

Hundreds Still Missing In Colo. Flooding

BY HANNAH DREIER
Associated Press

LYONS, Colo. — Gerald Guntle dials his sister's home multiple times a day, desperate to find out if she survived the widespread flooding that shattered the Rocky Mountain foothill town of Lyons, but the phone just rings and rings.

"If there was no phone service, I wouldn't expect to keep getting ringing. That's what has me scared," said the Tucson, Ariz., man, whose sister is among hundreds of people listed as missing in a disaster that is already confirmed to have killed four people.

Officials hope the number of missing will drop rapidly as communications are restored and people are evacuated throughout the region, as it did in Larimer and Boulder counties, where some 487 people dropped off missing-persons list over the weekend.

But faced with a lack of information, friends and relatives are struggling to avoid thoughts of worst-case scenarios.

In Estes Park, a tourist haven that serves as a first stop for many people entering Rocky Mountain National Park, Tony Bielat was searching for information about an elderly man who lives alone in nearby Glen Haven, where cabins and boulders washed down a swollen river.

"The problem is no one knows who has been rescued," Bielat said.

Officials were wading through the rubble in Glen Canyon on Monday, checking every structure in the town one by one.

Precise accounting of the missing remains elusive, with state and county agencies sometimes reporting conflicting totals. Colorado officials listed 1,253 people missing statewide at one point Monday and then updated it to just 658 later in the afternoon.

Most of the missing were in Larimer and Boulder counties, which lie north of Denver and are dotted with self-reliant mountain hamlets where privacy-conscious residents live in remote homes difficult to access even in ideal conditions.

Boulder County has assigned 10 police detectives to search for the missing. Officials are struggling to gauge how many people might actually be in danger as they field hundreds of calls from relatives, friends, estranged siblings and also near-strangers.

Rescuers and shelter workers are taking down lists of evacuees to feed to county officials, and people are asked to call in when they locate their rela-



MICHAEL CIAGLO/COLORADO SPRINGS GAZETTE/MCT
Dave Jackson closes a mailbox with his foot after delivering the mail to a home surrounded on three sides by a flooded Cheyenne Creek in Colorado Springs, Colorado, Friday.

tives. Federal officials Monday repeatedly implored people affected by the flooding to call and reassure their loved ones.

In the funky mountain town of Lyons, stranded residents were unsure how to communicate their status. Telephone landlines were knocked out as floodwater rushed in Wednesday, and most people's cellphones died long ago.

One man drove with his young son past the shuttered shops on a muddy and abandoned Main Street searching for guidance.

"Do you need something?" shouted Glenn Scott, who was walking his two golden retrievers. It's become the town's new greeting.

The man said he was looking for Federal Emergency Management Agency headquarters to let officials know the pair was OK so they wouldn't be listed among the missing.

But the only official seen around town that day was a local emergency worker telling residents it was their last chance to evacuate.

Guntle is hoping his sister and her two children — his only family now that his parents have passed away — are among the holdouts who have chosen boiled water, pantry items and isolation over homelessness.

He called the makeshift shelter for displaced Lyons residents on Friday and was told his sister hadn't come in. He called 10 more times that day, but couldn't get through again.

"I wish they had a list of people who are OK," he said.

A Red Cross website where evacuees can register to let people know they're safe had more than 960 people registered by Monday.

Some mountain residents, however, criticized the list, saying a website was the last thing on their minds after days of precarious existence and evacuation by zip-line, helicopter or military truck.

Families and friends are likely to suffer from acute stress as they wait, and should have access to emergency psychological first aid through FEMA, said Robyn Gershon, a professor at the University of California, San Francisco, who researches disasters.

"The toll on both the person whose missing — knowing that their families are worried — and the family and friends waiting to hear is horrific," she said, adding, "Every minute will seem like a day."

Some stranded residents are going to great lengths to reassure their loved ones. Gondalo Orejel's childhood friend and roommate hiked to a satellite phone in a mountain quarry on Saturday to let him know he was safe.

"It was the first time I smiled since it happened," said Orejel, who lives in Lyons but was visiting Boulder when the flood struck.

Associated Press writers Jeri Clausing in Estes Park and Dan Elliott in Denver contributed to this report.

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Evidence Of Chemical Weapons Found

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Careful not to blame either side for a deadly chemical weapon attack, U.N. inspectors reported Monday that rockets loaded with the nerve agent sarin had been fired from an area where Syria's military has bases, but said the evidence could have been manipulated in the rebel-controlled stricken neighborhoods.

The U.S., Britain and France jumped on evidence in the report — especially the type of rockets, the composition of the sarin agent, and trajectory of the missiles — to declare that President Bashar Assad's government was responsible.

