YES, DISASTERS HAPPEN HERE IN PENNINGTON COUNTY.

THIS DOCUMENT IS A COLLECTION OF SOME OF THE MORE MEMORABLE DISASTERS THAT HAVE AFFECTED PENNINGTON COUNTY.

PLEASE CONTACT OUR OFFICE IF YOU HAVE INFORMATION AND PHOTOS ON A SIGNIFICANT DISASTER THAT WE ARE MISSING FROM OUR LIST.
YES, DISASTERS HAPPEN HERE IN PENNINGTON COUNTY.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FLOOD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rapid Creek, June 12, 1907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOOD</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rapid Creek, 1909, 1920, 1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>McVey Fire, Hill City, July 11, 1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLIZZARD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pennington County, January 1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOOD</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rapid Creek, June 15, 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TORNADO</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rapid City, June 18, 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOOD</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Black Hills &amp; Rapid City, June 9, 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRE</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Westberry Fire, Rapid City, July 26, 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLIZZARD</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Pennington County, April 5, 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOOD</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Pennington County, June 2, 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOOD</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Keystone, June 18, 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRE</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Meat Packing Plant, Rapid City, January 30, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRE</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Battle Creek Fire, Rockerville/Keystone, August 16, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRE</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Keystone Downtown, June 18, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THUNDERSTORM</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Pennington County, SuperCell, July 14, 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAIL</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Rapid City, August 17, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOOD</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Rochford, July 6-7, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TORNADO</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Wall, May 9, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOOD</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Black Hills, May 29-30, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLIZZARD</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Winter Storm Atlas, Pennington County, October 4-5, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLOOD</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Hill City, June 6, 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
June 12, 1907 (Rapid Creek)

An average of five inches of rain caused rapid melting of snow and the worst flood in Rapid City prior to 1972. Every bridge over Rapid Creek between Mystic and Creston was destroyed. Canyon Lake washed out and remained dry until 1932. Peak flow was estimated at 13,000 cfs with $100,000 damage in Rapid City, plus $100,000 damage to railroads and four deaths.
May, June 1909 (Rapid Creek)
A severe storm on May 9, 1909, caused damage and flooding in various parts of the Black Hills. During late May and early June 1909, widespread flooding from prolonged rains occurred in many streams in the northern Black Hills. (sd.water.usgs.gov)
Heaviest rain recorded at Weather Bureau in Rapid City as of date of article (1909). Same storm affected New Underwood (June 9, 1909, Deadwood Pioneer Times article) and other areas south of Rapid City.

June 11, 1909, Report of 20 inches of rain at Pactola. Rail damage reported. (sd.water.usgs.gov)

June 11-12, Boxelder Creek reported as 7 feet higher than previous record and Owanka in danger of being swept away. (sd.water.usgs.gov)

May 10-12, 1920 (Rapid Creek)
A significant amount of rain fell over a few days, 4.75 inches over 3 days on melting snow. Eight deaths were reported. All private and county bridges on Rapid Creek were destroyed, and 20 rail bridges were damaged or destroyed. A peak flow of 8,000 ft³/s occurred on May 11-12 in Rapid Creek. (sd.water.usgs.gov)
Rapid City inundated from very heavy storm and flooding. Widespread rail damage reported and virtually all train service disrupted or halted throughout a very large area. Rail line was under 5 feet of water near Hill City. (sd.water.usgs.gov)

May 27, 1926 (Rapid Creek)
Three inches of rain fell in three hours causing flooding. (sd.water.usgs.gov)
More than 1,000 firefighters battled the fire that started July 10, 1939, on a ranch belonging to John and Ben McVey, about seven miles northwest of Hill City. A forest official told the Journal a day after the fire started, “One hundred thousand men would not be enough to stop the fire at its present rate of burn.” The Journal reported that “freakish, gale-like” winds whipped the blaze into an uncontrollable “crown fire” that raced through treetops and pushed back firefighters. Jack McBride, a retired firefighter now living in Custer, lived near Piedmont at the time. He said that flames shot hundreds of feet into the sky and were visible for miles. “I wanted to go fight that fire so bad,” he said. His father told him to stay behind in case his family was forced out of its home. On the evening of July 12, lightning struck and killed a firefighter as he sought shelter under a rock. By the time the mop-up began on July 14, the McVey Burn had consumed 21,857 acres.
January 1, 1949 (Pennington County) The Blizzard of ‘49 started late in the day on Saturday, Jan. 1, 1949. Local residents had enjoyed relatively nice weather during the Christmas holidays and had just brought in the new year, only to have a sudden and drastic change. Blizzard conditions raged for weeks rather than days, according to information from the S.D. Office of Emergency Management.

