

# Mudslide damages historic Wheeling cemetery where many veterans are buried

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A mudslide has damaged Mt. Zion Cemetery near Wheeling. (Photo/Ohio Midland Newsgroup)

**WHEELING, W.Va.** — A mudslide caused by recent heavy rains has damaged Mt. Zion Cemetery near Wheeling where many veterans are buried.

The mudslide happened Wednesday.

Mt. Zion Cemetery Corporation President Charles Yocke was at the cemetery Thursday morning and said the mudslide went through the middle of the property and damaged about 25% of the 19 acres. He fears more damage with additional rain in the forecast.

"I think there could be more to come," Yocke said told MetroNews. "I was sitting up there this morning and I could see little piles on the ground moving."



Shawn Fluharty

Yocke said there are 400 veterans buried in the cemetery including some from the Civil War.

The slide was limited to the top few inches of the soil and damage appears to be limited to headstones but a closer look when the weather clears may show more damage, Yocke said.

"It didn't do anything to the vaults," Yocke said. "I think what it did was it came down and it slid on the grass, and it took probably 100, maybe 150 tombstones down with it."

Yocke has acknowledged the efforts of Del. Shawn Fluharty, D-Ohio, who planned to reach out to U.S. Senator Joe Manchin for help. Manchin was visiting Wheeling Thursday.

"When you see the pictures, it's very startling and something everyone is concerned about," Fluharty said. "But it is good to know we have a U.S. Senator that will roll his sleeves up and get things done, and I fully expect Senator Manchin and his office to step up and help us here."

Manchin released the following statement to MetroNews:

"I am continuing to monitor the situation at the Mt. Zion Cemetery after a large landslide washed away as many as 200 tombstones on Wednesday morning. My heart goes out to every West Virginian who has a family member or loved one buried in the cemetery, and I stand ready to help the Wheeling community in every way I can."

Also responding to the call for help is a local gas drilling company that has offered to help. As a volunteer organization maintaining the cemetery, they have several questions before moving equipment into the disturbed area of the cemetery.



Joe Manchin

"They have equipment that can get up there and start working but first we have to go through all the channels to see what needs to be done," Yocke said.

Yocke said there is really no timeline to fix the damage. Rather, there are two timelines including one to establish the means and one to have a contractor do the work, then the timetable presented by the contractor.

"Just to get started on it, it could take two months or six months," Yocke said. "It depends on what kind of people, construction companies, and money we can get to get started on this."

The cemetery has been operated by the Mt. Zion Cemetery Corporation since 2015.