

A REGION UNDER WATER

Interstate 5: No easy solution for recurring shutdowns



SNOQUALMIE VALLEY: The entire valley is under water in this view to the south toward Carnation. The bridge is on Northeast 124th Street, south of Duvall, which connects Snoqualmie Valley Road with Carnation Duvall Road. The curve of trees indicates the normal banks of the Snoqualmie River.

ALAN BERNER / THE SEATTLE TIMES

BY HAL BERTON AND LYNDA V. MAPES
Seattle Times staff reporters

CENTRALIA — This week's powerful storm once again demonstrated just how vulnerable Interstate 5 is to flooding, with two trouble spots in Lewis County keeping a 20-mile stretch of the transportation lifeline shut down Thursday.

The freeway may remain closed until Monday.

The closure is just another sign of a long-running issue: In the past 19 years, I-5 has been closed in Lewis County four times because of flooding where the Chehalis River is joined by smaller streams and creeks. Despite the repeated problem, a solution is still years away and local officials are wary that a pro-

WEB EXTRA

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posed interstate fix would aggravate flooding to some county residents.

"We are saying that we don't want to solve the problem of the freeway at the expense of the people here, and their homes and businesses," said Mayor Tim Browning, of Centralia. "It is a huge, big complicated mess."

In the aftermath of this week's storm, roadways across the state were slowly being reopened as flooding abated. Stevens Pass on Highway 2 reopened Thursday.

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MARK HARRISON / THE SEATTLE TIMES

SNOHOMISH: Nearly 100 volunteers turned out to move sandbags and hay bales to bolster a failing dike on the Pilchuck River.

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ECONOMIC IMPACT: Interstate closures cost millions in lost commerce. > A7

WORKING, FIFE: One had a practiced, effective disaster plan; one didn't. > A9

HYAK: Crews clean up after avalanche. > B1

Communities took heed, and casualties were avoided

Seattle Times staff

First came the snow, with record-setting accumulations that virtually paralyzed parts of Western Washington.

Then came the deluge: inches upon inches of rain that steadily pounded the region Wednesday and Thursday.

The numbers were indeed impressive. Tens of thousands evacuated or were left isolated by floodwaters. Parts of Interstate 5 shut down —

All three major passes closed at least through Thursday afternoon, stranding countless travelers. And thousands of area residents were marooned in their communities as roads to and from became impassable.

The weather is expected to be much calmer over the next couple of days as temperatures go down and rain in the mountain passes turns to snow.



ALAN BERNER / SEATTLE TIMES
The P-I Globe, a familiar Seattle landmark.

REPORT: STAGE SET FOR P-I TO CLOSE

HEARST SAID TO BE READY TO PUT IT UP FOR SALE BUT EXPECTS NO BUYER

P-I, Times execs surprised

BY ERIC PRYNE
Seattle Times business reporter

Is the Seattle Post-Intelligencer on its last legs?

Quoting an unnamed source, KING TV reported Thursday that the newspaper's owner, Time Warner Entertainment Co., Hearst Corp., planned to put the paper up for sale soon, setting the stage for its closure in the next few months.

The P-I's managing editor said he knew of no such plans. A Hearst spokesman in New York did not return calls, pages or e-mails.

Executives at The Seattle Times, which has partnered for 25 years with Hearst and the P-I in a federally sanctioned joint-operating agreement (JOA), said they did not know if the report was true.

"I'm stunned," Times Publisher Frank Blethen said in a newsroom hallway, declining further comment.

But with both Seattle dailies metropolitan newspapers across the nation in serious financial trouble, a P-I shutdown probably would help The Times' bottom line, several industry observers said.

"It would benefit The Times cause anybody who wants a newspaper would have no choice but to buy The Times," said Stephen A. Lipp, a Michigan State University journalism professor who has studied JOAs.

A P-I demise would not solve The Times' problems, he said, "overall, I would suspect [The Times] would see economic gains." University of Washington journalism professor Doug Underwood said.

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