Temperatures plummeted below zero, averaging -2 to -8. The area recorded an average of 2 feet of snow, with winds ranging from 40 miles per hour to more than 70 miles per hour. Storms continued to roll through the territory in February and March and some roads weren’t opened until May.

- Airplanes were used to deliver food, fuel and medicine to stranded people.
- People crawled out of windows to leave their houses.
- Snow buried some rural homes to their chimneys.
- Ranchers put guide ropes between their houses and barns so they wouldn’t get lost in the blizzard.
- Near Sulphur east of Newell, cows were found buried with only their heads sticking out of the snow, according to a pamphlet on the storm published in May 1949.
- Snow blew into some houses, creating snow banks 1- to 2-feet high inside.
- West River Cattle and calves lost in the storm were estimated at 15,000 to 16,000.
May 22, 1952 - Damage reported for Canyon Lake area of western Rapid City. Heavy rains reported for other areas. Peak flows of 2,540 ft³/s on May 23, 1952, at station 06414000 (Rapid Creek at Rapid City) and 1,770 ft³/s on May 24, 1952, at station 06421500 (Rapid Creek near Farmingdale) occurred on Rapid Creek.

Flow on Rapid Creek was 2,500 cfs and damage occurred to the Canyon Lake area.

In 24 hours, 5.55 inches was reported at Pactola with a storm total 6.26 inches.

Rapid City Flooding-USGS Aerial Rapid Creek near Canyon Lake, bridge is Evergreen Drive
**June 15, 1962** - Rapid Creek left its banks on June 15. Nine days later, over three inches of rain fell over the Black Hills. Two motels, 120 mobile homes, and over 400 houses were damaged in Rapid City. Bridges, roads, sewer systems, and recreation areas along Rapid Creek were damaged. Extensive road and bridge damage occurred in Sturgis, Deadwood, and Whitewood. Damage to road equipment was estimated at $200,000. On June 30, 1.5 inches of rain fell in Rapid City damaging north Rapid City and the South Canyon area for the second time.
June 18, 1967 (Rapid City)
The only tornado touchdown ever recorded in the Rapid City limits took place on Father's Day in 1967 when a small twister briefly made ground contact on Mount Rushmore Road near the Town & Country Inn.
It then skipped along to the northeast through Robbinsdale with damage reported at the motel and to a few nearby homes. There is no record of anyone ever being killed by a tornado in Rapid City.

Photos Courtesy of RCJournal
Town N Country Motel Hardest Hit In Tornado

Tornado Damage Widespread In Robbinsdale

Twisting winds dropped out of bright, practically clear skies Sunday afternoon and skipped through the southeast part of Rapid City, causing property damage estimated at nearly $2 million. Miraculously, only three minor injuries from the tornadoes were reported, but Robbinsdale residents were busy Monday with clean-up work that will go on for weeks.

The first tornado warning by the Rapid City Weather Bureau was issued a little over an hour before the storm first touched down at 1:45 p.m.

The injured persons apparently were all passengers in a small foreign compact car that had just driven up to the motel. St. John's Hospital reported they were John C. Nolker, Ellsworth Air Force Base; Forrest D. Janson, Minneapolis; and Mrs. Carol Ebenhuis, Elkton.

All three received cuts on the legs from flying glass as the front windshield blew in.

Witnesses and meteorologists agreed there was no distinct funnel visible when the tornado hit the Town 'N Country Motel at Rushmore Road and Cleveland and skipped eastward across Robbinsdale. The funnel became clearly visible as the storm left the city and lifted into the clouds over the airport.

