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## Mayor: 'Clendenin is Going to Survive'

Two weeks after historic flooding in the Kanawha County town of Clendenin destroyed or damaged homes, churches, and even town hall, the people who live there are still working to clear mud and debris from the homes and city streets.

There are two donation collection locations set up for the town of about 1,200, one across the street from the damaged post office that's now closed. Workers are handing out mail from a temporary trailer parked next to a tent full of food and cleaning supplies.

*West Virginia Public Broadcasting*<https://wvpublic.org/story/wvpb-news/mayor-clendenin-is-going-to-survive/>

Clendenin Mayor Gary Bledsoe speaks with Tom Kempton, a FEMA representative.

“The day after it happened, it looked worse than a war zone,” Clendenin Mayor Gary Bledsoe said Wednesday. “The streets were almost impassible, but now we’ve got the streets all open. They’re still a little dirty, but other than that, we’re getting the infrastructure put back together.”

Floodwater in Clendenin reached historic levels after the Elk River topped out at 33 feet, breaking a record set in 1888.

Bledsoe said his office in town hall took on 3 and a half feet of water and destroyed some city records.

Total damage estimates have yet to come in, but Bledsoe expects them to be more than the town can handle on its own. He’ll rely on state and federal aid to rebuild his community.

“This was a catastrophe, not just a devastation. It’s a catastrophe. I hope we never see anything like this again,” he said. “They say it’s a thousand year flood, let’s hope it is.”



*West Virginia Public Broadcasting*

A member of a cleaning crew sprays mud from the deck of a Clendenin gas station.

Almost every business in town- 99 percent in Bledsoe's words- was destroyed in the flooding. The mayor doesn't expect to see any income from business and occupation taxes for at least another 12 months- that's 40 percent of the city budget gone.

Still, he said, "Clendenin is going to survive."