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Weakened Irene downs trees, knocks out power

RMLD estimates 4,000 lost power throughout service area during storm

By PAUL FEELY

READING - Packing less of a wallop than was predicted, Hurricane Irene still had enough in her to knock out power to thousands within the Reading Municipal Light Department (RMLD) service territory yesterday, as heavy rain and high winds brought down trees and lines throughout the region.

RMLD spokesperson Priscilla Gottwald reported today that at one point on

Sunday, an estimated 4,000 customers throughout Reading, Wilmington, North Reading and Lynnfield were without power.

"Over the course of the storm, beginning at 7:30 a.m. and well into the night on Sunday, half of our feeders had been affected - 14 out of 28," said Gottwald. "We had widespread outages. This number fluctuated as repairs were made and others

POWER on page A-2



One of Irene's many victims

TREES WERE DOWN all over Reading, as a weakened Hurricane Irene passed through the region yesterday. This was the scene at 230 Washington Street, as this tree took down electrical wires, causing police and fire personnel to block off the street.

Bill Ryerson photo

Police, fire busy with answering calls for help

By MATT LORDAN

READING - She may not have been a hurricane by the time she arrived in Reading, but Irene still caused more than its share of problems in town.

From just after 6 a.m. Sunday to midnight, Reading police dispatch fielded close to 80 calls regarding a variety of storm-related issues to be dealt with by the police department, fire department, Department of Public Works, and Reading Municipal Light Department.

Most were reports of limbs and wires down, causing access issues on the roadways, but a few were worse. Houses

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Fewer expected to travel this Labor Day

BOSTON - AAA is forecasting that 31.5 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more from home during the Labor Day holiday weekend, a 2.4 percent decrease from the 32.3 million people who traveled a year ago. Automobile travel is expected to be up, but travel by air will decrease.

"AAA is projecting a decrease in the number of Labor Day travelers as some

New England Senior Vice President of Public and Government Affairs. "While automobile travel is expected to increase slightly, if recent declines in gasoline prices continue through Labor Day, we could see an increase in last-minute holiday weekend travel."

Approximately 27.3 million people (87 percent of holiday travelers) plan to take to the

Irene delays trash pickup by a day

READING - Town officials issued the following alert this morning regarding storm debris and trash pickup.

"While Reading escaped much of the anticipated damage, we have had power outages and tree damage in many parts of the community.

RMLD and Town workers are addressing these problems as quickly as possible.

The Town will continue to address the clean up of public shade tree damage during the coming days.

The Town will NOT be doing curbside collection of

damage from private trees.

We WILL have the compost center on Strout Avenue open extra hours during the next week and residents may use the center without a compost sticker:

Monday August 29 through Friday September 2 from 8 am

to 2:30 PM

Saturday September 3 from 8 am to 4 pm

Sunday September 4 from noon to 4 pm

Monday September 5 - Closed for the Labor Day holi-

TRASH on page A-2

•Power

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occurred. Those areas where most customers were affected

were given priority over the individual residences.”

RMLD had four line crews, four tree crews and five run-

ners from its management team who fielded calls, analyzed damage and when the area was determined to be a danger to the public, the runners stayed at the sites until the line crews could get to them. In addition, subcontracted electricians and three additional bucket trucks were called in to service secondary and individual service outages.

Office personnel were called in to handle over 3,000 phone calls and engineers

monitored the situation from the Control Center.

“Dispatchers worked with the police, fire and public works departments and were busy communicating with our field workers,” said Gottwald.

As of 8:50 a.m. today, Gottwald reported there were still 500 customers throughout the territory without power. All outages were due to uprooted trees and limbs which brought wires down.

The areas in Reading that were affected were Salem,

Auburn, Vine and Grove Streets; Tamarack, Russell, Sherwood and Milton Roads and Edgemont Avenue. There were nine individual service drops in residences that were being serviced this morning.

Reading's Emergency Operations Center was open and fully staffed with the Town's Emergency Team during the storm, and Reading Public Works and Public Safety had additional staffing on duty in order to respond to any developments.

•Woman

Continued from Page A1

“We allege that this defendant drove erratically and under the influence of alcohol which amounted to be over twice the legal limit, resulting in the death of one of her passengers and causing injuries to three other victims,” District Attorney Leone said. “Any time you get behind the wheel of a large motorized heavy piece of equipment while under the influence of alcohol, you heighten the risk of danger to yourself and others. We allege that risk materialized here in a tragic and fatal way. Our thoughts remain with the victim's family and friends.”

