

# BLINDSIDED

## Evacuations

# Flood-Weary Plot Swamped Again

BY BRIAN CLARK  
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Jean Rock cried as she climbed out of the rowboat at Depot Street and Amelia Avenue.

"I left three times (during previous floods)," she said. "I said I wasn't leaving the fourth. Now I'm out."

She didn't say much more. Her face — like those of hundreds of her neighbors — said it all.

Clutching small bags of possessions, Plot section residents left their flooded homes Saturday morning after the Lackawanna River overflowed its banks. The lucky ones were back by late afternoon. Others still had water on their front porches.

Police officers also went door-to-door on Nay Aug Avenue, Ross Avenue and Marion Street to evacuate residents earlier in the day.

The Scranton Fire Depart-

ment used boats to evacuate at least a dozen people from Brown Avenue, Depot Street and Dean Street. Water reached firefighters' chins by 10:30 a.m. as they trolled streets for people trapped by the water.

More than 150 homes in the city were flooded, said Ray Hayes, city director of public safety. There was no count of the number of people driven from their homes, he said, but the city had received more

than 70 requests for basement pumping by Saturday evening.

In groups of two and three, the rescued stepped to safety. Some brought purses. Others brought bags of clothes. One couple brought a dog and two cats.

They talked about the water rushing into their basements and over their porches.

"We got the kids out and it

Please see **RESIDENTS**, Page A4

FROM PAGE A1

came up so fast," said Mary Bowen, who moved to the neighborhood a year ago.

Bob Reed found himself in deep water after rushing to help others. He drove to help his in-laws, Harry and Ann Kirby, secure their home before floodwaters rose. Mr. Reed lived in the neighborhood before and knows the dangers of floods.

"We lived here in '96," Mr. Reed said. "After that, we moved."

Adults fretted over their homes. Children splashed in pooled water on the streets. Bill and Mary Beth Mitchell, owners of Mitchell's Restaurant, brought food and coffee for city workers and people

fleeing the water after a banquet was canceled.

"The guys from the city are good for us, so we said we're going to help them out. This stuff isn't easy," Mr. Mitchell said. "The only problem is we're so far away if we need to make more coffee."

The Scranton Chapter of the American Red Cross opened seven shelters, along with two others run by the county, and sent 25 to 30 volunteers to help when the water rose. About 65 people sought shelter at Robert Morris elementary school, Jennifer Washney, a chapter spokeswoman, said.

Two more shelters — Scranton High School and Bancroft elementary school — never opened when flooding pre-

vented people from reaching the sites. Six of the shelters were shut later in the day, and people were moved to Northeast Intermediate School on Adams Avenue by the evening.

"People seem to be going and living with family and friends, but we're going to leave it open just in case," she said.

The shelters were difficult for people who wanted only the comfort of home.

"I lived here 30 years," Ms. Rock said as she left her flooded neighborhood. "I raised my kids here. I don't want to leave."

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Scranton firefighters evacuate residents on Depot Street in the Plot section of the city after the Lackawanna River flooded Saturday.

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