

Area feels effects of tropical storm Irene

By [Steve Smith - Staff Writer](#)

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A tree fell on this apartment building off of South Street on Aug. 28, but did not appear to significantly damage the structure. Photos by Steve Smith.

After tropical storm Irene moved through the area on Aug. 28, many were thankful that Connecticut didn't get the full brunt of a hurricane. Many parts of the state were deluged with heavy flooding, and the shoreline communities were hardest hit. But, there were still enough problems in the Vernon area to keep emergency and utility crews busy.

Vernon Emergency Management Director Michael Purcaro said the town was prepared in advance.

"We had our first inter-department planning meeting on Thursday [Aug. 25]," he said. "We had meetings Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and Thursday the emergency operations center was activated."

Purcaro said Monday that there were about 40 active incidents that occurred because of the storm, mostly involving downed trees and telephone poles. A few of the calls involved trees falling on homes. One tree fell on Fox Hill Nursing Home, causing damage to a non-residential area of the building.

Purcaro said there were widespread reports of power outages and localized flooding, but no major flooding on rivers and streams. Officials were watching the low-lying area near the junction of the Hockanum and Tankerhoosen rivers, but no further action was necessary.

Emergency crews also responded to a structure fire at a multi-family house on High Street on Sunday afternoon, which was not directly related to the storm, but further tied up services. There were no injuries in that incident.

A tree had fallen on Hartford Turnpike near Mt. Vernon Drive, which caused the street to be closed. Purcaro said crews were still working on that area Monday. Near there, two trees had fallen on the same car in a driveway at a duplex. The woman who owned the car said no one was hurt, but she had just recently bought the new car.

"The first tree fell down at like 8 or 8:30 this morning," the car's owner said. "Then about a half an hour later, another tree fell on it. I just got it a couple of months ago. I'm okay, though." Friends had helped clear the trees early Sunday evening.

Hundreds of sandbags were given to local residents, and a shelter was established at Rockville High School, with bus service shuttling residents to the shelter, as needed. Information was distributed through the emergency services website and through the town's reverse-911 system.

On Monday, 6,000 residents were still without power. Purcaro said Northeast Utilities was busily clearing downed lines and restoring power. "All-in-all, it was very busy," Purcaro said. "It was a very well-coordinated response on behalf of the town, and all of the department heads contributed. It was a great team effort, but we're not done yet. Just because the sun is out, that doesn't mean there aren't still wires down, and they could be energized."

At press time, another shelter was in the process of being set up, at an as-yet-undetermined location. For further updates, visit www.vernon-ct.gov/irene.