According to authorities, at

approximately 10:38 pm, on May 14, Massachusetts State Police responded to Route 128 in Lexington for reports a motor vehicle crash. Upon arrival, authorities observed a Pontiac Grand AM with damage to the driver's side. Authorities observed the defendant sitting in the driver's seat of the Pontiac with the keys in the ignition and the engine running. Authorities detected a strong odor of alcohol emanating from the defendant's breath and observed that the defendant's eyes were bloodshot and glassy and her speech was slurred as she tried to speak. Inside the car were also two passengers; Robichaud, who was evidenc-

ing obvious injuries, and a second victim in the backseat. The three occupants were transported to Lahey Clinic for treatment. Later that evening, Robichaud was pronounced dead as a result of his injuries.

Authorities also observed a second car, a Buick, evidencing damage to the front of the motor vehicle. The driver of that vehicle and the passenger were both transported to Winchester Hospital for medical treatment and were later released.

Authorities allege that the defendant drank alcohol at the victim's apartment before leaving around 10:30 pm. It is alleged the defendant was driving north on Route 128 in Lexington when she lost control of the motor vehicle, driving into the break down lane and then re-entering the highway crossing the first and second travel lane. As the defendant continued driving, it is alleged that she entered the third travel lane, crossing directly in front of the Buick, causing the Buick to strike the vehicle driven by the defendant on its driver's side.

•Faire

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for Noon - 2:30 and 2:30 - 5:00 shifts. Though if you have just an hour to spare, they would welcome your involvement.

If you have a group that you think would like to participate staff can arrange for you to

cover a specific area, and you'd be welcome to wear shirts/hats to identify your group. Please send an email to us @ reading-fallstreetfaire@verizon.net or call Ben Tafoya our RFSF Event Chair at 781-944-3178.

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•Trash

Continued from Page A1

day
Saturday September 10 from 8 am to 4 pm

Sunday September 11 from noon to 4 pm

Then returning to our regular fall schedule - see the Town web site at www.readingma.gov

Continued from Page A1

3:19 pm: Officers assisted at the scene of a two-car crash on Main Street.

Possible Break-in

3:22 pm: An officer responded to Estate Lane after a resident there reported the glass pane near their door handle was broken.

Reading

Woman

•Calls

Continued from Page A1

were struck by falling trees on Forest Street, Walnut Street, Washington Street, Arlington Street, Winter Street, Azalea Circle, and Edgemont Avenue.

On the roadways, a Stoneham woman's Ford Escape was damaged by tree debris on Main Street, while a Ford van driven by an Everett man struck a downed tree on Lowell Street, disabling his vehicle and destroying a fence at a residence there.

A falling tree struck a Nissan Murano on Beech Street.

Reading police faced the storm while temporarily losing one of their own, as

Officer Mark Mullen was briefly hospitalized after a three-car crash at the intersection of Salem and John Streets just before 5:00 pm. No other injuries were reported. His cruiser was towed from the scene, one of two police cars damaged Sunday, as another cruiser received minor damage when it was struck by a tree branch on Van Norden Road.

Pleasant Street and Scotland Road were rendered impassable until DPW units could respond and remove trees from those roadways. Downed wires were on fire on both Colburn Road and

Timberneck Drive.

Judging by the volume of calls, tiny Puritan Avenue appeared to be one of the worst-struck areas, with a branch on a wire in one spot, a tree limb across the road in another, and a cracked tree threatening to fall in a third site.

The first storm-related call came as early as 6:09 a.m., when a tree limb was reported down on South Street.

The responding officer actually removed the limb himself, pulling it off to the side of the road for the DPW to remove later.

•Chronicles

Suspicious Male

12:15 pm: After a report of a suspicious male in a pink shirt and tan pants hanging around the Reading Public Library area, an officer responded but could not locate the individual.

Suspicious Vehicle

12:19 pm: An officer searched the Blueberry Lane

Sunday, August 28

Pajama Party Problem

12:33 am: Officers investigated a large party on Haverhill Street, which was determined to be a pajama party.

Noise Complaint

1:05 am: After receiving a complaint about a group of