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## Tillamook port cuts back operations after railroad is devastated

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*Port of Tillamook*

The damaged rainroad track.

TILLAMOOK - Severe storm damage totaling an estimated \$20 million to the Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad has forced Port officials to curtail outbound shipments of lumber and inbound shipments of grains for local dairy farmers.

"The Port has issued a temporary embargo and informed all of our railroad customers and others we work with that we will not be able to ship or receive railcars on our line for the time being," said Port of Tillamook Bay Port Director Robert H. Van Borssum Friday.

Van Borssum said that, immediately after the massive storm of Dec. 2-3, his crews headed out to inspect the line.

The worst of the damage seen so far involves a section of railroad track in Salmonberry Canyon east of Wheeler in the Coast Range.

"The good news is that all of our metal bridges are still upright and our tunnels appear to be intact."

However, on Thursday, workers discovered that soil slippage in Salmonberry Canyon had undermined a section of track roadbed, causing the track to sag and become unusable.

In addition, he said, there is still a lot of debris on the tracks and one tunnel has some earthen material at one end that appears to have fallen in from an external slide adjacent to the tunnel's entrance.

Van Borssum said workers are still inspecting track and assessing the situation.

"We don't have the complete picture yet," he explained, "but the port determined that it would be prudent to issue an embargo now so no customers would have their cargo lost in transit. The Port can rescind the embargo anytime in the future when we have the problems under control."

The Port of Tillamook Bay Railroad operates 95 miles of track that stretches from Tillamook into the western suburbs of Portland, where the line intersects with major north-south rail lines. The route includes 17 metal bridges, several tunnels and a number of wooden bridges.

The Port's railroad is the major shipping lifeline for Tillamook County's two major lumber mills operated by Stimson Lumber and Hampton Affiliates. The timber business, alone, sends approximately 250 cars loaded with finished product on its way to market each month. While the railroad is out of operation, this could mean an additional 750 to 1,000 truckloads each month will need to be sent to market over local roadways, increasing shipping costs significantly to Tillamook County industries, said Van Borssum.

In addition, from six to eight railcars of various grains for the production of dairy feed come into Tillamook County each

week.

"The Port railroad has been the primary means of grain delivery for the production of high-protein feeds for the Tillamook County dairy industry," Van Borssum noted.

The Port railroad runs through the coastal communities of Tillamook, Garibaldi, Rockaway Beach and Wheeler and Nehalem before heading over the Coast Range into the Portland area rail interchange, where locally produced commodities are then redistributed to other rail carriers and shipped all over the United States.

The Port of Tillamook Bay also operates an industrial park, airport and an alternative energy bio-gas digester at its 1,600-acre site two miles south of Tillamook on U.S. Highway 101.

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