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Higher toll feared

Search for flood victims continues; 67 known dead

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Courier-Journal Staff Writer

MAN, W. Va.—Rescue teams continued to dig bodies from the debris left in the wake of Saturday's Buffalo Creek flood disaster yesterday as officials from the U.S. Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) began coping with the problems of an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 broken, homeless survivors.

American Red Cross rescue officials estimated that 200 persons in addition to the 67 known dead might have perished when the giant mountain slag dam broke and wiped out 14 coal camps along the narrow creek valley.

Other sources, including the West Virginia state police, indicated that the final death toll could be much higher.

Still in question is the total number of persons living in the string of old company towns along the 14 miles of Buffalo Creek now left a shambles by the sweeping flash flood.

The Red Cross figured its "possible" death toll on a population basis of 3,700 persons for the area hardest hit by the flood.

Robert Kerley, principal of Man High School, and manager of the Red Cross survival shelter there, said about 3,500,

including the dead, have been accounted for.

Frank Carney, OEP disaster coordinator for the White House met with local officials yesterday to begin locating sights for 300 to 600 house trailers that will be set up within the next three months to house the flood victims.

About 100 trailers were on the way to Man yesterday from Mississippi, where they had been used over the past year by hurricane victims. Twenty of the trailers are expected to arrive today, an OEP spokesman said.

Carney figured it would take "more than a month, but less than three

months to prepare the trailers for the survivors."

Meanwhile, persons left homeless by the flood will remain at Man High School, part of which is being renovated as an office for federal rescue agencies.

Man High School principal Kerley said the school will be closed "indefinitely" until the hard hit community is back on its feet and all Buffalo Creek victims are cared for.

"As long as we have one family in this building, we won't have school," Kerley said. "It may be one week, two weeks and maybe two months."

About 300 food refugees spent yes-

terday and last night at the high school, sleeping on Army cots in halls and classrooms and receiving 3 meals a day from food donated by individuals, community groups and businesses in West Virginia and southeastern Kentucky.

Carney said OEP representatives will begin assessing the damage. A rebuilding program will be carried out at federal expense under the federal Disaster Relief Act of 1970.

The coordinated federal effort was made available to the community immediately after the disaster when President Nixon declared the flooded area a nation-

al disaster in a telephone call to West Virginia Gov. Arch A. Moore Jr. from China.

Carney said flood victims can sign up immediately for special emergency grants and low interest loans, food stamp benefits in addition to any they may now be receiving, and special unemployment benefits for persons who may have lost their jobs as a result of the flood.

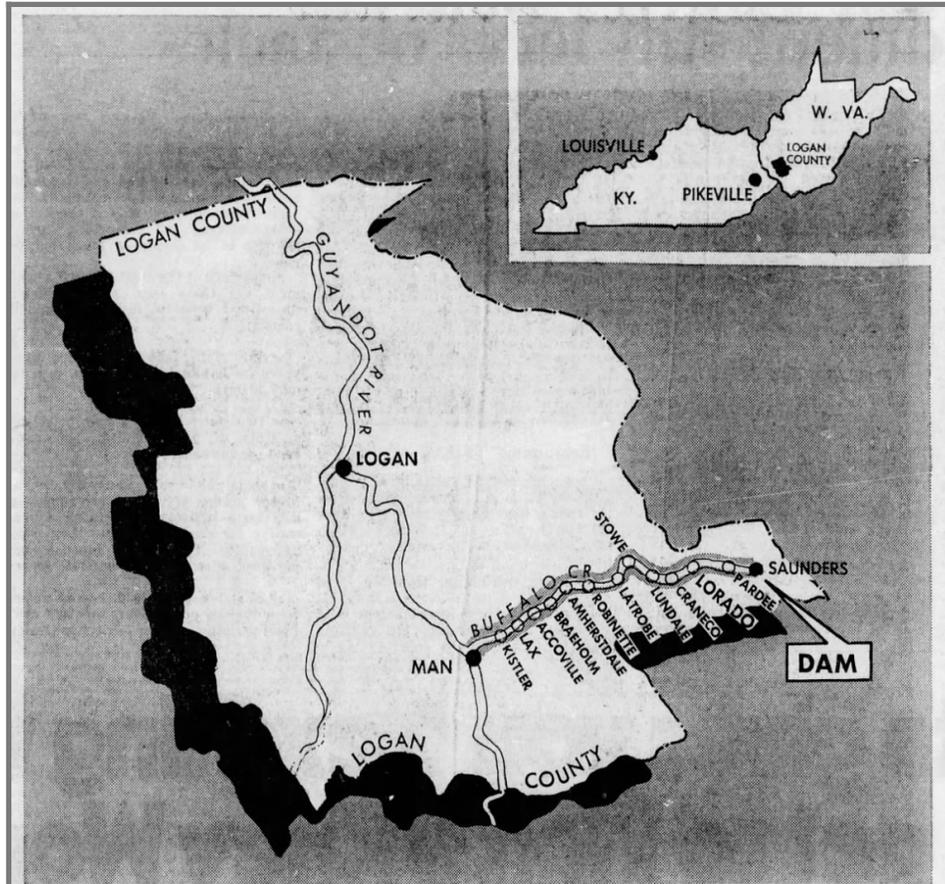
Offices available on the special mission to aid flood victims and the local community will include the White House

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1972 Buffalo Creek flood NEWS

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Staff Map

THE BUFFALO CREEK AREA is located in this map of Logan County, W. Va., where devastating floods occurred Saturday. Floodwaters burst through a dam near the community of Saunders,

lower right. Logan County is in southwestern West Virginia, inset above. The flood swept through the communities shown in Buffalo Creek Hollow.

Search continues for flood victims as toll rises to 67; could go higher

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represented by Carney; the U.S. departments of Housing and Urban Development, Health Education and Welfare and Agriculture; the Federal Highway Administration; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and the Small Business Administration.

In addition, Carney said, several charitable organizations, including the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and a Mennonite Mountain Aid organization, will maintain offices at the high school.

Victims to have purchase option

(The Louisville area chapter of the American Red Cross is conducting an appeal for funds to assist the West Virginia flood victims. Contributions should be sent to: West Virginia Flood Relief, American Cross, P.O. Box 1675, Louisville, Ky. 40201.)

Carney said house trailers will be provided "rent free" to the disaster victims for one year under the Federal Relief Act.

The victims will have several options to purchase the trailers after the year or to arrange for other housing under several federal aid programs.

Damage estimates of the flood were speculative yesterday. However, U.S. Sen. Jennings Randolph, D-W. Va., said after a tour of the area, that reconstruction of roads and bridges alone may cost \$25 million.

Randolph said earlier he had requested the U.S. Corps of Engineers to make an immediate study of all slag dams in the Appalachian coal fields that are being used by coal companies as water impoundments as was the case at the Buffalo Creek Dam.

Randolph, chairman of the Senate Public Works Committee, said that, depending on the result of the study, he may include federal slag pile controls in a federal strip mine control bill being formulated by a congressional subcommittee.

Randolph said he could not place blame on any individual, company or government agency for the Buffalo Creek

disaster and said he had not heard of citizen efforts over the past 20 years to have the slag pile removed from the Buffalo Creek Valley.

Several survivors say their efforts to have the state or company remove the potential hazard have been ignored.

Ben Tudor, general superintendent of the Buffalo Mining Co., which owned and operated the slag dam, has blamed the disaster on state conservation laws that prohibit the company from draining the toxic, black water impounded behind the dam into Buffalo Creek.

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