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Severe wind storm wreaks havoc, destroys homes

At approximately 2 a.m. on Tuesday morning a severe storm swept through Clearwater County with wind gusts estimated at 70 mph knocking over trees throughout the county leaving most of the county without power.

Fortunately, there have been no fatalities or injuries reported.

The Orofino area suffered the most damage, especially Hidden Village Mobile Home Park west of Orofino. Approximately 20 homes were damaged or destroyed by falling trees. The Orofino Fire Department searched all the homes in Hidden Village. Two people were trapped inside one home and needed extrication, but were not injured.

The city of Orofino had multiple trees down with homes and vehicles damaged.

The Clearwater County Road Department, Clearwater-Potlatch Timber Protection Association, and law enforcement spent most of the night and early morning assessing the damage and clearing trees from the roadways. Most roads have been opened and are now passable.

Trees and power lines went down throughout the county and some have been restored. There are still areas where the power and/or phone lines are out. Clearwater Power and Avista Utilities Company are working around the clock in an attempt to restore power. Both companies report extensive damage to both substations and to utility lines. Neither have an estimate time for the completion of repairs.

Damage assessments are ongoing, and shelters are being organized to assist those in need. An emergency center has been opened at the Orofino Community Church at 14233 U.S. Highway 12, for Orofino residents who have been displaced from their homes due to the damage. The Clearwater County Search and Rescue is working with American Red Cross from that location, providing power and meals. Their phone number is 208-476-3019. Shelter plans for Weippe and Pierce were in place but not needed overnight.

The county is asking residents who have had any damage to their property to call the Assessor's Office at 476-7042. Any families in need of assistance during business hours are to call the Commissioner's Office at 476-3615. For an emergency, please call 911.

Clearwater County Commissioners and City of Orofino have issued disaster declarations due to the high wind event. Both entities are in the recovery phase.