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LOCAL

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Sun breaks through; cleanup begins

MSD pledges to help residents in St. Louis neighborhood where sewers backed up



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Abby Herman (left) and her friend Jessica Schlueter, both of Ballwin, explore a flooded section of road Saturday that leads to the Meramec River at Castlewold State Park. The road remains closed to vehicular traffic, and there were reports of snakes in the water.

BY SUSAN WEICH
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS • As the sun broke through the clouds for the first time in a week, residents across the area started cleaning up water damage from rainfall that caused flash floods and road closures.

According to the National Weather Service, 5.66 inches of rain has fallen at Lambert Airport since June 12, much of it the remnants of Tropical Storm Bill.

The rain is set to return Sunday, though it'll be scattered, meteorologists said.

One of the areas hardest hit was the Ellendale neighborhood of the city, near the intersection of McCausland and Southwest avenues. Water there backed up through sewers Friday morning, flooding basements and sending residents to area hotels.

The Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District said the backup was caused by something in its system that didn't work properly. Lance LeComb, a spokesman for MSD, pledged to take care of the damage and work to save residents' possessions. Workers with a restoration company had set up a tent on McCausland and were meeting with homeowners.

One of the people drying out was Tom Cargill, 31, an aircraft mechanic for the Wings of Hope charity in Chesterfield.

Cargill shares a 700-square-foot home with his mentally disabled sister Tessa, 28, and two pit bulls, Loki and Luna.

Cargill said his sister called him at work Friday to tell him water had started to seep



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Terrell Newbill of Woodard Cleaning and Restoration Services walks mildewed clothing to the trash Saturday from a home in the 2700 block of Hermitage Avenue in St. Louis.

into the house, and by the time he got home 20 minutes later, the water was 3 feet high.

He waded through waist-deep water to help his sister and dogs get to safety. He said the home he rents is a total loss and probably will have to be torn down. "I'm stressed to say the least because I'm going to have to find a new place to live," he said.

He and his sister will have to stay in a hotel until then, he said.

A neighbor, Peggy Vonder Haar, 46, is a dental lab worker, and said the water in her basement was 4 feet high but had since receded, leaving a thick coating of mud.

She lost Christmas decorations, gas-powered scooters, a TV, an extra bedroom set and photographs.

"Everything is replaceable except the pictures of my kids," she said.

In Maplewood, Fire Capt. Peter Marsac said things were back to normal after a flash flood threatened the Deer Creek shopping center.

"Once the rain stopped, Deer Creek receded rapidly," he said on Saturday.

Barry Nuss, spokesman for the Lincoln County Fire Protection District, said the Cuivre River had crested Friday night, and

only a few smaller roads remained impassable.

All lanes of Highway 61 at the Cuivre River bridge were reopened Saturday morning. The highway was shut down Friday at noon amid a flood warning that had affected most of the county.

In Centerville, St. Clair County Emergency Management Director Herb Simmons said the water had receded from a 12-block area just north of Frank Hollen State Recreation Area.

Firefighters evacuated 38 residents Friday but had no calls for help Saturday, Simmons said.

In St. Charles County, southbound Highway 67 from the Clark Bridge in Alton to Highway 94 were closed Saturday night.

The Mississippi River is expected to crest Sunday at St. Louis at 7.5 feet over flood stage, then fall quickly, going below flood stage downtown by Thursday. The river at St. Charles crested Saturday at almost 6 feet over flood stage and was falling at Hermann and Washington, Mo.

In Valley Park, the Meramec River was expected to crest Monday almost 10 feet over flood stage, but not enough to affect the low spot on Highway 141 at Interstate 44. Officials expect the levees to hold, but a few businesses evacuated as a precaution.

Denise Hollinshed and Tim O'Neil of the Post-Dispatch contributed to this report.

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