

33 TO 100 DROWNED IN KENTUCKY TOWNS BY 'FLASH' FLOODS

Mountain Streams, Swelled by Cloudbursts, Sweep Down on Sleeping Families

MOREHEAD IS INUNDATED

Other Communities in Breathitt and Rowan Counties Are Isolated—Aid Rushed

By The Associated Press.

MOREHEAD, Ky., July 5.—Thirty-three persons are known to have been drowned today when swiftly rising Eastern Kentucky mountain streams, following cloudbursts late last night, rushed down creeks and rivers to inundate communities along their banks. Government and relief officials said they feared the death toll might reach 100, since eighty-one persons are still missing. Aid was sent to the stricken areas.

Postmaster W. E. Crutcher of Morehead said thirty-eight persons had been drowned in that part of Rowan County. The known dead at Morehead numbered twenty-six, with twelve missing. The known dead at Keck was seven, with sixty-nine missing.

At Washington, the Red Cross gave out the following report from Roger W. Jones, chairman of the Breathitt County Red Cross:

"Seventy-five to 100 drowned or missing on Frozen Creek. Ten to twenty homes swept away. Hunting Creek flooded but no reports of loss of life."

Water Rises 15 Feet

The United States engineers' office at Cincinnati received a report that "between 25 and 30 persons" had been drowned in a "flash" flood in Carter County, east of here. Workers were dispatched immediately. However, Police Chief C. B. Womack at Grayson, seat of Carter County, said a "fairly complete check" disclosed no loss of life.

Creeks and streams cramped in narrow banks in widely separated sections of the mountain country were unable to carry the water off fast enough. At many points residents reported streams rose ten to fifteen feet in less than an hour.

Mayor Warren C. Lappin said "sanitary conditions are the worst possible" in the stricken area and appealed to the Red Cross and Government relief agencies for aid.

Mrs. N. L. Wells, chairman of the Rowan County Red Cross Chapter, said after a survey that the county's death toll might reach 100 persons. Medical supplies and Red Cross nurses arrived here during the afternoon. Fifty townspeople were sworn in as special deputies and aided in patrolling the roped-off downtown section.

The sleeping residents of Morehead, which has a population of 2,500, had little opportunity to escape the rushing torrents. Fire sirens and factory whistles screamed in the early morning, but before many persons could flee the avalanche of water was smashing at their homes.

Postmaster Crutcher estimated "at least" 100 houses were ripped from their foundations.

Dr. Philip E. Blackerby, assistant Kentucky health director, dis-

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patched doctors, nurses and medical supplies to Morehead. Governor Chandler ordered fifteen State patrolmen and State highway emergency crews sent here to aid rescue workers.

Highway bridges were washed away, railroad tracks twisted and undermined and highways blocked with debris. Telephone and telegraph linesmen struggled to restore the almost wholly disrupted communications in the affected area.

Water completely isolated Farmers, a community of 250 persons seven miles west of here, and Clearfield, a factory settlement of 500 persons, across Triplett Creek from Morehead.

It was feared the death toll in both communities would be high, as they apparently bore the brunt of the water's force.

At least two distinct cloudbursts apparently struck Eastern Kentucky during the night as Morehead and Jackson are in different watersheds and the cloudbursts hit at separate hours. The deluge struck here shortly before midnight and at Jackson at 3 A. M. The search for the bodies of victims was taken over by enrollees at a CCC camp at near-by Rodburn and scores of volunteers.

Water in Railroad Street, Morehead's main thoroughfare, varied in depth from four to ten feet at the peak of the flood.

Ted Sparkman said the force of the rushing torrents swept his house from its foundation.

"I grabbed my wife," Sparkman

related, "and we ran to the door. The force of the water swept us into the torrent and we were sucked into the street. A few seconds later our house swept by and we were unable to do anything for our children. We could hear their cries as our house went by."

Sparkman and his wife were rescued from a tree top at 6:30 A. M. by boatmen. Rescuers said between fifty and seventy-five persons were taken from tree tops along the banks of the creek.

Townpeople sought to rescue Mrs. Harley Boyd from a house slowly breaking up against a tree. She could be seen plainly in the gleam of searchlights across a 300-yard stretch of raging water, Postmaster Crutcher said, but the torrent was so swift boats had not been able to reach her.

The mountaineers call floods such as today's "flash" floods, because the water rises and subsides quickly.