

HURRICANE BERTHA

Seeking shelter: 'It's in God's hands now'



From staff reports

People began flocking to emergency shelters across the region Friday once they realized they didn't want to sit out Hurricane Bertha at home.

Trask Middle School in New Hanover County began seeing a surge of people shortly after 11 a.m., when weather bulletins announced the storm had strengthened and was moving toward Wilmington.

People continued to file in as the storm rattled windows, tossed tree limbs into the streets and ripped down power lines.

By 1 p.m., 278 had sought shelter at Trask. Shelter workers had to move people out of the cafeteria around noon because the roof was leaking and they feared it would cave in.

Around 1:30 p.m., with New Hanover County's three main shelters filling fast, the county opened overflow shelters at Blair Elementary and Lancy High schools.

At Hampstead in Pender County, emergency workers were scrambling early in the afternoon to get the key to a Topsail Elementary School freezer. Without it, they wouldn't be able to feed about 200 people who sought shelter there. Workers had to cut two trees that had fallen in the road en route to the home of the person who had the key.

Inside the shelters, people did what they could to pass time and cope with the storm.

Some were merely thankful they weren't at home. Su Beyazit, 9, knows the fury nature can unleash. She rode out Hurricane Andrew in a closet four years ago in Florida. Though she and her mother had sought shelter at Trask, she was worried about her cat, Minnos.

"Please save my cat," said Su, whose first name means "water" in Turkish. "She went up a tree, and I don't know how she's going to get down. I don't want her to die. She's a kitten."

Su's family moved from Florida to Burgaw, where her father is a general manager for Hardee's. He stayed home to care for the family pets -- Minnos and a cocker spaniel that just had puppies -- and a few assorted farm animals.

Su's mother, Nikki, remembers the terror as Hurricane Andrew blew out a window. The force of the wind... Please see SHELTER on page 4.

Staff photo JAMIE MUNA KIRK

The Kure Beach fishing pier was in splinters Friday after Hurricane Bertha swept through the region, leaving devastation in its wake.