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SCHOOL UPDATE Complete list 2B

New Hanover -- Closed today and Tuesday.
Pender -- Closed today and Tuesday for students.
Brunswick -- Closed for students today, optional for 10-month employees, and mandatory for year-round employees.
Columbus -- Closed to students today, optional workday for teachers, year-round staff should report for work.
Whiteville City -- Closed to students today, optional workday for teachers.
Duplin -- Closed today and Tuesday.
UNCW -- Closed today; reopens Tuesday. For updates, call 962-3991.
Cape Fear Community -- Fall quarter begins Wednesday. Late registration begins 9 a.m. Tuesday. Today and Tuesday are optional work days for employees.

NFL WEEK 2 1C

Panthers 22, Saints 20
Steelers 31, Ravens 17
Redskins 10, Bears 3
Oilers 34, Jaguars 27
Colts 21, Jets 7
Vikings 23, Falcons 17
Bills 17, Patriots 10
Chiefs 19, Raiders 3
Lions 21, Bucs 6
Chargers 27, Bengals 14
Broncos 30, Seahawks 20
Cowboys 27, Giants 0
49ers 34, Rams 0
Dolphins at Cardinals, late

TONIGHT'S GAME
Eagles at Packers

WEATHER

Partly sunny
Today: High in the lower 90s with chance of afternoon thunderstorms.

Complete forecast on **10A**

Morning Star

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90% of N. Topsail Destroyed

More rain, high water adding to problems

By TRICIA VANCE
Staff Writer

The third day of recovery from Hurricane Fran brought more grim news for residents of southeastern North Carolina.

A rain-swollen Cape Fear River jumped its banks, sending some residents searching for higher ground. Along the coast, many beach residents got their first view of their homes since Thursday's storm, and for many it was a sad sight.

Coastal officials reported that the state has practically lost its dune line from Kure Beach to North Topsail Beach. Officials estimated that 90 percent of North Topsail Beach was destroyed. Search crews were still looking for missing people.

To stop sightseeing by the media and curious onlookers, state officials declared a no-fly zone from two miles offshore to two miles inland from New River Inlet south to Holden Beach.

At least three more deaths were blamed on the storm. A woman in Duplin County was reported dead after her chimney toppled on her as she sat on her couch during the storm. A man in Pender County was found floating face down in the Intracoastal Waterway in Scotts Hill. He was last seen standing on his porch.

And the woman found during the storm floating on a mattress in a marsh behind Surf City died at Columbia Cape Fear Memorial Hospital.

The storm and its after-effects killed at least 22 people, including 17 in North Carolina.

Crops were flooded inland, and about 10,000 turkeys drowned in Duplin County. About half the area's residents are still without power, and if the N.C. State Aquarium doesn't get power or more diesel fuel soon, workers will have to release the fish or watch them die.

To make matters worse, a thunderstorm Sunday caused more flooding and delayed efforts to restore power.

Roger Schecter, director of the N.C. Division of Coastal Management, flew over the coastline and later said there were only a few miles of dunes left. He compared the damage to Hurricane Hazel, the legendary 1954 hurricane that battered the area.

"This is Hazel stretched over 70 miles," he said.

Because of the damage, Coastal

Please see DAMAGE *on page 4A*

Staff photo · KEN BLEVINS

Nancy Tatum pulls onto Cape Fear Drive just outside Burgaw on Sunday. Ms. Tatum was on her way to the store to get more supplies.

Flooding continues to plague region

By ANNE MINARD
Star-News Correspondent

BURGAW — Hurricane Fran became Flood Fran on Sunday, as water deposited by the storm farther north caused the Cape Fear and its tributaries to overflow their banks.

Gene Funderburk, a spokesman for the National Weather Service, blamed the hurricane for the original rise in the Cape Fear and its tributaries. But rain in Wayne and Duplin counties late Saturday, as well as thunderstorms that shook the ground Sunday, postponed crest time and added insult to injury for residents of Pender and Duplin counties.

