

AFTER HURRICANE FRAN

Beaches slow to get back electricity, phones, water

By CHRIS DAVIS
Staff Writer

As utility services return to the majority of storm victims, many beach dwellers are still suffering without electricity. Some don't have phones, and some are even without safe water to drink.

A week after the storm, utility companies were reporting success in returning service to most of their customers.

Even so, people in hard-hit areas still have days to wait before they can turn on a light or watch cable television.

Off the islands, some folks in Delco, Ogden, Porters Neck,

Scotts Hill and Bayshore will have to wait for their electricity. Heavy tree damage has mangled power lines that could still take days to repair.

Kyle Hampton, a spokesman for Carolina Power & Light, said the remaining areas will be the hardest to repair.

CP&L had returned power to 90 percent of its customers Thursday afternoon in the Wilmington, Whiteville and Wallace service areas.

Water and electricity were not available Thursday in hard-hit Topsail Beach and Surf City, according to emergency management officials in Pender County.

Kure and Carolina beach resi-

dents had water service, but at nearby Hanby and Wilmington beaches water was not safe to drink. Much of the north end of Pleasure Island was without power because home damage prevented the power company from turning it on.

At Wrightsville Beach, water was turned on for many residents Thursday, but problems with individual lines kept some homes from receiving it.

Flooding in Pender and Duplin counties has slowed work and created even more power failures.

Even so, more than 97 percent of Four County Electric customers had power Thursday evening, co-op officials said. Fran had left all 26,000 of them in the dark.

About 700 customers still don't have power. About one-third of those live in flooded areas of Duplin and Pender where crews are taking boats to work on damaged lines. Four County officials don't expect all their customers to have power until the weekend.

Counties that got hit with the south side of Hurricane Fran have done better.

Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. reported that all of its 50,000 customers in Brunswick and Columbus counties had power Thursday, and crews were retracing their steps to finish temporary repairs.

Meanwhile, BellSouth, which had relatively few problems, is struggling to repair its lines.

Heavy calling volumes have tied up lines, and the logjams are expected to continue for several days.

Spokesman Kay Warner said rain continued to delay efforts to restore phone service in New Hanover, Pender and Brunswick counties. Rain has dampened partially damaged lines, causing static on phone lines, she said.

In New Hanover County, many customers are without phone service in Wrightsville Beach, downtown Wilmington and the Winter Park area. Ms. Warner described Pender County as "a mess," with rising floodwaters only making things worse. About 2,500 area customers are without service.



GEORGE SHARIN photo



Two views of the main road on the south end of Figure Eight Island show residents have a lot of cleaning up to do. Sand and water cover the roadway up to nearly 3 feet deep.

Exclusive isle surveys damage

By PHILIP HERVEY
Staff Writer

FIGURE EIGHT ISLAND — Beach Road is aptly named.

Thursday, Figure Eight was not the comfortable, secluded getaway for the owners of 350 houses that range from typical beach cottages to million-dollar estates.

The main route through the private island north of Wrightsville Beach was under nearly three feet of sand from Hurricane Fran. Tractors have plowed the street to make it passable for vehicles, creating piles of sand that look like snowdrifts following a winter storm.

Throughout Figure Eight, sand-cloaked yards are littered with casualties of the hurricane — splintered docks, bicycles, small sailboats blown out of the water, a model train set.

Many of the oceanfront houses suffered significant damage. First-floor levels were washed out by the storm surge, which flattened the protective dunes on the beach. One house lost its roof and was gutted by the overwash.

Figure Eight still lacks electricity and water. Property owners were being allowed on Thursday. Construction workers doing repairs outnumbered the handful of people checking how their houses fared.

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about 75 percent of the beachfront houses lost enough sand depth to make the septic tanks non-functional, said Bruce Cameron.

beachfront houses lost enough sand depth to make the septic tanks non-functional, said Bruce Cameron, who owned the island and was one of the early developers. He said he is not involved in the island's business affairs today.

He estimates 1 million cubic yards of sand will be needed to replenish the beach. "It's going to take quite a job to repair it all," he said.

He doubts many property owners will want to do costly repairs to houses until the beach is renourished. The homeowners would have to pay for rebuilding the beach since the island is private, he said. He hasn't decided what to do with his house on South Beach Road, which had significant first-floor damage.

The Figure Eight Island development dates to the late 1960s. It's become the in place for doctors,

developers, even Hollywood actors.

Andy Griffith owns a house on Backfin Point. The 2½-story house appeared to have only minor roof damage. Nick Nolte and Kim Basinger are rumored to have houses there, although their names don't appear on county property tax records. Melanie Griffith stayed on Figure Eight when she was in Wilmington last year shooting *Lolita*.

A few people, like Paul Foster, have called Figure Eight home for years.

Mr. Foster's lot and other properties on South Beach Road lost 3 to 4 feet of sand depth. His 28-year-old cottage, which he lives in year-round, was the ninth house built on Figure Eight.

He was critical of house designs that have livable space on the ground level.

Houses built during the early stages of Figure Eight development were limited to having no more than 30 percent of the overall building space on the ground level, Mr. Foster said. And that space had to be made of breakaway walls. The 20-by-25-foot bottom utility room on his house was damaged by the flooding. But the top floor survived intact.

Those rules don't apply today, Mr. Foster said. "We don't have any regulations that I see."

Storm may be among the costliest

Associated Press

RALEIGH — Hurricane Fran wasn't the strongest storm to hit the United States, but it left one of the biggest swaths of destruction, federal and state officials say.

"This disaster is enormous," said Lacy Suiter of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. "It is probably in the top two or three in the country."

Dollar amounts for damages from the storm are starting to come in.

Insurance companies have received claims for \$723.4 million in property damage so far, and the

amount is expected to top \$1 billion by the weekend, said Insurance Commissioner Jim Long.

Preliminary figures from the state Department of Agriculture showed more than \$616 million in agricultural damage in 28 counties. Crops suffered \$337.5 million in damage, while livestock and poultry losses totaled \$3.7 million. There also was \$275 million in forestry, equipment, facilities and land damage.

The projected loss of corn was set at \$54.18 million, with 226,000 of 930,000 acres affected. Cotton losses were expected to be about \$55.12 million, with 143,000 of 735,000 acres damaged, and tobacco losses were expected to be about \$185 million, with 62,000 of 273,000 acres damaged.