Black Hills Power and Light Co. reported Monday that power difficulties because of the tornado were not too severe, mostly troublesome.
**June 9, 1972 (Rapid City)** Record flows were reported on Rapid, Battle, Bear Butte, and Boxelder creeks. On June 9 a stationary front, with moderate southeast surface flow, moved through high pressure aloft. A strong flow of warm, moist air near the surface fed the storms and anchored them against the Hills for six to eight hours. An average of six inches of rain fell with up to 15 inches reported. Rainfall intensities of two to six inches/hour were common. Canyon Lake breached, adding to the wall of water that poured through Rapid City. Flow on Rapid Creek in Rapid City was estimated at 50,000 cfs. After the flood, 750 acres near Rapid Creek were designated as a floodway. 238 deaths and $164 million in damages were reported.
Fire blasted its way into the Westberry Trails subdivision on Nemo Road just west of Rapid City. Fifteen houses, two mobile homes, 40 outbuildings, 42 vehicles and a bridge were destroyed. Firefighters worked 24- and 36-hour shifts, battling advancing firewalls from the decks of houses. Flames reportedly leaped higher than 10-story buildings, as unpredictable winds fanned the flames in all directions. An arsonist had started the fire. By the time it was out a week later, 3,840 acres of heavily urbanized forest had burned. It became more expensive than the 1959 Deadwood blaze. Private-property losses totaled $1.8 million, and the cost of putting out the fire was more than $1.5 million.
• Total Area Burned 3840 Acres
• Property Destroyed 15 permanent homes, 2 mobile homes, 30+ outbuildings, 12+ private vehicles, 1 barn, 1 bridge
• Value of Property 1.3 Million
• Property saved by firefighters 190 homes, 300+ outbuildings
• Value of Property saved 14 Million
• Personnel at Fire scene 119 (Incl 33 Hand Crews)
• Total Support Personnel 260
• Equipment at Fire Scene 81 engines, 10 dozers, 6 helicopters, 6 air tankers, 11 personnel carriers, 29 water tenders
April 5, 1997 (Pennington County) National Weather Service meteorologist Matt Bunkers de-scribed memorable storms that have hit the Hills. On April 5, 1997, 1 to 3 feet fell across north-east Wyoming, the Black Hills and northwest South Dakota. Winds were strong, and there were “widespread effects.”

West River shovels out

Blizzard: Livestock getting hit hard

Continued from page A1

The wind really made it bad. It's a hor-rible, gusty snow - the type that sticks to windows and signs and you can't see.

"This snowfall is for another month or two, said Roy Hanzlik in his-ter-est in pre-sid ions from the on-ly ranch house window on Sublette Creek south of Hot Springs.

"The man's still got to go out and take care of the beasts."

With cattle stuck from one of the worst winters in a lifetime of ranch- ing, Hanzlik said that, "there's going to be a lot of loss in this year."

He explained that instead of spring showers, this most recent blizzard began with rains that soaked enough that he had to go out and shovel the snow from the windows and doors of his home. Winds were from the northeast and were strong enough to throw snow into his ranch house windows.

Snow depths in the Black Hills area range from 1 to 2 feet in parts of Lawrence County and 15 inches at Deerfield to 1 to 3 inches at Hot Springs and south into Nebraska.

Hanzlik said that he expected to lose 50 percent of his cattle, and he had to go out and shovel the snow from the windows and doors of his home.

Winter’s last laugh

Despite the storm and fog, Mount Rushmore National Memorial was still visible early Saturday afternoon.

Blizzard: Livestock getting hit hard

Continued from page A1

The wind really made it bad. It's a hor-rible, gusty snow - the type that sticks to windows and signs and you can't see.

"This snowfall is for another month or two, said Roy Hanzlik in his-ter-est in pre-sid ions from the on-ly ranch house window on Sublette Creek south of Hot Springs.

"The man's still got to go out and take care of the beasts."

With cattle stuck from one of the worst winters in a lifetime of ranch- ing, Hanzlik said that, "there's going to be a lot of loss in this year."

He explained that instead of spring showers, this most recent blizzard began with rains that soaked enough that he had to go out and shovel the snow from the windows and doors of his home. Winds were from the northeast and were strong enough to throw snow into his ranch house windows.

Snow depths in the Black Hills area range from 1 to 2 feet in parts of Lawrence County and 15 inches at Deerfield to 1 to 3 inches at Hot Springs and south into Nebraska.

Hanzlik said that he expected to lose 50 percent of his cattle, and he had to go out and shovel the snow from the windows and doors of his home.

