

Rochester Residents Want Individual FEMA Cash Grants

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By The Chronicle

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Last night, about 150 residents of Rochester gathered at the Rochester Middle School Commons, voicing their frustration in not being included in FEMA's \$28,800 cash grants given to individual flood victims in Lewis and Grays Harbor counties.

Many also told the three Thurston County commissioners their concerns about clear-cut logging in the Chehalis River Valley and building in flood zones in Chehalis, that some said added to the volume of water that eventually spilled over the banks of the Chehalis and at one point made Oakville an island.

"Many homes were flooded, with three to six inches of mud on their floors," said Keith Eisner, spokesman for Thurston County Emergency Management. "Independence Valley got hit hard."

Eisner said early estimates of damage to South Thurston County are in the area of \$14 million, including \$7.2 million in structural and property damage, \$1.9 million in damage to businesses, and \$4.6 million in structural damage, response costs and preventative measures to Thurston County and local governments.

The county, as of Dec. 10, has received reports from 169 residents and 12 businesses. The total is likely to rise, according to a report from Thurston County Emergency Management, as more people list their damage.

"We urge people to act now to report any damages to their homes or businesses," county Emergency Manager Kathy Estes said. "The faster we all act, the faster the federal government can respond."

Another meeting for Rochester residents is planned for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 18 at the Rochester Middle School Commons.