

B.C. storm puts Courtenay, Delta in state of emergency, thousands without power

Vancouver crews sandbagging against seawater surge for powerful 'king tide' Wednesday

CBC News Last Updated: Dec 10, 2014 11:20 AM PT

The second wave of a **powerful subtropical storm** pounded the southern coast of B.C. on Tuesday morning, leading Courtenay and Delta to declare a state of emergency and leaving thousands without power.

While the storm eased off during the afternoon in many areas, it has returned in force on Tuesday night and is expected to last until Wednesday morning.

Courtenay, Delta declare state of emergency

On the east coast of Vancouver Island, the City of Courtenay declared a state of emergency because of flooding.

According to the city's website, Courtenay has been walloped with 200 mm of rain in the 36-hour period since the rainfall began Monday.

The city also said the Comox Lake Reservoir had risen about 1.5 metres by noon Tuesday, with water flowing into the reservoir at about 1,000 cubic metres per second — the equivalent of water from an Olympic-sized swimming pool entering the reservoir every 2.5 seconds.

Although B.C. Hydro has moved to lower the reservoir levels, the city said that at the current rate of rise, water will likely begin to spill over the dam Tuesday night.

Several roads are closed in the city, including Comox Road from Highway 19A to Headquarters Road. The Fifth Street and Dove Creek bridges are both closed as well. The city has been warned by Emergency Management BC and BC Hydro that the flooding could potentially eclipse the floods that occurred in 2009 and 2010.

In Delta, Mayor Lois Jackson declared a state of emergency owing to the recent storm surges in the Boundary Bay and Beach Grove areas, which have been hit hard by strong winds and heavy rain.

One home in Tsawwassen had to be evacuated when the sea wall protecting it was washed away on Tuesday. Crews are working to repair the damage.

Preparing for the storm

Flood watches have been issued for the **North Shore of Vancouver, Howe Sound, Vancouver Island and the Central Coast**, as the warm temperatures and heavy rain melt snow at higher elevations. Rivers and creeks are expected to continue to rise before subsiding by Wednesday afternoon.

Crews in Vancouver are also sandbagging low-lying areas around Jericho Beach to prepare for a storm surge expected during a "king tide" Wednesday morning.

The B.C. Ministry of Environment said king tides are extreme high tides that happen about twice a year when the sun and moon's gravitational forces reinforce each other.

The next king tide is expected to hit just as southwestern B.C. is being hammered by high winds and rain.

City spokesman Brian Crowe said king tides can approach five metres in elevation, or about one metre higher than a typical high tide, and can form storm surges when they are combined with low-pressure systems.

He said the sandbag work is a precaution because Wednesday's king tide is forecast for 5.5 metres, which is the same elevation of water that flooded a local park but spared nearby homes in 2012.

Thousands without electricity

Throughout the day BC Hydro has been reporting power outages affecting tens of thousands of customers across southern B.C., as crews work to repair damage caused by the high winds.

BC Hydro is warning further widespread power outages are expected across the region tonight when the high winds are expected to resume.

Earlier on Tuesday morning, BC Ferries reported that the storm caused the cancellation of two dozen sailings on seven different routes, including the main crossings between Vancouver and Vancouver Island.

Service resumed on the major routes around 11 a.m., but travellers are advised that more sailings could be cancelled tonight and to check with BC Ferries for updates.

The weather has closed ski hills on the North Shore of Vancouver, and Whistler-Blackcomb is getting drenched by rain right to the peak. Strong winds at the latter forced the ski hills to be closed.