Russia, Syria's closest ally, called the investigators' findings "deeply disturbing," but said it was too early to draw conclusions. The Syrian government's claims that opposition forces were responsible for the attack "cannot be simply shrugged off," Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin insisted.

The conclusions represented the first official confirmation by impartial scientific experts that chemical weapons were used in Syria's civil war, but the inspectors' limited mandate barred them from identifying who was responsible for the Aug. 21 attack.

"This is a war crime," U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the Security Council when he presented the report. "The results are overwhelming and indisputable. The facts speak for themselves."

Concordia Wrested Off Italian Reef

GIGLIO ISLAND, Italy (AP) — Using a vast system of steel cables and pulleys, maritime engineers on Monday gingerly winched the massive hull of the Costa Concordia off the reef where the cruise ship capsized near an Italian island in January 2012 and were poised to set it upright in the middle of the night.

After 15 hours of slower-than-expected progress in pulling the heavily listing luxury liner to an upright position, engineers said they finally hit the tipping point they eagerly were awaiting.

Shortly before midnight, the Concordia was raised by 25 degrees — after that, engineers said, the effect of gravity started giving the rotation a boost.

Then engineers quit operating the pulleys, and by using remote controls, carefully began opening valves to let seawater start filling huge ballast tanks that had been welded onto the already exposed side. The weight of the water in the tanks helped pull the cruise liner up much faster.

Obama Warns GOP Of Potential Chaos

WASHINGTON (AP) — A potential federal shutdown looming, President Barack Obama on Monday warned congressional Republicans they could trigger national "economic chaos" if they demand a delay of his health care law as the price for supporting continued spending for federal operations.

House Republican leaders were to meet Tuesday in hopes of finding a formula that would avoid a shutdown on Oct. 1 without alienating party conservatives who insist on votes to undercut the Affordable Care Act. Even more daunting is a mid- to late-October deadline for raising the nation's borrowing limit, which some Republicans also want to use as leverage against the Obama administration.

"Are some of these folks really so beholden to one extreme wing of their party that they're willing to tank the entire economy just because they can't get their way on this issue?" Obama said in a speech at the White House. "Are they really willing to hurt people just to score political points?"

The Republicans don't see it that way.

House Speaker John Boehner, who opposes the threat of a shutdown, said, "It's a shame that the president could not manage to rise above partisanship today." Obama, said Boehner, "should be working in a bipartisan way to address America's spending problem, the way presidents of both parties have done before," and should delay implementation of the health care law.

Study

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have been so many studies done on the Jim. My board has had enough of studies. They want to get some information and make a decision."

Bartel said plans to study the situation have been put on hold until he can speak with the Yankton County Commission. He anticipates that will happen in the next couple weeks.

"I want to talk with the commissioners and see if there are maybe some local engineers who could look at the elevations," he said. "If the Yankton County Commission thinks that \$50,000 USGS project is needed, I think we're committed to doing that. But my board didn't see the benefit of that right now. We could maybe be persuaded otherwise of the commission feels differently."

Getting the elevations would give the JRWDD an idea of whether there is

enough of a drop to make dredging the area an option that can be considered.

Bartel said he has been at the mouth twice since a July tour of the area by JRWDD board members, Yankton County Commissioners, USGS employees and others.

Since flows were decreased at Gavins Point Dam, the Jim River has apparently started running around the west side of an island at the mouth because it's blocked to the east.

"I don't know what will happen when they raise the flows again," Bartel said. "There are so many variables that it is hard to anticipate what will happen next."

He stated that a new ally on the project may have been found Monday. Bartel visited with U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem's staff about the issue.

"They think she might be able to get us some help," he said. "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has not been of much assistance. They don't feel it is their problem. I'm hoping Kristi can help with that."

Bartel said it is important to the JRWDD board to

continue to work closely with the Yankton County Commission on the project.

"We really want to keep the commissioners happy and do what they think we need to do," he stated. "But we're not going to keep throwing money at it in the hope that throwing enough money at it will make it better."

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net/.

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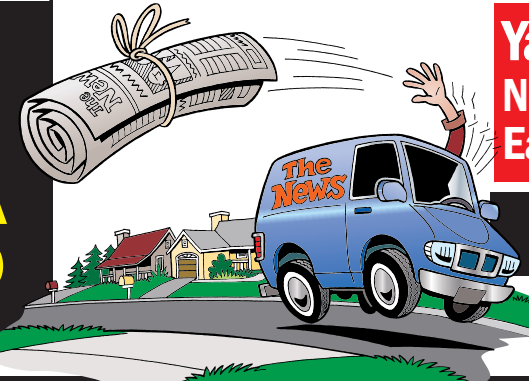
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