed to this story. To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: msscott@plaind.com, 216-999-4148

BOX

If your home is damaged:

Contact your insurer right away to report the damage and get answers about your policy.

Photograph damage and begin an inventory of damaged items.

Your policy may require you to take steps to prevent further damage. Save your receipts for labor and materials.

Check your deductible. If your home is unlivable, check to see if your policy covers temporary housing.

Don't fill out a claim form until you can get written estimates from several reliable contractors for long-term repairs.

Before you hire someone to make permanent repairs on your home, check out the company's reputation with the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org).

If you have questions or need help deciphering a policy, contact the Ohio Insurance Department's consumer hot line at 1-800-686-1526.

CITATION (AGLC STYLE)

Michael Scott, Plain Dealer Reporter, 'Melting snow, heavy rains flood area and burst dam Hundreds of residents in region evacuated', *Plain Dealer, The* (online), 1 Mar 2011 A1 <<https://infoweb-newsbank-com.ezproxy2.cpl.org/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/135B93500DCE06F0>>

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