Winter’s last laugh

Despite the storm and fog, Mount Rushmore National Memorial was still visible early Saturday afternoon.

Blizzard: Livestock getting hit hard

Continued from page A1

The wind really made it bad. It's a hor-rible, gusty snow - the type that sticks to windows and signs and you can't see.

"This snowfall is for another month or two, said Roy Hanzlik in his-ter-est in pre-sid ions from the on-ly ranch house window on Sublette Creek south of Hot Springs.

"The man's still got to go out and take care of the beasts."

With cattle stuck from one of the worst winters in a lifetime of ranch- ing, Hanzlik said that, "there's going to be a lot of loss in this year."

He explained that instead of spring showers, this most recent blizzard began with rains that soaked enough that he had to go out and shovel the snow from the windows and doors of his home. Winds were from the northeast and were strong enough to throw snow into his ranch house windows.

Snow depths in the Black Hills area range from 1 to 2 feet in parts of Lawrence County and 15 inches at Deerfield to 1 to 3 inches at Hot Springs and south into Nebraska.

Hanzlik said that he expected to lose 50 percent of his cattle, and he had to go out and shovel the snow from the windows and doors of his home.

Winter’s last laugh

Despite the storm and fog, Mount Rushmore National Memorial was still visible early Saturday afternoon.
June 2, 1997
(Pennington County)
Two to three inches of rain fell in less than an hour from Deerfield to Rapid City. Up to 4.5 inches of rain fell in thirty minutes in Chapel Valley. Six to eight feet of water in Cleghorn Canyon washed out driveways and bridges. Eight to ten feet of water in Red Rock Canyon washed out driveways and bridges. Minor flooding reported at a golf course near Chapel Valley. In Rapid City, six to twelve inches of water was reported over roads with the highest flows on Rapid Creek since 1972.

Flash floods fill streets

By Journal Staff Writers

Flash flooding raced through portions of Rapid City early Monday evening, pushing cars off roads, ripping up asphalt, and closing major highways, but no deaths or injuries were reported.

A thunderstorm that slowly pushed its way out of the Black Hills and across the city dumped rain ranging from nearly 3½ inches west of the city to 2 inches in east Rapid City.

Most of the rain fell within a 30-minute period, according to officials with the National Weather Service in Rapid City.

A spokesman for the Rapid City Police Department said the storm caused “significant residential flooding,” but Monday evening authorities weren’t certain of the amount of damage.

The flooding washed vehicles off roads, including at least six vehicles on East Meade Street in southeast Rapid City. “We have checked all of those vehicles we’re aware of, and there are no injuries or deaths we’re aware of at this point,” said Rapid City Police Capt. Craig Tieszen.

East Meade Street resident James Thelen, who has lived in the neighborhood for about a dozen years, said there had been flooding in the area before, “But I’ve never seen this much water. It was a washout.”

Diane Buscom, who was visiting the area, said she watched waves turn an area of water into a boiling river along East Meade Street. The Chevrolet Cavalier slammed into a pickup truck, and the two vehicles then pushed a sports car about 100 feet.

“I’d never thought that truck would move,” Art Fuller, the owner of the three-quarter-ton pickup truck said. “It’s a diesel and heavy-loaded.”

The Robbinsdale area suffered a “fair amount” of road damage, including manhole covers blown off by the overwhelmed storm sewers. There also were chunks of asphalt pavement ripped off roads in the Fairmont Boulevard area in southeast Rapid City.

Authorities closed South Valley Drive in Rapid Valley after it was covered by 3 to 4 feet of water.

About 7 p.m., Mount Rushmore Road was closed to traffic near the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center when water covered the major downtown street. S.D. Highway 44 was closed west of Rapid City due to a rock and mud slide near Nameless Cave Road. The highway was reopened to one-lane travel at 8:45 p.m.

A wall of water came down Red Rock Canyon in the Chapel Lane area of southwest Rapid City.

See Water on page A2
June 18, 1999 (Keystone) In less than 90 minutes, three to four inches of rain fell around the Keystone area. Major damage occurred to Pennington County Road 323 (Old Hill City Rd) where it was undercut at many locations. The heavy rain and hail that accompanied this storm also caused significant damage to the 1880 Historic Train. Over 400 feet of track were completely undercut in the area near Camp Judson at a cost of $300,000. The flood stage at Camp Judson on Battle Creek is 6.5 feet and the river reached 8.48 feet around 1648 MST and dropped back below flood stage at 1830 MST.

