

Beattyville 'cleaned up'; memorial rites tomorrow

Associated Press

BEATTYVILLE, Ky. — The small mountain town of Beattyville yesterday finished cleaning away the rubble from a gasoline truck explosion that killed seven residents.

"It's all cleaned up. All the debris has been hauled away. The street has been cleaned up and opened to traffic, the electricity is back on and the telephone service is back," Mayor Charles Beach III said.

"It looks like the rest of this week is going to be spent burying our dead here," Beach said.

He said the Lee County Ministerial Association will conduct a 30-minute memorial service at 7 p.m. tomorrow at the Lee County High School.

The remains of the victims were taken to Louisville, where Dr. George Nichols, Kentucky's chief state medical examiner, performed autopsies yesterday.

Workmen hauled away the wreckage of the 8,200-gallon gasoline tanker that plowed into Main Street businesses Saturday and exploded. The truck, owned by Usher Transport, Inc., of Louisville, was taken to the Kentucky State Police laboratory in Frankfort for study.

The truck apparently lost its brakes on the steep KY 11 hill leading into Beattyville.

Officials of the Kentucky Department of Transportation officials are preparing a report on whether the state can speed up construction of a new road into the town.

Jack Hall, an aide to Gov. Julian Carroll, said Carroll had indicated he wanted to see an alternate route designed to replace the KY 11 hill and have the project bid before he left office in January of 1980.

An appropriation of \$250,000 was approved last June for design and planning of a road that would go from the intersection of KY 11 and KY 52 in downtown Beattyville to the junction of KY 498 and KY 11, five miles north of the Eastern Kentucky community.

The new route is expected to cost about \$12.5 million, Hall said.

He said it usually takes three to five years to complete a road once it has been approved. "Normally, it's a question of available dollars," he said.

The governor has asked state transportation officials to review the proposed route to find out if there is a financing method that would allow construction to begin sooner.

Hall said he has been told the transportation department has complied with federal planning requirements, making the road eligible for U.S. funds.

He said he has asked highway officials to submit a detailed report on the proposed construction schedule, and on available alternatives, by the end of the week.

In the meantime, he has asked the transportation department to send someone to Beattyville to review the KY 11

entrance to the city with respect to lights and warning signs.

Mayor Beach said those who owned the property on the now-vacant block on Main Street haven't decided what to do in the wake of the disaster.

The damage is estimated at \$750,000 to \$1 million, he said, and the destruction of the businesses meant the loss of 31 jobs in Beattyville.

However, he said, "You can always rebuild a building. The loss of life here is immeasurable."

Funeral services have been scheduled for four of the victims:

✓ Mrs. Judy Gabbard, 30 — 3:30 p.m. today at the Newnam Funeral Home in Beattyville. Survivors include her husband, Earl.

✓ Woodrow Wilson, 57 — 11 a.m. today at the Athol Church of God. His wife, Juanita, survives. The body is at the Newnam Funeral Home.

✓ Mrs. Christina Bradley Hughes, 77 — 11 a.m. tomorrow at the Beattyville Christian Church. Her husband, Dr. Robert L. Hughes, survives. The body will be at the Newnam Funeral Home after 6 p.m. today.

✓ Mrs. Gladys Fights, 59 — 2 p.m. tomorrow at the Newnam Funeral Home. Her husband, Vitus, survives. The body will be at the funeral home after 6 p.m. today.

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