

# Flooding danger remains

From staff reports

Diana was no lady but she wasn't exactly a tiger.

After raking New Hanover and Brunswick counties with 110-mph winds early Thursday, the worst hurricane to hit Southeastern North Carolina in 30 years faded at midday in Columbus County to a tropical storm with 50-mph winds.

Four deaths were attributed indirectly to Diana and damage estimates ran into millions of dollars. But state and local officials credited early evacuation, strengthened housing codes — and a lot of luck — with averting a major disaster.

A day's delay while Diana whirled indecisively offshore reduced the storm's wind velocities from 135 mph to 110 mph before it crossed the beaches to the south of Wilmington.

Hurricane Hazel, which hit the coastline on Oct. 15, 1954, with 140-mph winds, took 19 lives in North Carolina and caused more than \$125 million in damage.

The first Atlantic hurricane of this season abruptly charged the coast early Thursday, its eye touched land at 1:15 a.m. at Fort Fisher, south of Wilmington by the Cape Fear River, the National Weather Service said.

Flooding rivers remained a danger.

"We've been lucky thus far even though these people have been terribly damaged and it has been bad for them," Gov. Jim Hunt said Thursday as he toured near Wilmington. Damage in the city itself was widespread but limited largely to downed signs, toppled trees, flooded streets and minor structural damage to buildings.

These deaths were attributed to the storm by local officials:

- George Burrows Kline, 70, of Wilmington, who died of a heart attack Tuesday after trying to secure his cottage at Wrightsville Beach.

- Larry Bell, 32, acting director of the Brunswick County Department of Social Services, who died in a car accident Wednesday night on U.S. 17 at the height of the storm.

- Arnold C. Marshburn Jr., 20, of Route 2, Wallace and Lisa Gail Parker Walls, 22 of Beaufort, who both died when their cars collided head-on on wet pavement Wednesday afternoon east of Wallace.

The areas suffering heaviest damage from the storm appeared from early reports to be Caswell Beach and Holden Beach in Brunswick County.

Most of the island areas evacuated in advance of the storm were to reopen to residents today.

Please see DIANA, 5A

# Diana

Continued from 1A

Although early precautions protected many pleasure boats and fishing vessels, many more sank, were driven aground or shattered in docks and collapsed boat sheds.

**Carolina Beach**

Roofs torn from motels, power lines, chunks of metal and other debris littered Carolina Beach streets Thursday.

Hurricane Diana appeared to have left its mark most heavily on Lake Park Boulevard, the highway entering Carolina Beach, and along streets nearest the beachfront.

High tides combined with rainwater to push the lake onto Lake Park Boulevard. Water was about three feet deep on the street, making the main thoroughfare to Kure Beach impassible. Emergency crews and newsmen reached Kure Beach by Dow Road that runs down the west side of Pleasure Island.

Canal Drive resembled its namesake Thursday. Water stood more than a foot deep along much of the street that leads from Lake Park Boulevard to the main multifamily area on the north end of the island.

Completed condominiums and townhouses appeared to have escaped the storm with damage mostly to their roofs. Many were missing shingles and gutters. Some lacked window glass.

Four condominiums under construction on Canal Drive and Carolina Beach Avenue North were destroyed. The frame of a room from a condominium in the 900 block of Canal Drive landed on the house next door.

Carolina Beach Councilman Doyle Brummitt, who lives at Forest By The Sea Townhouses, credited the city's building codes for the high survivor rate of the condominiums and townhouses.

The roofs were ripped from two motels on Carolina Beach Avenue North: the Anchor Motel and King's Motel.

The storm also took down many billboards. Few business signs escaped the storm intact. Power lines hung down on many streets.

The OP Lounge appeared to be the boardwalk business most heavily damaged by the storm. Half of the lounge's second floor, which faced the ocean, was ripped off.

Much of the boardwalk was covered by fallen power lines, pieces of metal roofing, glass, wood and other debris.

The streets were being patrolled Thursday by Highway Patrol troopers, who said they were keeping a close watch on businesses to prevent looting.

Hundreds of Carolina Beach residents who did not stay on the island during the hurricane were trying to get back Thursday afternoon. All were being turned away by National Guardsmen and Carolina Beach policemen, who had orders not to allow anyone on the island other than emergency personnel, utility repair crews and newsmen.