Southern Hills rain closes off roadways

- Wet cycle means high-water danger throughout the Black Hills.

By Denise Ross
Journal Staff Writer

As much as 4 inches of rain in parts of the Southern Hills left water running up to the doors of vehicles along Custer County Road 101 and 3 feet of water gushing over Pennington County Road 323 between Hill City and Keystone.

“We’re completely blocked. There’s 3 feet of water over Pennington County Road 323. The water is 60 yards wide, and it’s really rushing,” said Marilyn Kallander, a cook at Camp Judson near Keystone, just before 7 p.m. Friday. “We’re stuck here.”

A sheriff’s deputy and a U.S. Geological Survey employee were stranded along road 323 after it washed away and buckled in places, according to reports from the National Weather Service.

The National Weather Service office in Rapid City on Friday issued a flash-flood warning for eastern and southern Custer County and for the northern part of Fall River County after heavy afternoon rainfall, said Trove Huse, a hydrologist for the weather service. Then, even heavier rain hit central Pennington County, and another warning was issued for that area.

“There are thunderstorms in the Hermosa area, near Battle Creek and on Beaver Creek. (The water) runs into the Cold Brook basin and the Beaver Creek basin,” Huse said. “There have been 3 to 4 inches in areas of the basin since noon (Friday),” Huse said.

Stream gauges near Keystone showed water running about 2 feet over flood stage. Huse said. The rains stopped by 7 p.m., and sunshine could help dry the area out, she said.

Pennington County highway crews started work to repair Road 323 on Friday night.

See Flooding on page A2
1880 Train Tracks Washed Out In Flood

The heavy rain and hail that hit Friday afternoon caused heavy damage along the lower portion of the 1880 Train tracks near Keystone. Over 400 feet of track were completely washed out in the area near Baptist Camp Judson.

"You can't believe it," said Black Hills Central Railroad office director and tour manager Meg Warder. "It looks like a roller coaster. So much dirt was washed out you can walk under the track where it was a solid bank before." Tree limbs and other debris were washed over the tracks in other places.

The train has crews working on repairs and hopes to be back to their regular schedule by next week. Early estimates of damage are in the range of $300,000.

Because of the flooding, the train has only been running from Hill City to Oblivion since Saturday. The train is leaving on regular schedule from the Hill City Depot until the damage is repaired. Rates have been reduced for passengers since the ride is shorter.

Meg Warder said the 1880 Train would like to thank all their staff for being so supportive after the flood. "Everybody brought shovels and axes. They were all so willing to help with repairs," Meg said.

The flood will not derail plans to extend the tracks into Keystone in the near future. Warder said those plans are unchanged and that the two-mile extension into town is still underway. Those last few miles of track were completely torn out in the disastrous flood of June 1972.
January 30, 2002 (Rapid City) The fire started at night, but as the sun rose the smoke could be seen for miles. This blaze at Federal Beef Processors plant in Rapid City kept fire fighting crews busy all day. Over three hundred people didn’t report to work that day because of the packing plant fire. At 2:00 a.m. the smoke was so thick inside the building fire crews couldn’t find the source.

Shortly after their arrival, an explosion, or a back draft, occurred forcing fire fighters to evacuate the building. They were able to go back inside for a few hours, but no one was allowed inside later because of collapsing walls and roof.
August 16, 2002 (Rockerville/Keystone) Named for an area stream, the Battle Creek Fire ignited on August 16, 2002 off the South Rockerville Road at Black Hills Children’s Home between Rockerville and Keystone. The fire burned actively for four days and was finally contained on August 25; the fire had burned 12,450 acres. Over 600 structures were threatened in addition to the town of Keystone. Firefighter efforts were able to limit losses to three residences. Closure of U.S. Hwy. 16 from Catron Blvd. to U.S. Hwy. 385 as well as Sheridan Lake Road from Victoria Lake to U.S. Hwy. 385 forced local residents and tourists to detour via Hermosa and Custer State Park or through Rapid City on Hwy. 44 west to U.S. Hwy. 385. Many area evacuations were necessary including the Cosmos Mystery Area, Rockerville, and Sheridan Lake.
Evacuees flee flames, await word on homes

By Steve Miller
Journal Staff Writer

Keystone residents had more time Sunday to prepare for the Battle Creek Fire than Reins Bingen and his children did Friday night.