The Cape Fear River at Lock and Dam Two in Elizabethtown is expected to crest Tuesday at 25 feet, 1 foot over the flood stage. Upstream at Lock and Dam No. 3 in northwest Bladen County, the Cape Fear was almost 17 feet above the 42-foot flood stage by 7 a.m. Sunday. The river there is expected to crest today at about 60 feet, Mr. Funderburk said. The Cape Fear in Wilmington will crest Wednesday, he said.

As Hurricane Fran wreaked havoc on the state, flood warnings were issued for the Cape Fear and Lumber rivers in North Carolina and the Little Pee Dee, Great Pee Dee and Waccamaw in South Carolina.

In Duplin County, Chinquapin Elementary School was opened as a shelter at 6:30 p.m. Sunday for residents living near the Northeast Cape Fear River. Dorothy Cavenaugh, assistant director of emergency services, said about 100 residents were evacuated.

Please see FLOOD *on page 4A*

Linda Chiangi (left) and Peggy Brinkley sit on a boat off Cape Fear Drive, near Burgaw. 'We're inconvenienced, but the joy of living on the river is still worth it,' Ms. Brinkley said.

Staff photo · KEN BLEVINS

Storms hamper cleanup efforts

By MARTY MINCHIN and VICTORIA CHERRIE
Staff Writers

> 'It just adds to the rest of our misery.'
>
> Wilmington Fire Capt. E.J. Vosnock

As if Hurricane Fran wasn't enough, Mother Nature mercilessly took another swipe Sunday afternoon at Wilmington residents as they tried to clean up and begin to get their lives — and houses — in order.

Severe thunderstorms rocked New Hanover County, causing widespread flooding and dousing any hopes of returning to normalcy.

Heavy rains flooded roads where storm drains were clogged with debris and lightning struck houses and yards.

"It just adds to the rest of our misery," said Capt. E.J. Vosnock of the Wilmington Fire Department.

Volunteer firefighters evacuated their Seagate station as the water swelled 3 feet deep at the intersection of Oleander Drive and Greenville Loop Road.

By 6 p.m. massive flooding forced authorities to block off that area as well as Pine Grove Drive at Greenville Loop Road.

Near Hewlett's Creek, Shamrock Village families who lost everything a few days ago stood drenched from sporadic downpours that mirrored their own tears as they continued their clean up.

In the Pirate Cove subdivision, a drowned pump station sent sewage into the flooded streets, said W... Blanchard, a New Hanover County engineer.

"It's rained so hard, one st... right after the other," said Ro... Andrews, who lives on Sh... Drive off Greenville Loop R... "Been here 31 years and n... seen anything like this."

Before Sunday's rain, Hurricane Fran's damage had only begun to sink in. Mr. Andrews' 1987 ... Cadillac had just started to dry out after being soaked up to the dash Thursday night. The carpets in his house also got drenched from water that rose from nearby marshes.

"Ground's so wet it's got no where to go," he said. "I'm thinking of going to get me an ark."

Please see STORMS *on page 4A*

Hurricane a blow to local tourism

By JOSIAH CANTWELL
Business Editor

On a typical Sunday morning in early September, Lance Smith would be getting ready for a big lunch crowd at the Dockside Restaurant in Wrightsville Beach.

Instead, he was pitching 250 ruined flounder into the water behind his Airlie Road restaurant.

His eatery sustained little damage from Hurricane Bertha on July 12, but after Fran, he said, "We're pretty much wiped out."

Mr. Smith figures his tourist season is over for the year. Instead, he'll be replacing virtually all the equipment in his kitchen and repairing damage to docks and awnings behind the restaurant.

With the Bertha/Fran double-whammy, tourism officials are concerned about losing money but confident that the hurricanes won't keep tourists away.

"I think a lot of people know natural disasters can happen anywhere, like earthquakes," said Jane Peterson, president of the Cape Fear Coast Convention and Visitor's Bureau.

"It's comparable to huge snowstorms in Buffalo or

Please see TOURISM *on page 4A*

Notice to readers

Because Hurricane Fran interrupted and finally ended the press run for Friday's edition, only a limited number of papers could be printed.

