

Flash flood impacts residents of South Line Fire District

By **Jim Herr** - August 18, 2018



South Line firefighters work to pump out a home on Towers Boulevard the night of August 17th. (Jim Herr/Cheektowaga Chronicle)

CHEEKTOWAGA – Several homes were flooded, and a handful of people had to be rescued from their cars after torrential rain submerged several streets in the South Line Fire District late Friday night.

Two bands of moisture – one north around Lake Ontario and another moving up from the south – converged over Cheektowaga during the 11 o’clock hour according to National Weather Service Meteorologist Steve Welch.

“They kind of collided over the airport and the Thruway area and expanded in coverage,” he said.

A measurement of two inches of rainfall by 1 am was observed by a meteorologist in Depew.

“There were localized heavier amounts, but it’s kind of hard to say right now whether it was three or four inches. A lot of the areas that had the heavy rain generally saw one to three inches,” Mr. Welch said.

Sharon Hejna of Autumnwood Drive posted this picture to [Cheektowaga Chronicle's Facebook Page](#). She says her rain gauge registered four inches of precipitation by 12:30 am. It picked up an additional one inch of precipitation through 7 am.



Sharon Hejna of Autumnwood Drive posted this picture to Cheektowaga Chronicle's Facebook Page.

"Autumnwood was flooded as were basements," Ms. Hejna wrote. "Have not seen anything like this street flooding since before bigger drainage pipes were installed in the 70's! Thinking we need bigger ones again! Streets behind us were fine."

South Line Fire Chief Andrew Dayton was on his way home when the storm hit.

"Very fast and hard," said Mr. Dayton. "Towers Boulevard was flooded from N. Seine Drive all the way to Le Harvre Drive."

His fire department was pushed into service after a handful of split-level homes near the intersection of N. Seine and Towers were inundated by the flash flood.

"Street level, the water was past the tires on the vehicles; easily two feet," said Mr. Dayton. "The water in the garage was almost up to the top of the doors at first."

The road was closed by Cheektowaga Police, and firefighters assisted the residents by pumping the water from the lower level of their homes.



Water from flooded homes on Towers Boulevard is pumped into the street by South Line firefighters the night of August 17th. (Jim Herr/Cheektowaga Chronicle)

Sydni Nichols of Martinique Drive was dropping off her friend on E. Mayberry Drive.

"I came down the street before, and my car was fine. I was on my way home, and then my car just completely stopped – flash flood," said Ms. Nichols. "I called my boyfriend, and he pushed me out. It was really deep; it was past my bumper."

Several other people blocks over on Fradine Drive and W. Mayberry Drive required the help of the fire department to get out of their waterlogged cars. The scene was repeated across the fire district according to Mr. Dayton and Bellevue firefighters were called in to assist South Line with the influx of rescue calls from cars and utility shut-offs because of flooding basements.

Mr. Dayton says no one required medical attention.

Darrell Wilcott of E. Mayberry Drive spoke to Cheektowaga Chronicle while looking out at his flooded street.

"You can see that it's right up across the sidewalk. This girl walking down the street, it's up almost to her knees," said Mr. Wilcott.

The sight is nothing new for Mr. Wilcott who has lived on the street since 1983.

"When we get a lot of rain very quickly there are some drains a couple of houses down, and they can't handle the water, and it just backs up and the street floods," added Mr. Wilcott. "It doesn't happen too often; just when we have those huge, very fast thunderstorms that come through. This is the worst that it has been in quite a few years."



Flash flood waters consume E. Mayberry Drive the night of August 17th. (Jim Herr/Cheektowaga Chronicle)

A sentiment echoed by Mr. Dayton who was in command of the flooded out Towers Boulevard.

"The drainage couldn't keep up with the amount of rain," said Mr. Dayton. "This is a first in a long time for us over here for sure."

The storm also forced the shut down of Union Road between Broadway and Como Park Boulevard due to flooded viaducts.





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