Bingen was among a knot of people standing outside the Keystone Community Center on Sunday afternoon watching smoke from the fire billowing up only a mile or two northeast of town.

Keystone residents started packing after they were alerted Sunday morning to get ready to evacuate.

Late in the afternoon, groups of residents, their vehicles packed with belongings, stood along S.D. Highway 40 in Old Keystone nervously watching the smoke. By 5:30 p.m., the order still had not come. By that time, Bingen had left for Rapid City.

Bingen lives about four miles east of Keystone on Lost Creek Road, just above Rushmore Cave.

On Friday night, he was in his mobile home with his two daughters, Katherine, 7, and Kristen, 8, when one of the girls looked out a

FEMA funds authorized for Battle Creek Fire
June 18, 2003 (Keystone, SD)

It was a terrible day when a good portion of the Keystone downtown burned to the ground. The fire started in a garbage can outside on the boardwalk in the late evening hours. Nine businesses were affected by the blaze. The White House Motel was partially destroyed and the landmark restaurant, Ruby House Restaurant and Red Garter Saloon were almost completely destroyed. The fire hit just as the summer season was in full swing and tourists were beginning to come into the area. Following the fire, townspeople and businesses thought the loss would be decimating to tourism revenues that fund city operations, however the opposite occurred. A large number of visitors flocked to the area to see the wreckage and rebuilding that took place over that summer and they left dollars behind.

At the time of this fire the Keystone Volunteer Fire Department was 100% volunteer. As a result of this fire the Keystone VFD now has two firefighters on duty 24/7 who initiate fire suppression actions until additional volunteer firefighters arrive on scene.
July 14, 2004 (Rapid City)
On the evening of July 14, 2004, a supercell thunderstorm moved across western South Dakota. It dropped large hail and produced a visually stunning scene.

Photo by Eric A. Helgeson

Photo by Gary Matthews
August 17, 2007 (Rapid City, SD)
The severe weather broke windshields and stalled vehicles on the roads in the Black Hills.

Parts of Interstate 90 between Sturgis and Rapid City were closed. Authorities said cars were stopped on that road because of the baseball and softball size hail. Even windows on emergency vehicles trying to help the stranded motorists were being broken. Heavy rain caused flooded streets and shut down roads in western South Dakota. Pennington County Emergency Manager Anthony Carbajal said, “With any summer storm like this it’s not something to take lightly.”

Three inches of rain fell west of Rapid City. But rain wasn’t the only problem, hail so big it fit in the palm of your hand broke windshields and stopped traffic in the Black Hills.

Carbajal said, “They really need to get off the roads, stay inside, and just wait the storm out.” - Dunsmoor, B., August 17, 2007, KELOLAND

Photo by Mike Smith Enterprise Blog

This roof damage is one of several giant hailstones that fell near Rapid City, SD. Hailstones of this size (based on calculations at StormTrack.org) fall through the air at about 200 mph! The updraft in the thunderstorm would have been around 150 mph. An airplane could be torn apart by flying into an updraft of that intensity which is why pilots need to give thunderstorms a wide berth. -Mike Smith Enterprises Blog
July 6-7, 2008 (Rochford) Three to six inches of rain fell in two hours from O’Neil Pass to Roubaix Lake along north Rapid Creek upstream of Pactola Reservoir. Several culverts were washed out, several sections of roads were damaged and a home was flooded. The river gauge on Rapid Creek at Silver City above Pactola Reservoir reached the second highest flow of 1640 cfs.

