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Death Valley National Park Update

This is the latest information available from Death Valley National Park. Additional updates will be sent as more information becomes available.

Death Valley National Park remains closed until further notice from damage to critical infrastructure from flash flooding that occurred August 15, 2004. For safety reasons, the main entrances to the park remain barricaded and/or staffed with law enforcement personnel. Superintendent J.T. Reynolds said, "We regret having to continue this closure action, but it is absolutely necessary for safety and health reasons, due to the extensive damage the park received from the storm." Two fatalities from that flooding were discovered on August 16, 2004.

The Inyo County Deputy Coroner Robert Franke is requesting assistance from the public. His office has been unable to notify relatives of the two people from Downey, California who died as a result of last Sunday's flash flooding. A 48-year-old male named Bernherd Reith, and Tabea Reith, his 71-year old mother, died when water, mud and debris struck their vehicle while they were traveling on Highway 190. If anyone knows any information that can help the Deputy Coroner Franke locate relatives of the victims, please call 760.876.4665.

Death Valley personnel are continuing work to repair critical infrastructure at the Furnace Creek developed area. Crews are repairing the main water line that suffered at least two breaks. While repairs are being done, the main 2 million-gallon tank is being filled and will undergo testing to ensure water quality. This repair work and testing could take up to 48 additional hours to complete. National Park Service and California Department of Transportation, District 9 (Caltrans) personnel are working to repair sections of Highway 190. Work has begun on the area of the road that links Furnace Creek with California State Highway 127.

Death Valley National Park Superintendent J.T. Reynolds and Superintendent of the Death Valley Unified School District Jim Copeland have agreed to postpone the start of the school year from Monday, August 23 to August 30.

National Park Service crews are continuing to assess damage in other areas of the park. Today their assessment efforts will be focused on the roads in three areas: Emigrant to Wildrose section of Emigrant Canyon Road, the Grapevine to Scotty's Castle, and Scotty's Castle to Scotty's Junction.

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