

fishermen rescued

Boats and a helicopter rescued 130 ice fishermen from Lake Simcoe yesterday after a "phenomenal" early break-up sent wind-driven floes crashing into several shoreline cottages and boathouses.

No one was hurt, but many got a bad scare as the huge cakes of ice broke away and piled up as high as 60 feet in spots.

At the same time, an inch of rain caused serious flooding northeast of Metro and elsewhere.

Dozens of Metro storm

sewers and basements were flooded, and the swollen Don River spilled over acres of parkland between Riverdale Zoo and Bayview Ave. extension.

A small dam burst on the Rouge River, flooding an area near Gormley. A section of Unionville's main street washed away. Scores of basements were flooded in Thornhill and Markham. A township road was washed out north of Peterborough.

The rain all evening

most of southwestern Ontario.

Windsor got three inches that flooded some area highways and threatened to swamp parts of the shorelines of Lake St. Clair and Lake Erie.

In the London district, cars got mired in thick mud on concession roads, while in the Chatham area at least one township road was washed out.

Today's forecast of light winds and scattered showers diminished further flood threats in the province.

A York regional policeman said winds topped 35 miles an hour for only an hour on Lake Simcoe yesterday, "but the ice shift was phenomenal."

Police and volunteers used boats to rescue 128 fishermen and a few snowmobiles stranded by the unusually early break-up. A helicopter picked up two other men.

A few got ashore by jumping from floe to floe.

Mrs. Trudi Goesseringer

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130 rescued from lake after sudden break-up

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of Palm Beach, six miles south of Orillia, watched the ice squeeze a boathouse next to her home until the roof popped off and flew 40 feet away.

Witnesses said every dock in a two-mile stretch between Oro Station and Palm Beach was destroyed, and many of the cottages and boathouses damaged.

The floes crunched inland as much as 100 feet.

ICE IN LIVING ROOM

Tons of ice came crashing into the living room of an unoccupied north shore cottage owned by George Schneider of Irene Ave., Toronto. (Eileen)

His cottage sits on a cliff 20 feet above Lake Simcoe, but when Schneider arrived he had to climb a 40-foot pile of ice to survey the damage.

Ken Palmer, a Jackson's

Point businessman who rents fishing huts, jumped from his snow tractor moments before it and a panel truck he was pulling plunged through the ice into 40 feet of water.

12 MEN

Palmer had 12 fishermen in the tracked vehicle only a minute before it went under, but asked them to step out while he tried to pull the truck over a foot-wide crack in the ice.

"They would have been goners if we had tried to cross that crack with them," Palmer said.

In 20 minutes he and his party were cut off by 100 feet of open water. They were picked up by boats.

"The wind on that lake was just incredible. It took less than 20 minutes to push the ice 100 feet away from the shore. This has been the craziest winter I

have ever seen on this lake," said Palmer, a veteran Lake Simcoe fisherman.

He said he will have the \$5,000 tractor and the truck, which is owned by a Georgetown contractor floated to the surface in the spring.

Palmer said most owners will remove their huts from the ice this week, although they may legally remain until March 31.

REMOVE HUTS

Just south of Montreal, the Chateaugay River began receding during the weekend after rising 20 feet in a week.

It caused widespread flooding in several communities along the south shore of the St. Lawrence River. Hardest hit was Chateaugay, where 100 homes were damaged.

METRO WEATHER

Cloudy, chance of shower. High today mid-50s. Low tonight mid-30s. Pollution index 7 at 8 a.m. Details on page 2.

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130 stranded Lake Simcoe