

## 'Ignored and overlooked': Some Outlook residents still waiting for assistance in wake of flood

Phil Ferolito, Yakima Herald Republic, March 10, 2017

OUTLOOK, Wash. — Manuel Gonzalez hasn't been able to move back into his home since it was swamped Feb. 28 by floodwater suspected of being contaminated with cow manure.

The water entered his First Street home, covering floors and seeping into lower portions of walls, mattresses and couches in part of the house.

After learning of the incident, attorney Charles Tebbutt fired off letters to Gov. Jay Inslee seeking emergency assistance for Gonzalez and another family he said whose home had been flooded.

That was more than a week ago, and Tebbutt said the call for help has fallen on deaf ears.

“The treatment that the people in Outlook have received is nothing short of reprehensible,” said Tebbutt, who has represented groups challenging some of the environmental practices of Lower Valley dairy operations.

“They've been ignored and overlooked. If this had been a flood in a more affluent area, these people would have been evacuated and taken care of immediately.”

Tebbutt sent another letter to Yakima County's Office of Emergency Management and the Yakima County Department of Health seeking help for those affected.

On Friday a spokesman for the Emergency Management Office said it has done everything it could in the matter and directed any future concerns to the three agencies directly involved: the state departments of Health, Agriculture and Ecology.

Scott Miller, director of emergency management, said his office on Friday began handing out information about how to decontaminate hard surfaces.

“We will go to each house and give them that information in English and Spanish,” he said.

Tebbutt said floodwater seeped into a second home as well, but Miller said he was aware of only one affected home.

Authorities believe the floodwater came from a nearby wheat field owned by DeRuyter and Sons Dairy, where a breached berm allowed snowmelt to travel across an adjacent field recently fertilized with cow manure.

The dairy blames a clogged drain belonging to the Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District. But the irrigation district said the drain was clear and flowing.

While the state departments of Health and Agriculture have been testing water in area wells, there hasn't been any effort to safeguard those living in the two homes swamped by floodwater from potential health risks, Tebbutt said.

He said he had the floodwater tested, and results showed high levels of E. coli and other illness-causing bacteria.

Since the Feb. 28 flood, Manuel Gonzalez and his family have been staying with his oldest son east of Sunnyside.

The son, Ramiro Gonzalez, said he's been trying find out who is responsible for the flood and whether his parents will receive any help cleaning up their home.

"That's what sucks about this: no help," he said outside their Outlook home Friday afternoon. "Is it safe for us to be here? Is it safe for us to start pulling the carpet out? We don't know. All they say is don't drink the water."

Inside the home it was damp with a musty odor. A couch and mattress were leaned against a wall and a carpet was moist.

"This room is still wet, and we're trying to dry it out," Ramiro Gonzalez said.

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