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Southampton hit hard by fallen trees

By CATHERINE BAUM
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SOUTHAMPTON - The town of Southampton appears to have been one of the hardest hit by Sunday's blow.

Highway Department crews were out Monday clearing debris left after Sunday's storm, trimming and cutting tree limbs and cleaning up with help from the Western Massachusetts Electric Co.

More than a dozen Southampton streets were closed when trees or tree limbs blocked the streets or fell on power lines. They included Madison Avenue, East Street and Fomer, Russellville, Gilbert, Moose Brook, Glendale, Cold Spring, Rattle Hill, Crooked Ledge, White Loaf, Lead Mine, Montgomery, County and Brickyard roads.

"What's striking is it's happening more and more often than it ever did before," said Highway Superintendent Edward Cauley, while he and his crew were on a mandatory safety break from clearing storm damage Monday.

"This is the third or fourth time in the last 30 days that we've been dealing with this wind and tree damage."

At least 30 Southampton streets were affected by wind damage, Cauley noted. One tree with a diameter of about 4½ feet on the corner of Fomer and Russellville roads was uprooted by Sunday's winds. The tree blocked access to those roads, causing the department to close them Sunday.

All of the streets closed due to storm damage except for Strong and Glendale roads reopened Sunday evening.

On Glendale Road, a transformer blew and hit the ground Sunday, spilling oil and hazardous waste. Glendale Road was shut until about 10:30 a.m. Monday and power serving homes on the road was still out Monday afternoon.

"It was a lot more damage than they (WMECO) thought," said Cauley. There were 82 homes still without power Monday evening.

Damaged power lines present the biggest challenge for the Highway Department, Cauley said. "We do not want to come in contact with power lines and we don't put our crews in jeopardy until we're given the OK by the supervisor of the electric company. The cleanup is slow and monotonous but it's got to be done."

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