

Kulongoski tours flooded Oregon coastal towns

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Oregon Governor Theodore R. Kulongoski and other state officials on Tuesday visited coastal towns in the northwest part of the state hit hard by widespread flooding. The coastal town of Vernonia, Ore., was hard hit by heavy rains Dec. 2 and 3. Oregon Governor Theodore Kulongoski reviewed the damage from an Oregon Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter on Dec. 4. (All photos provided by USAF - Tech. Sgt. Nick Choy, ONG Public Affairs Office) Oregon Governor Theodore R. Kulongoski talks to residents of Vernonia, Ore., as he looks over flood damage, Dec. 4, 2007. Heavy rains Dec. 2 and 3 caused widespread flooding to several coastal Oregon towns, prompting state officials to declare a state of emergency. One of the streets in Vernonia, Ore., sits under several feet of water, Dec. 4, 2007, following heavy rains the night before. Many residents of Vernonia and other coastal towns were left homeless after floods caused widespread power outtages, and damage to buildings and homes there. They arrived in Vernonia, Oregon, via an Oregon Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter, and spoke with residents and town officials affected by heavy rains that pounded the Oregon coast December 2 and 3. "I will make requests to FEMA, and get a hold of a Congressional delegation, because (recovery efforts) will be ongoing," the governor said, during a press conference held at the Oregon Army National Guard aviation facility following the group's return to Salem. The Governor said that the National Weather Service greatly underestimated the impact of the storm, leaving many residents on Oregon's coast unprepared for the heavy rains. "Most people I talked to in Vernonia said their concern wasn't the wind, but the flood waters," Kulongoski said. Both the Governor, and Brig. Gen. Mike Caldwell, Deputy Director, State Affairs for the Oregon National Guard, lauded the quick response of local and state agencies. They pointed to the recent inter-agency emergency exercise, TOPOFF 4, held in mid-October, in helping prepare rescue and relief agencies for such a disaster. The Oregon National Guard in particular, said the governor, is very good at conducting relief efforts. "But now we're doing a great job at recovery," he added. Department of Transportation official, Lucinda M. Moore, said Highway 26 and Highway 18 were scheduled to reopen later Tuesday. Highway 47 remained closed just north of Vernonia due to downed trees. The Governor vowed to help communities affected by flood damage by, "â€ bringing every resource of the state to bear." Several Oregon National Guard units are dispersed throughout the hardest-hit communities on the Oregon coast, helping with relief efforts.

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