Carolina Beach's 100,000-gallon water tower collapsed Wednesday about 10:30 p.m. The town's million-gallon water reservoir was leaking water rapidly Thursday but was later repaired.

City crews would begin clearing streets today, Brummitt said.

Destruction of the 100,000-gallon water tower on Third Street is not serious as it might have been because Carolina Beach officials were already preparing to build a 500,000-gallon elevated water tank. Engineering plans have already been drawn.

**Kure Beach**

The storm left tiny Kure Beach virtually unscathed. The Army Corps of Engineers said beach erosion at nearby Fort Fisher, where Diana's center first came ashore, was minimal.

Damage estimates were not available.

Paul Hall of the Federal Emergency Management Agency said preliminary reports were being prepared Thursday, but he did not want to release them.

"They aren't going to be right at this point," Hall said. A team of investigators from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development left Raleigh about 4 p.m. for Wilmington, he said. That group will estimate damage to all of the areas affected by Diana.

Part of the roof was sheared off the Kure Key Motel and one of King's Cottages and about two-thirds of the Kure Pier was missing. Shingles flapped in the wind on some buildings and some windows were shattered. About two inches of sand covered sections of U.S. 421 in the town.

**Wrightsville Beach**

Wrightsville Beach escaped major damage from Hurricane Diana.

A storm surge and exceptionally high tide lapped at the tops of bulkheads at homes on Banks Channel and marinas, but water damage to buildings was minimal.

There was shallow flooding, utility lines were down, shingles were blown from roofs and windows were shattered. Railings and pilings on piers and boat docks were torn loose.

Residents were kept away until late Thursday afternoon until electricity was partly restored.

Wrightsville Beach Police Chief George Antley said seawater there had surged over the berm near Conch Lane on Shell Island when the storm hit.

"It ate up a lot of berm," Antley said.

Beach erosion was most severe on the north end of the island, where there have been erosion problems before and where the town pumped sand to build up the beach.

"There was a lot of wind blowing around between 2 and 3 o'clock this morning," Antley said.

A few policemen and firefighters rode out the storm in the town hall on Causeway Drive, which is about 12 feet above sea level.

A predicted storm surge of five to eight feet which would have inundated parts of the beach, did not materialize.

Town Alderman Jim Summey said he did not know of anyone else who stayed on the island through the storm. The beach was evacuated Tuesday.

"People were super cooperative," Summey said. "It only took two and a half hours to evacuate the whole island when the order was given."

A few people refused to leave Tuesday night, but got off the island as the storm threat increased.

There were a few problems trying to keep people off the island after a roadblock was set up at the bridge around 4 p.m. Tuesday.

One unidentified man paddled across the waterway on his surfboard Wednesday and was seen walking past the town hall, surfboard in hand and headed for the beach. Police turned him away, Summey said.

Some residents also tried to approach the island by boat Wednesday, he said.

**Brunswick County**

Despite initial reports that Brunswick County was devastated by Hurricane Diana, the storm seems to have spared the county another Hazel, the storm that demolished the beaches in 1954.

Beaches and rural areas were hit about equally hard, said David Clegg, public information officer and county attorney. "Some rural areas sustained as much damage as the beach areas," he said.

Most of the damage came from falling trees and broken glass, he said, adding that most houses seemed to be OK. He did not have dollar figures for damage on Thursday.

About 95 percent of the county was without power Thursday. The Brunswick Electric Membership Cooperative and Carolina Power & Light were working, clearing trees, deciding which lines needed to be replaced and which areas will be serviced first.

"Some areas should start returning to normal service by late tomorrow," he said.

One death attributed to Diana was reported in Brunswick County. Larry Bell, 32, the acting director of the Brunswick County Department of Social Services, died in a car accident Wednesday night.

Bell had his home in Longwood and was travelling north on U.S. 17 to the government complex. As one of the organizers of the county evacuation, he had spent the past few days at the complex and had gone home to get some clean clothing to bring back to the center, David Clegg, public information officer and county attorney, said.

Coming around a corner, Bell lost control of the car, crossed the center line and hit another car, Clegg said. Bell died at the scene. The driver of the other car suffered minor injuries.

"It was a terrible shock," said Clegg. "He did a phenomenal job" organizing the hurricane evacuation.

Throughout Brunswick County, trees were split or uprooted, blocking major roads and winding side streets. Power lines lay like dead snakes or swung hazily near passing cars.

