

Extensive Damage Surveyed

Survey Team Damage Assessed

By STEVE CRICK
ITEM Staff Writer

Robert L. McFerren and J. Rolando Sarabia, two field representatives from the Atlanta Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) of the President of the United States, and Ross B. Miller, assistant director of the South Carolina Civil Defense Agency, met with officials of Sumter and Clarendon counties yesterday and took a visual survey of both counties to determine if the counties can be declared national disaster areas.

Their visit was upon the request of Gov. John C. West who had wired President Nixon asking him for emergency aid, according to Woody Brooks, executive director of the division of local governments in Columbia.

"THEY WERE SENT by the President to see if 31 South Carolina counties could be declared disaster areas so that these counties could receive emergency help," Brooks explained. "They had to evaluate the damage and advise the

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president whether he should declare these areas disaster areas.

"They left Wednesday night for Atlanta to meet W. C. McMillen, regional director of the OEP in Atlanta, and now we must wait until this survey team evaluates the damages and then in-

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Sumter area businesses and industries are still continuing to assess the storm damages to their respective companies in the aftermath of the weekend winter holocaust.

"We're presently inventorying all our raw manufacturing materials today, and this will give us a lot of insight into the total amount of loss here," said John P. Mitchell, general manager of Town and Country Manufacturing Co.

"The damage is very extensive to two of the main buildings, (due to the collapse of their roofs) and at this time we don't know exactly what we can salvage. Until such time as we can get the information on what we can salvage out

of the building, it's hard to come up with a damage estimate figure. Hopefully, damage estimates will be forthcoming in the next few days.

THOMAS AND HOWARD CO., wholesale grocers at 200 S. Harvin St., reported approximately one quarter of their storage warehouse caved in under the weight of the snow. A part of one of

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Large Grant,
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Survey Team Looks At Damage

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forms the state as to its decision," Brooks said.

State Sen. T. O. Bowen, D-Sumter, said, "I introduced a resolution in the State Senate Wednesday to ask President Nixon to declare 31 South Carolina counties national disaster areas which included, of course, Sumter and Clarendon counties, and it was unanimously passed by the Senate.

"The photographs that were taken on the helicopter survey trip Tuesday were presented to the senate members and quite a bit of amazement was expressed by many senators throughout our state," Bowen said. "The same resolution will be introduced in the House of Representatives today."

Sen. Bowen said that he pleaded with all state senators to contact their respective United States congressmen and senators in Washington to assist (the state government) in establishing this area as a disaster area.

Sen. Bowen noted that if a disaster declaration was declared by the President, then, "This would give federal grants to stricken areas while making long term loans available at low interest rates. For example, loans for stricken farmers would come through the Farmer's Home Administration. A declaration such as this would put these counties in the same category as na-

tional disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts," Sen Bowen concluded.

THE SURVEY TEAM met with Sumter city and county officials Wednesday afternoon in the courtroom of the Sumter County Court House to hear what assessment of damages that local officials had made.

Luke Rogers, acting Sumter County Civil Defense director, told the group that, "Buildings in this part of the state are not constructed to hold up (under heavy snow) so the roof literally fell in. We have no snow removal equipment (on hand) in this part of the state, so we had to ask for aid from the City of Greenville which has some equipment, and the state of North Carolina.

"Major damage has been done to the chicken farms, milk industry and many large local industries," Rogers said. He cited the collapsed roof at Town and Country Manufacturing as an example.

"We have no idea how many cattle have been lost as we can't get into the county to find out. We've just been trying to save human life and limb."

Sumter Mayor Richard P. Moses explained to the survey team that he estimated "50 percent of the poultry production at Campbell Soup's processing plant may be affected. We have estimated \$3 million in poultry losses as of yesterday (Tuesday)"

McFerren of the OEP told local officials "Today our purpose in being here is to see the concentration and magnitude of damages. We must segregate public and private damages, and then find out what is and what is not insured and to what percentage it is or is not insured.

"I CAN ASSURE you that both federal and private insurance estimators are going to give their assessment of damages."

McFerren emphasized that the OEP had come to inspect the local damages "from the national level." The survey team was then taken on a tour of the county by local officials so that they could see the storm damages first hand. It was their original intention to survey the afflicted areas by helicopter, but weather conditions did not permit this Wednesday and they were taken by automobile.

After seeing Sumter County, the team drove to Manning to see the damages there. They "toured" Manning in "the only police car running now," according to Charles V. Singleton, Manning Chief of Police.

Upon completion of their Sumter and Manning visits, McFerren issued the following statement: "The local authorities (Civil Defense, Shaw Air Force Base personnel and volunteers) have taken care of the immediate needs of the

people which is always the most important thing. In terms of physical damage, it's going to take some time to get accurate estimates that you can quantify. We will not know the magnitude of the damages in Sumter and Clarendon counties until we can get precise and complete evaluation from both state and local authorities."

MILLER of the state Civil Defense Agency stated: "The purpose of this trip was to get an idea of the extent of the damages now — it gives us a visual picture. We can then come back later and assess the damages with local authorities. It would be impossible to put a dollar value on all this until it's over; then we can get a clearer picture."

The survey officials had high praise for the efforts of Sumter and Manning authorities and citizens in meeting the emergency situation. They said that city and county officials of both cities had done excellent jobs in rescuing stranded motorists and rendering all types of emergency aid. They also remarked about the "fine way the citizens at large had opened their doors to help total strangers."

When asked when they felt like they could finally fully evaluate the damages, the survey team agreed that this estimate would come "at an undetermined date."

Damage...

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the walls also caved in early Sunday morning.

According to B. S. Boykin, vice-president and general manager, damage to the building and merchandise was extensive, but no estimate as to the cost of repairs is yet available.

Austin Floyd, project engineer for Southern Coatings and Chemical Co. Inc. on Fulton Street, reported that a 38,000 square foot finish goods warehouse collapsed.

Floyd said, "Our officials estimate that the damage will be approximately \$150,000. The only other damage we had was to a metal building under construction which collapsed during the heavy snows last weekend."

Cover Manufacturing Co. at 29 Progress St. reported minor roof damage. According to general manager Jay Schwartz, no machinery was damaged and there have been no estimates on repairs as yet.

Hugh Humphries Jr., plant engineer for Georgia-Pacific Corp. on Fulton Street, reported that "Our total prop-

erty damages for all plants is estimated at \$5,000." He added that, "Compared to other area industries, we consider ourselves very fortunate."

WILLIAM FERGUSON, project director of the Wateree Manpower Training Center at 812 S. Guignard Drive, said that "Excessive snow on the southwest portion of the center caused two-thirds of the south part of the building to collapse into the center's offices and auditorium."

Ferguson thought that the damage probably occurred late Saturday night or early Sunday morning, and he could give no damage estimates at this time.

"We are seeking temporary headquarters to house the center so we can hold our training operations," Ferguson said. "However, we have not been successful in our search efforts so far and the center will be closed until further notice."

Ferguson is presently operating out of the Wateree Community Actions Agency at 225 W. Liberty St.