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Worst in KM history? Thursday's ice storm blacks out city, estimated financial loss over \$400,000

All of Kings Mountain's power restored by Monday morning

By GARY STEWART
 Editor of The Herald

The ice storm that devastated North Carolina last week is the worst on record for the City of Kings Mountain.

According to city officials, the storm has already resulted in over \$400,000 in financial losses to the city, far more than even Hurricane Hugo caused in 1989.

"It was one of the worst disasters in the history of the City of Kings Mountain," said Mayor Rick Murphrey.

A few snowflakes but a lot of sleet and freezing rain began falling in Kings Mountain by lunch time Wednesday, and by late afternoon and early evening it was freezing on all power lines, structures and streets. The city had begun spreading sand and salt on main streets and bridges as early as Tuesday evening in preparation for the widespread forecast of freezing precipitation, and that helped keep main roads passable.

But by midnight trees and power lines were falling all over town, and when residents awoke Thursday morning the town was totally without power.

Along with the county and other municipalities in the county, Mayor Murphrey declared the area a state of emergency. North Carolina

Governor Mike Easley also declared the State in a state of emergency. Government officials hope the federal government will agree, making them eligible to work with FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) to recoup some of the financial losses.

Kings Mountain's financial costs run the gamut from lines, poles and other materials to restore power, to contracting for cutting of trees out of streets and overtime for almost 200 city employees who worked around the clock. The city used emergency funds to purchase an additional chipper truck to help clear debris.

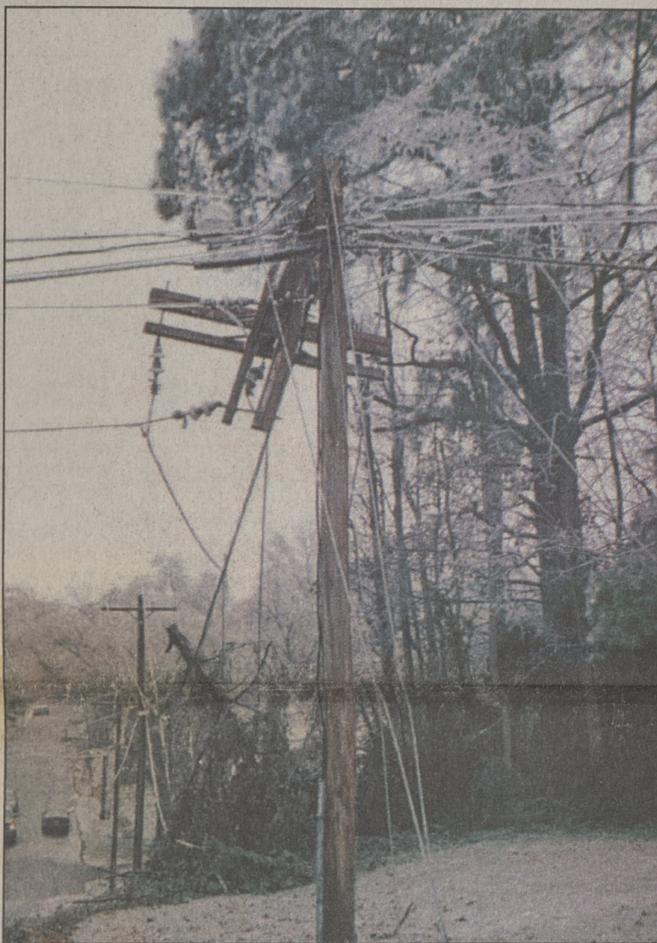
A number of streets around town were blocked because of downed trees and power lines. A tree fell through a house on the corner of Tracy and King Streets and a woman sleeping inside was evacuated by emergency personnel and taken to a relative's home in Cherryville.

A main power line and transformer on Hillside Drive came tumbling to the ground when icy trees snapped a utility pole, leaving it in the shape of a 7.

A number of power lines were all over the streets in the Linwood area, particularly on Grace Street.

An aggressive year-round tree trimming policy on utility rights-of-way probably prevented even more serious outages in town.

See Power, 2A



People helping people, that's KM

By GARY STEWART
 Editor of The Herald

Other than the obvious inconvenience of being without power and having to clear their yards of broken trees and limbs, Kings Mountain citizens were spared any serious problems during last week's ice storm.

No deaths or serious injuries were reported here during the power outage, which lasted up to five days in some areas of town.

Mostly, city officials say they saw a great spirit of understanding, cooperation and hard work by employees and citizens.

City employees were on the street 24 hours a day from the very first drop of sleet until the present. Since power was restored, workers have still be clearing debris and replacing old and damaged transformers and lines.

"We have a great team," said Mayor Rick Murphrey. "Not only that, we have good equipment on standby and good neighbors who helped each other out. I can say that this city was prepared. Everybody pitched right in and never complained."

Probably the most visible city department during the crisis was the police department, which manned traffic lights at main intersections 24 hours a day.

Chief Melvin Proctor said, surprisingly, there were no major incidences of crime or serious accidents during the storm and days following.

"We were worried about businesses getting broken into," he said. "But during the entire time we had only one B&E, and that was to a vehicle."

When the storm set in on Wednesday, Proctor said officers responded to nine accidents related to icy roads. But there was not

See People, 2A

Insurance claims high

BY ABIGAIL WOLFORD
 Staff Writer

With the ice storm last week, much property damage occurred both from falling limbs and trees and from food spoilage from the power outage. Now that the damage has been done, it is time to pay for it.

The local insurance agencies have been very busy since the storm ended. Nearly all damage caused by falling limbs and trees is covered by the insurance agencies, and people have been calling continually to file claims.

"Virtually everything is covered in this type of situation," said Bob Maner of B.F. Maner Agency, Inc.

Although most of his claims have been for damage to dwellings caused by falling trees and limbs, Tony McClure, the manager of Farm Bureau Insurance, said that most people who have insurance through his agency

See Claims, 2A



Top, utility pole snapped on Hillside Drive bringing power lines sagging to the ground. Bottom, tree fell on house on Tracy Street.

GARY STEWART / HERALD

KINGS MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

Teaching, drama Betsy Wells' calling



BETSY WELLS

BY ABIGAIL WOLFORD
 Staff Writer

"I love teaching. Truly teachers do shape the future," said Betsy Wells, Kings Mountain High School drama teacher. "Teaching truly is a calling.

It's been a privilege to be able to touch the souls of the students through music and theater."

Wells has now taught over 4800 students in her 33 years of teaching, she said, and is beginning to see the children of her former students in her

classes. In fact, she has even taught many of her colleagues.

"I'm the oldest teacher in years of experience at Kings Mountain High School," she said. "Many of the faculty members, I have taught."

Wells said that she was

first drawn into the theatrical world by watching Mighty Mouse cartoons as a child. She said she loved it when Mighty Mouse would sing. She said she also grew up in a musical family. Her dad played the guitar and the harmonica, while her

mother played the piano and organ. Her dad even made tapes where he would sing all four parts of the quartet. Her family would often sing gospel music and ballads together, she said.

Wells grew up on a

See Wells, 5A

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