Evidence of heavy runoff was visible on July 7 following the storm near Rochford. Precipitation totals ranged from about 1.5 to 5.5 inches and the duration was about 1.5 to 2 hours for this storm (U.S. Geological Survey photograph).
May 9, 2011 (Wall)

Tornado damage was observed northeast of Wall, where a large electrical transmission tower was crumpled and some trees snapped. Winds were estimated at 115 to 130 mph, which classifies this tornado as an EF-2.—NWS Rapid City
May 29-30, 2013 (Flash Flooding along the eastern Black Hills)

Thunderstorms developed along the east side of the Black Hills from Nisland to Sturgis to Rapid City. As these storms moved toward the northwest, they quickly redeveloped and became anchored over the eastern foothills. Rainfall amounts over six inches fell within a few hours. Flash flooding was reported in Rapid City, Sturgis, and rural areas of Butte, Meade and Pennington counties. Runoff from the rainfall quickly inundated city streets, overflowed small creeks, and caused a few private stock dams to breach. Flooded rivers included Horse Creek, Indian Creek, Rapid Creek, Willow Creek, Whitewood Creek and the Belle Fourche River. The Bismark Bridge over the Belle Fourche River east of Vale had two feet of water over it. Around Rapid City, flooding was reported along Sheridan Lake Road in the Spring Brook Acres area; Fifth Street was flooded south of Minnesota St and south of Catron Blvd; Arrowhead and Meadowbrook Golf Courses were flooded with a cart bridge destroyed; water was up to three feet deep against Meadowbrook School; and a few structures along Rapid Creek.
Meadowbrook Golf Course, photo courtesy of Alexa White

Horsecreek Drive in Springbrook Acres, photo courtesy of Scot Rathert
October 4-5, 2013 (Entire Black Hills Region)
A freak blizzard in early fall, titled (Winter Storm Atlas by The Weather Channel and many in the area) dumped three feet of snow in some parts of the Black Hills. Most parts in Pennington County received around 2 feet of snow. This monster snow storm came after a week of 70 and 80 degree days. Warnings were sent out but most had trouble grasping the magnitude of this snow storm when the ground temperatures seemed so warm. Most were caught unprepared.

Thursday night, October 3, residents went to sleep to light rain accompanied by thunder. The thunder continued to roar as the snow began to fall that night. It was a sight for those who awoke in the wee hours to see the “thunder snow” out their window. Many residents awoke to a foot of snow and up to 70 mph wind gusts around the region. The storm intensified as the day went on dropping heavy, wet snow that closed roads and downed power lines causing massive widespread power outages that ranged from 1 hr to 7 days or more depending on the area you lived in.

Many individuals spent the night in their cars because movement was physically impossible unless you had a snowcat only 4 existed in the county) or a snowmobile.

The snow finally let up in the morning on Saturday, October 5, and some roads and thoroughfares began to open up late in the day on Saturday. As the blizzard exited the area, residents were finally able to assess the damage. Almost every piece of property with a tree had one or more with snapped limbs. Clearing the amount of debris took months.
The most staggering toll was livestock losses. Cattle were in summer pastures far from shelters at the ranches and they had not yet grown thick winter coats so they became hypothermic after first being soaked by the rain, then chilled by the snow and wind. Snowdrifts covered fences allowing cattle to drift for miles. Stress killed some, others wandered off embankments into creeks and drowned or suffocated in snow drifts. Thousands of cattle, sheep, horses, and even bison, usually known for their ability to survive harsh winter conditions, perished. The storm cost ranchers millions of dollars, not only from the loss of calves that were going to be sold in the coming months, but also from the loss of cows pregnant with next year’s calves.

Winter Storm Atlas will long be remembered as one of the region’s worst blizzards in history for its intensity, devastation, and hardship.
June 6, 2015 (Hill City)
Steady May showers left the ground very wet and unable to absorb any more moisture in the Hill City area on this day in June. Three to four inches of rain fell between 12noon and 1:30pm, causing major flooding throughout the town of Hill City. The rain hit hard and fast. The area 1-2 miles outside of Hill City saw barely a sprinkle. Many roads leading into and out of Hill City were blocked for several hours. Businesses on Main Street were affected by lots of mud and water in their businesses. Overall damages were not extensive, but propane tanks came lose, and logs from slash piles washed down into town from the forest above Hill City.

Photo above shows the playground equipment shortly after the rain stopped. Another view (R) shows as the water when it has begun to recede.
Will it be high winds, large hail, wildfires, terrorism, dam failure, flash flooding, tornado, or spills of hazardous materials?

Will you be ready when it happens?
WHEN WILL THE NEXT DISASTER HAPPEN?
IT COULD BE TOMORROW OR EVEN TODAY.
BE PREPARED!

RAPID CITY-PENNINGTON COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
605-394-2185 - WWW.RCPCEM.COM