Copies of that edition are no longer available. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

AFTER HURRICANE FRAN

Damage

Continued from page 1A

Management is waiving permit requirements for bulldozing the beaches, Mr. Schecter said. It's the only way to protect what property is left along the barrier islands, he said.

Permits are usually required because protected loggerhead turtles nest in the dunes. But it's doubtful that many turtle nests were left after the hurricane washed away so much sand, Mr. Schecter said.

He surveyed the damaged area by air Saturday with Jonathan Howes, secretary of the Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources. On Sunday, a team from Coastal Management visited the beaches.

"We were pretty stunned," Mr. Schecter said. "It's even more sobering being on the ground, seeing what has happened and seeing how people's lives have been changed by this hurricane."

Structural and agricultural damage estimates are still trickling in, but the numbers are staggering.

Up and down the coast, officials said, newer structures built to stricter building standards weathered the storm better than older ones. At Wrightsville Beach, most of the newer homes sustained relatively little damage, Mayor Herb McKim said.

Coastal residents will need to talk with Coastal Management officials before repairing or rebuilding their property. In some cases, there's no property left on which to rebuild, Mr. Schecter said.

He urged patience on the part of homeowners anxious to begin rebuilding.

"It is going to take a long time to get anything close to back to normal," he said. "Every state and local government is going to be completely overwhelmed for a while."

Anyone with questions about rebuilding at the beach should call the Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources office in Wilmington, 395-3900. Leave a name and phone number so an official can contact you.

In all, 34 North Carolina counties have been declared disaster areas eligible for federal aid. Twenty-four counties were added to the list Sunday.

In some areas, longtime residents said Fran was worse than Hazel.

The storm surge flooded all of Wrightsville Beach past Babies Hospital, Mr. McKim said. Hazel only sent water as far as the former maternity hospital, he said.

Most buildings at Wrightsville Beach survived, Mr. McKim said. So far, only one building has been declared a total loss.

The Shell Island Resort, which is perched precariously on the edge of a rapidly eroding inlet, is structurally sound, Mr. McKim said. However, the storm washed away what was left of the dunes that helped protect it from the ocean.

Complete damage estimates for Wrightsville Beach and the unincorporated area of New Hanover County weren't available. But officials estimated 320 homes, 19 businesses and two other buildings were destroyed in Wilmington, Carolina Beach and Kure Beach.

Major damage was reported to 530 homes, 127 businesses and 11 other buildings, which include churches and schools.

Another 3,043 homes, 361 businesses and 16 other structures had minor damage, said New Hanover County Emergency Management Director Dan Summers.

In the unincorporated areas of Onslow County and the city of Jacksonville, 474 buildings — including 279 mobile homes — were destroyed, said Debby King, spokesman for the Onslow County Emergency Operations Center.

So far, officials there estimate property damage at $237.5 million, about half of it at North Topsail Beach. That includes damage to property and agricultural interests.

A total of 1,131 buildings suffered major damage, and 3,335 had minor damage, she said.

Agricultural damage estimates were unavailable for most areas Sunday, but Onslow County reported that Fran caused $34.5 million damage to crops, livestock and agricultural buildings.

Between Bertha and Fran, the county's farmers lost $63.8 million, according to estimates from the county's Cooperative Extension Service.

Forestry interests lost $20 million to $30 million to Hurricane Fran and another $2 million to Bertha, the agency reported.

Pender County reported widespread structural damage and lots of debris-covered roadways, but estimates weren't available Sunday.

Damage estimates are sketchy in inland counties, but Duplin County officials expect significant losses, said Assistant Emergency Services Director Dorothy Cavenaugh.

Ten thousand turkeys have been confirmed as drowned, according to the State Emergency Response Team.

Columbus County has closed its Emergency Operations Center, but an official there said one mobile home was destroyed and 92 homes received major damage. Another 128 homes suffered minor damage.

Some power restored

More than 730,000 Carolina Power & Light customers — including 138,000 in the district that includes Wilmington, Whiteville and Wallace — lost electricity Thursday. By 5 p.m. Sunday, more than half, or about 416,300 customers, had power. It could be at least a week before some people get their power back.

