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Epsom

Trailer park condemned from flooding

By WALTER ALARKON

Monitor staff

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When Epsom condemned Janet Parkinson's mobile home park last week, she wasn't surprised. Right after the April floods, she and her husband, Don, moved to a new mobile home in a higher and drier part of the park. The water had devastated their old home, where mud covered the floor and water filled the oven and fridge.

"We were desperate," Parkinson said. "We had to get something."

The town of Epsom has condemned the Parkinsons' home and 10 others at the King's Towne trailer park over the past two weeks. During the storm, the Suncook River overflowed and entered the park's homes closest to the river banks.

To some of the park residents, the condemnations were a formality; many had already made plans to move, knowing they couldn't save their homes or that they didn't want to pay for repairs.

Owners of five of the condemned structures signed their homes over to the park, which will pay for their disposals, at a cost of between \$2,000 and \$3,000, said Stedman Holton, the park's manager. A purchase of a used mobile home, like one that could be found in the Epsom park, would cost between \$30,000 and \$55,000, Holton said.

The Parkinsons said they plan to give their ruined home to the park, too.

"There was an awful smell in it," said Janet Parkinson, who was only able to bring a television and a couple of tables to the new home. "The water was 2 feet high in the trailer."

When a house is condemned, its residents are barred from living there and from entering it, unless they tell the police. The condemnations were a safety measure, said John Hickey, Epsom's building and zoning compliance officer. In many of the houses, water had damaged electrical wiring,

But some residents wondered why the inspections took so long. In neighboring Allenstown, 14 houses were condemned. Inspectors looked at those houses within four days of the floods, said Allenstown administrator Kelley Collins.

Re Raedy had already torn out the ruined carpets from her aunt's flooded mobile home

and given \$3,100 to a contractor to start replacing the floors last week. Raedy had taken in her 88-year-old aunt, Catherine O'Brien, and planned to renovate O'Brien's so she could return. So when a building inspector came and suggested that O'Brien's home be condemned, Raedy disagreed.

"I have an issue with them coming in and telling me to pack up and leave," she said. "I lost two hours of work because of that."

Inspectors didn't condemn the home, where water got about six inches high on the walls, allowing Raedy and the contractors to resume work.

Epsom Selectwoman Joanne Randall said that town didn't want to condemn the homes immediately after the floods, to give residents time to find housing elsewhere. Epsom also doesn't have a building inspector, so it borrowed Allenstown's.

Collins said it's important to inspect homes quickly so people can return quickly.

"And the sooner you can get power back, the sooner you can get your furnace fixed to dry it your house and avoid mold," she said.

Collins said that it wasn't fair to compare Allenstown's response to Epsom's, since Allenstown had previous experience with flood damage. In May 2006, water flooded homes in the same Allenstown neighborhoods.

Steve Allen, another resident of the King's Towne park, said he's moving to Bangor, Maine. Water ruined the electrical wiring in his trailer, making it unsafe for him and his daughter, Virginia, to remain there.

"In the condition it's in, it's not really worth living here," he said. "And in the location it's in" - about 15 feet from the Suncook River - "it's not really worth going on here."

"Next year," Virginia Allen said, the river "could be over the house for all we know."

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