

**Daily Express – 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2006**

## **Flooded ... and there's more to come**

*The country was on full-scale flood alert last night after heavy rainfall caused rivers to burst their banks.*

Up to seven inches of rain was recorded in a 24-hour period after torrential downpours blew in from the Atlantic.

Scores of properties were ruined and one driver narrowly avoided being drowned in his car as rivers swelled to raging torrents.

The Environment Agency issues 27 flood warnings yesterday, including nine along the River Severn.

The town of Bridgenorth in Shropshire was hit by severe flooding after the Severn broke its banks and spilled dirty water into homes and businesses. An Environment Agency spokesman said the area was "pretty saturated" after days of rain.

Joanne Hawthorne, managing director of Leno's restaurant in the town, spoke of her devastation as river levels continued to rise leaving much of her business underwater.

"I have just five sand bags at the door" she said. "There is nothing I can do apart from watch the water rise".

In Machnalleth, mid Wales, a motorist was rescued by firefighters after becoming trapped in his car by flood waters. A few miles away a landslide blocked the A470 near Mallwyd.

Rail services between Machnalleth and Shrewsbury, and the Conwy Valley line between Llandudno Junction and Blaenau Ffestiniog, were suspended due to flooding.

The Environment Agency yesterday placed 57 "flood watch" notices across the UK, in addition to the 27 higher-level warnings.

The Midlands was given seven warnings and the North-west six. The North-east, South-west and Thames region were given five each.

Last night forecasters warned that more weather misery is due today as the band of rain grinds its way eastwards across the country.

And as soon as it has passed, Britain can expect a fresh dousing from another front of rain arriving tomorrow.

Rainfall hit a peak in the Lake District, where the BBC Weather Centre measured 7in of rain in the 24 hours leading up to yesterday morning. North Wales registered 5in over the same period.

Some parts of the country have already exceeded the level of rainfall normally expected for the whole of December.

The wettest place so far this month is Capel Curig, Snowdonia, with 13.5in of rain. In previous years the average rainfall for the whole of the month in the area has been 11.7in.

The Met Office said the wet weather will not let up.

“We will have more rain sweeping in from the Atlantic on Wednesday. It will be a pretty showery day then and on Thursday, and we will have yet more rain in the early part of Friday” it added.

And more rain is due to hit the most sensitive areas. BBC meteorologist Tomasz Schafernaker warned of further downpours where home owners are already reeling from yesterday’s soaking.

He said: “The areas where we don’t want the rainfall again – north-western parts of Wales, Cumbria and Lancashire – there is yet more rain to come”.

But experts said Britain is badly under-prepared for severe flooding. Risk assessment company **Ambiental** warned that London, Manchester, Liverpool, Bath, Cambridge and Widnes were particularly vulnerable to high waters.

Dr Justin Butler, managing director of Ambiental, said: A large number of towns and cities across England and Wales are at risk of flooding, and given this autumn and winter’s predicted high rainfall and tides, the risk is even greater in the coming months”.

“Indeed, with climate change and increased development in the floodplain, flood risk is a problem that will dominate the UK over the next 20 to 30 years”.

“Both the private and public sector need to start taking that risk seriously”

Insurers have warned Britain’s wild winter weather could cost householders more than £300 million in wind and flood damage before the spring. Prasad Shastri, head of insurance marketing at Abbey, said: “Already we have seen a significant increase in storm-related claims within the last month and this is expected to continue into 2007”.

Abbey said the industry could expect around 620,000 home insurance claims as a result of tempestuous weather conditions, each one worth an average of £522.