Progress has been slow in some areas because of the number of trees, power lines and utility poles knocked down by the storm. Fran splintered more than 2,300 poles and downed about 500 miles of line in CP&L's eastern region, company officials reported.

By Sunday afternoon, after more than three days without air conditioning, refrigerators and hot water, customers were beginning to complain, but a company spokesman said crews are working as fast as they can.

As of Sunday night, power had been restored to 46 percent of the Wilmington area customers.

"We are hoping to get 97 percent of our customers back on by Friday," said Robin Boettcher, spokesman for the Wilmington district office.

As of 10 p.m. Sunday, Four County Electric Membership Corp. had restored power to 13,590 of its 26,000 customers. The utility serves customers in Bladen, Duplin, Pender and Sampson counties.

Even with the addition of 450 contract workers and workers from outside the counties, it will be 10 days to two weeks before power is fully restored, said the cooperative's general manager, Edward E. Brown Jr.

Staff Writers Clifton Daniel, Marty Minchin, Victoria Cherrie and Holly Roberson contributed to this report.

Staff photo · TYLER HICKS

Carolina Beach residents crowd into school buses they will take to view their property. Buses carried residents from the Federal Point Shopping Center.

Flood

Continued from page 1A

from their homes as the water rose.

Residents were displaced from their homes all along the Northeast Cape Fear in Pender County. Among the hardest-hit areas were N.C. 53 near Burgaw and Holly Shelter Creek, where residents told the National Weather Service up to 10 feet of water had poured into their homes.

N.C. 53 east of Burgaw and N.C. 210 from Interstate 40 to Hampstead were closed Sunday.

Pender County officials rescued some flood victims and sent them to a shelter at Topsail Middle School, on U.S. 17 at Hampstead.

Other refugees paddled boats over flooded streets, past half-submerged stop signs and speed limit markers. Nancy Tatum, a fourth-grade school teacher, tethered her canoe to a set of mailboxes and sloshed barefoot through 3 feet of water to join her neighbors at the end of Cape Fear Drive off N.C. 53.

"Tell my students they should get ready for their spelling test. We're already behind," she joked. She said 25 inches of water had crept into her home.

Most residents of Cape Fear Drive, River Bend Drive and River Bluff Road, gravel streets that join near the Northeast Cape Fear, say they've come to expect occasional flooding at their homes.

All they asked from officials Sunday were a men's and ladies' port-a-john and a garbage bin for their household trash, which they didn't want to send floating down the river.

"We're inconvenienced, but the joy of living on the river is still worth it," said Peggy Brinkley. She, like the rest of the 20-or-so neighbors gathered with their boats, kept her chin up as she peered across 75 yards of water separating her from her property.

Chuck Holtzinger, a spokesman for the National Weather Service, said the water was expected to subside for Pender County residents after crest time, but the weekend's additional rains are raising questions.

StarLine out of service

StarLine, the 'Morning Star' telephone information service, is temporarily out of order because of a lightning strike. Service will be restored as soon as possible.

The 'Morning Star' has also been unable to update its Internet service. StarLine Online will be updated with complete hurricane coverage as soon as possible.

We apologize for any inconvenience this has caused for our readers.

Hurricane Hortense? No, thank you

By JOSIAH CANTWELL
Business Editor

Hortense? Give me a break.

Already coping with the devastation caused by two hurricanes, no one in this weather-weary area wanted to talk Sunday about another storm.

"Hortense? What's that?" said an indignant Lance Smith, one of the owners of the Dockside Restaurant on Airlie Road.

Hortense is the latest tropical storm boiling in the Caribbean. At 11 p.m. Sunday, it was at latitude 16.2 north and longitude 64.7 west, about 105 miles south of St. Croix. It was moving west near 6 mph with maximum sustained winds of near 58 mph.

"I haven't watched that thing at all," Wilmington Mayor Don Betz said of Tropical Storm Hortense. "We can't possibly have three in a row."

Jane Peterson, a transplanted Northerner who heads the Cape Fear Coast Convention and Visitor's Bureau, joked about the names of these storms, including Edouard and Gustav.

