

## AFTER MONTHS OF DROUGHT, BELL COUNTY HAS BEEN SATURATED WITH ENOUGH RAIN TO RETURN TO NORMAL CONDITIONS.

The National Weather Service's U.S. Drought Monitor showed an end to the drought that had plagued the area all year.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, say both area lakes reached normal levels Wednesday.

Normally a spring event, Belton Lake surpassed its normal elevation of 594 feet above sea level (4.68' above normal) while Stillhouse Hollow Lake rose above its normal elevation of 622 feet (3.74' above normal), rising about 8' in less than 48 hours.

Flood events occurred in 2016 and '17 finally ebbing to normal levels late last year where the levels stayed until the drought this year.

Nonetheless, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began releasing water late Thursday night from the Lake Proctor Dam and the surge raced down the Leon River toward Gatesville at 1,100 cubic feet per second, leaving the old Leon River bridge submerged just blocks from the Coryell County Courthouse.

Several county and Farm-to-Market roads in the county are closed because they're impassable due to high water. Water was already covering the road in two spots on FM 116 between Gatesville and Copperas Cove and authorities were warning drivers to exercise caution.

Much of Coryell County has been under water, or threatened by rising water all week long.

Fortunately, Belton Lake is releasing more than 3,000 cubic feet per second, so there's more flowing out than will flow in, yet the lakes are still lower than they were two years ago when late spring rains caused both lakes to swell to near-record levels set more than 20 years earlier.

We may have escaped the worst of the drought season, we're well into the flood season. One of the factors for this phenomenon is the current El Niño cycle, which is associated with warmer waters along the Equator and in the Pacific Ocean.

Don't expect any relief soon as hurricane Willa makes her presence in the Gulf in the next week.



Halloween is just around the corner! Whether you're lighting a jack-o-lantern or making costumes, use these tips to make your Halloween safe and fun.

- Use flashlights or battery-operated candles for Halloween decorations.
- Keep Halloween decorations away from open flames, light bulbs, and heaters. Decorations like cornstalks and crepe paper can catch on fire easily.
- Look for "Flame Resistant" or "Flame Retardant" labels on costumes because candles and flammable costumes can be a dangerous combination. If you make costumes at home, choose flame-resistant fabrics like nylon and polyester.
- Always have an adult go along with children when trick or treating.
- Use sidewalks when trick or treating. Cross only at street corners and crosswalks.

To learn more about the causes of Halloween-related fires, visit <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/>.