

Epsom News

Desperation at flooded mobile homes

BY [NICHOLAS BROWN](#)

Residents in a low-lying Epsom neighborhood are reeling after the second major flood in 18 months destroyed their mobile homes, toppled their fuel tanks and left septic systems floating in their yards, local safety and health officials said.

Kingstowne Mobile Home Park, off Route 28 south of Webster Park, was ravaged by the recent floods, and many residents there are struggling to cope with the disaster, said Epsom's health officer, Cec Curran.

"I've encountered quite a lot of people that left me the lingering impression that they won't know what to do," said Curran, who recently urged selectmen to meet with residents at the park to encourage them to fill out applications for federal relief money, if it becomes available.

"They need more than a hot shower and a hot meal. They're going to need some serious assistance," he said.

During the recent floods, the Epsom Fire Department building off Route 4 acted both as the emergency command center and a temporary shelter for people forced to evacuate their homes. About two dozen displaced people passed through the shelter, said Fire Chief Stewart Yeaton.

But Curran said many people at Kingstowne now have no place to turn, even though they may be living in a breeding ground for mold and other health hazards.

He said he's not willing to start condemning homes there until residents can make other living arrangements.

"These people have nowhere to go," Curran said. "I know at this moment there are at least five families who are putting themselves in harm's way by staying there."

Police Chief Wayne Preve also told selectmen the situation at Kingstowne is dire.

"These people are devastated. This is twice in a row," he said. "You go down there and you can smell septic. Something needs to be done."

Yeaton said residents were forced to evacuate the mobile home park, which sits on the banks of the Suncook River, at 10 p.m., after water levels jumped 2 feet there in about 15 or 20 minutes.

Rescue workers evacuated 18 people in the park by boat and four-wheel-drive vehicles at night, he said, after about a dozen residents had already been removed from the neighborhood during daylight.

One local fireman fell thigh-deep into a septic tank, Yeaton said.

Also in the neighborhood, a 250-gallon oil tank was washed away into the Suncook, and about a dozen home propane tanks were toppled over by floodwater, Yeaton said.

Epsom rescue workers immediately summoned DES officials and other local hazardous materials experts to the area, and crews used absorbent pads to try and mitigate some of the contamination.

Yeaton said he's not sure how much oil was in the large tank, but said the DES officials repeatedly referred to the spill damage as "minimal."

Yeaton said anger and despair in the mobile home park were palpable, as residents questioned rescue workers why the Suncook River's change of course over last year's flooding had yet to be studied.

He said many of the people in the neighborhood are elderly and on a fixed income, and now have little hope.

"These folks aren't getting out to get another job," he said.

Town roads

Road agent Gordon Ellis estimated that the recent floods wreaked about \$1.4 million worth of damage to the town's roads. By comparison, road damage to the town after last May's floods was between about \$100,000 and \$200,000, he said.

"There were very few roads in town that weren't damaged," Ellis said.

At least 17 of the town's roads were shut down at some point during the recent floods.

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