

City recovers from damaging winds



Courtesy photo Cody Tree Surgery staffer Woody Lint works Thursday removing trees that had blown down on Beck Avenue.

Posted: Monday, June 21, 2010 3:36 pm | *Updated: 8:30 pm, Mon Jun 21, 2010.*

By HARRIET WEIXEL |

Strong winds blew through Cody last Thursday bringing down trees and causing other damage.

National Weather Bureau statistics recorded the highest wind velocity in Cody at 71 mph, occurring about 7 a.m. June 17. High gusts were recorded throughout the day, with the lowest velocity of 34 mph recorded at 11:15 a.m.

"This was the steadiest strong wind we've seen in a long time," Cody parks supervisor Monte Bales said.

There were trees blown down all over town, Bales said. Hugh Smith, Highland Manor and Beck Lake parks each lost one tree. And two trees were down at the Cody chamber, causing the sidewalk to buckle as the roots raised out of the ground.

City crews have been busy removing countless fallen trees and branches and filling in open holes caused by tree roots coming up.

"It shows the structural issues forced upon us," Bales said. "Mother Nature posted which trees were structurally deficient. It was a survival of the fittest. If you're weak, you die. If strong, you survive."

At the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, 15 trees were blown over, including spruce, Russian olives, aspens, blue spruce and a large cottonwood tree. Six of the trees were on the powwow grounds, according to BBHC facilities manager Paul Brock.

"The trees came out of the ground easily because the ground was so soft from the rain we've had," Brock said.

Cody Tree Surgery office manager Sue Merrill said crews were removing trees and branches from power lines, houses, fences and vehicles. They removed a 90-foot cottonwood tree that fell across three yards on Gale Lane.

At Howard Siggins' home on Bleinstein Avenue, a 75-year-old blue spruce tree was blown down. As it fell, the tree brushed the roof of Siggins' home, tore up bushes, buckled their sidewalk and pulled sprinkler lines out of the ground.

"The tree that fell was a beautiful tree," Siggins said. "My grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Bell, had planted three of these trees in the mid-'30s," Siggins said.

As for the other two trees, one fell over years ago, and the other is where Siggins' grandparents planted it, in what is now the neighbor's yard.

"The wind also blew the top off one of our pine trees," Siggins added.

Red panels below the yellow arches on the large sign at McDonald's were broken and blown off sometime early Thursday morning hours.

"Some parts fell off, and we can fix them. No cars were hit," McDonald's manager Nick Sikes said.

Sheriff Scott Steward said no major property damage in the county had been reported.

"There were some tree branches blown down, and a billboard halfway up the Belfry hill was toppled," he said.

City crews worked 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Thursday, repairing power lines and assessing various other damages.

"It was quite a wind source," Cody electrical superintendent Steve Wirth said. "Trees were blown down all over town. Some trees were uprooted and some just broke off and fell across power lines."

Neighbors on Beck Avenue, Jeannie Nothe and Clara McGary, heard loud crashes as trees came down on their homes.

"Our yards and roofs were full of trees with electric wires tangled in the branches," Nothe said. "Clara's bedroom inside wall was cracked all the way down."

Police Chief Perry Rockvam reported there had been property damages and road hazards caused by broken branches on streets and roadways. Traffic lights were out due to power outages, requiring traffic control at intersections.

In addition, a Wal-Mart employee said the store's power was out for 90 minutes Thursday.

(Harriet Weixel can be reached at harriet@codyenterprise.com.)

Cemetery damaged

About 15 trees, including a few that were 50 years old and 50 feet tall, were blown down by an ill wind that swept through Riverside Cemetery and the Cody area early Thursday.

Sexton Sam Welch said a wind gust of about 60 mph came through the West Cody Strip about 8 a.m. Thursday, taking down the trees and knocking over several headstones.

Welch and his crew were busy removing downed blue spruce in varying sizes Thursday. The cemetery was closed to the public because of the damage.

"It's going to look a little different out here from now on," he added.

About a dozen of the downed trees were 20 feet tall.

He said the smaller trees likely will be replaced, though some of the larger ones had become crowded and probably will not be replaced.

Some of the toppled headstones will have to be reset on new foundations, Welch added, but none were broken.

Two of the larger blue spruce that went down fell in the older portion of the cemetery, while one large tree went down in the newer section, he added.

A water line from the cemetery's irrigation system also was damaged, wetting the ground and making clean-up more difficult.