"I heard that when they name these storms, they should give them names Southerners can pronounce," she said.

We're still waiting for a Hurricane Bubba. But let him wait a while.

Storms

Continued from page 1A

The Wilmington Fire Department responded to at least four calls of lightning hitting people's houses, Capt. Vosnock said, but no fires resulted.

"On Lake Forest Parkway, they said they could feel the lightning run into their house," Capt. Vosnock said.

Firefighters were already run ragged Sunday answering 30 to 40 reports of electrical problems such as power lines sparking when the power was turned back on, he said.

The thunderstorms mirrored a similar mess after Hurricane Bertha in July: Heavy rains stymied work crews and wreaked mayhem on the county soon after Bertha blew through.

Sunday's rains were just late afternoon summer thunderstorms and were not related to Hurricane Fran, said Tom Addington, spokesman for the National Weather Service's center at the New Hanover County airport.

Some areas of the county reported more than 6 inches of rain, he said.

"These were intense thunderstorms," Mr. Addington said. More of the same can be expected today.

The lightning was so intense at one point that Wilmington Police officers were called in off the streets, said Bruce Shell, a county spokesman.

That left work crews and scores of sightseers driving on quickly flooding roads, many without working traffic lights.

Other heavy flooding was reported on Eastwood Road at Landfall, Airlie Road, the 5200 block of Wrightsville Avenue and Market Steet at Porters Neck Road and Sweetwater Road.

Tourism

Continued from page 1A

Rochester, or forest fires" in the Northwest, said Wilmington Mayor Don Betz. "We all have our natural disasters. I think we can recover from that, rebuild the tourism from a promotional standpoint."

Bertha cost $6 million a day in lost tourism along the coast, Ms. Peterson said, or a total of $24 million.

This time, the price could be much higher.

"With Bertha, it was picking up branches and cleaning sand from roads, and then people were ready to go again," said Chris Mackey, the bureau's newly hired spokesman.

Now it's a matter of rebuilding on the hardest hit beaches, such as Pleasure Island and Topsail Island.

Ms. Mackey was media development director for the N.C. Travel and Tourism Division until about a month ago, and worked on the state response to Bertha. She said the state agency placed a full-page ad in *USA Today* and sent ads to state newspapers, many of which ran them at no charge as a public service.

The local visitors and convention bureau is joining the state in advertising that southeastern North Carolina is still here.

Ms. Peterson was working Sunday with emergency officials to find housing for relief workers and others coming into the area. After Bertha, relief workers replaced tourists in motels away from the beaches, providing needed revenue.

Ms. Peterson said June room-tax collections, a way to gauge the success of local tourism, were about 15 percent higher than last year. The numbers aren't in for July, when Bertha hit, but most months have been running 8 to 12 percent higher than the previous years' collections.

"If we'd been at a low point, this would really be disastrous," she said.

Wilmington tourist attractions are already springing back. The Battleship North Carolina opened at noon Saturday, and the Wilmington Railroad Museum was open.

Nancy Bullock, who manages the Cotton Exchange and some other downtown retail centers, said her tenants planned to be back to normal by today, and Stefany Rhodes, who owns the Front Street Inn with her husband, Jay, said she had all her rooms filled.

"Everyone learned a little from Bertha," she said. Mindful of empty rooms after Bertha, she called those who had booked rooms as Fran approached to see if they were canceling. "We were able to book that room right away this time, which was great because there's so many people without a place to stay."

Lost sand and lost tourism dollars will sharpen the debate over how to spend room tax revenue.

Some of the money from the 3 percent room tax goes to advertise the area as a tourist destination; the rest goes for beach renourishment. Last year, the amount of tax revenue given to tourism promoters was raised from 25 percent to 40 percent, angering those who say the money should replace lost sand, especially as federal purse strings tighten.

Ms. Peterson said it's important to promote the area as a year-round destination, and Mayor Betz characterized tourism as a triangle of downtown attractions, golfing and beaches.

"It's great to bank all that away for beach renourishment, but we have to continue to promote the area to offset the negative impact of a natural disaster," he said.