Some trailers were roofless and one had overturned in Shallotte. Billboards and gas station carports were in shreds.

Nobody was permitted on Ocean Isle Beach Thursday. Police Chief Jerry Gurganus said a couple of houses lost their roofs, a number had lost shingles and one house under construction was destroyed.

"We didn't have the tides we were expecting," he said, and the sea had not come over the dunes. People will be permitted back on the island 8 a.m. today.

The storm damage seemed less severe on N.C. 179 between Shallotte and Ocean Isle Beach than on U.S. 17. Fewer trees were down and less debris was on the road.

In Holden Beach, around 30 houses had major structural damage, including their roofs, porches and fronts, a report by the National Guard says, released by Mayor Kenner Amos. One-third of the houses were missing shingles.

No damage was reported at the Holden Beach Pier. Several campers were overturned and two utility sheds were destroyed. The dunes were not broken but the streets were flooded from the rain and were not passable for cars.

"The bridge took a beating," Amos said. Without several parties called "wedges," which were blown away by the storm, the only access to the island was wobbling and was to be repaired Thursday afternoon, he said.



Sonja and Edward Johnson check out the roaring wind and rain from the safety of a shelter at St. Paul's United Methodist Church at Carolina Beach.

Gloria Barrett, police commissioner, said, "It looks bad but I was encouraged because it doesn't look like Hazel." If streets are clear, residents will probably be allowed back on the beach later this afternoon, Amos said.

In Southport, large oak trees were uprooted or split during the storm, and rooftops had blown off some businesses and residences. No houses were destroyed, said Police Chief Bill Coring. No injuries have been reported. He said it was too early to tell how much damage the hurricane had wrought.

"We have been hit, and we have been hit hard," Coring said. "We have not been wiped out. The citizens of Southport are old salts at hurricanes. They knew how to board up."

Thursday morning, branches were strewn all over the city of 2,500, and fallen trees and power lines made some residential streets impassible. By noon, however, residents and maintenance crews were busy clearing the area.

The Family Dollar Store lost its roof and windows, and awnings from the Maytag store downtown were wrapped around the building. The parking lot at Wilson's Plaza became a river as the rain continued to pelt the area early Wednesday afternoon.

Along Waterfront Park, waves reached the sidewalk during high tide. Homes facing the water fared well, with only minor roof damage apparent.

At the Southport Marina, a few rowboats were under water, and one man was busy pumping water out of his boat. Winds blew the siding off one of the buildings at the marina.

Outside of Southport, mobile homes remained intact, as did satellite dishes along N.C. 87.

The Brunswick County Airport had major damage at all of its buildings. The airport office, a trailer, was damaged beyond repair. There was no roof, and the furniture inside was taking a beating Wednesday afternoon from the blinding wind and rain. The office telephone was off the hook.

The new terminal building, also a trailer, remained on the cinder blocks where it had been placed last month, but winds had blown off part of one end.

Near the airport, a 24-foot motor boat, raised on blocks at a marina sales office, overturned during the storm.

A press release from Bald Head Island delivered by messenger Thursday morning said damage to the island was minimal on Wednesday, before the storm struck. Spokesmen for Bald Head Island Limited could not be reached for information about conditions Thursday.

Yaupon Beach also had damage to beach cottage roofs, and the surf was pounding away Thursday at the few feet of sand in front of the rocks.

At Long Beach, Arnold's Auto Service was demolished. The brick garage collapsed, piling cinder blocks, bricks, tires and aluminum on used cars.

The roof was missing from the Long Beach town hall. The police department building was damaged on one side. The storage buildings behind the city offices were demolished, according to Somers' report.

Camper trailers and picnic tables two blocks from the beach overturned during the storm, and those remaining upright were sitting in two to three feet of water Thursday afternoon.

Public access roads to the beach became canals with water between one and three feet. Civil preparedness officer Jim Somers said he had not visited the oceanfront areas and he would not let news correspondents visit the beach.

Somers said it was premature to estimate the damage Long Beach had sustained. "We have taken a beating," he said. The storm raged from 10 p.m. Wednesday to 11 a.m. Thursday, he said, with winds from 110 to 120 mph. There were no injuries reported.

About 120 people spent the night at the Long Beach Recreation Center, one of three evacuation centers on the beach.

Tides carried away piers leading to beach cottages, and steps from the town's gazebo led into the ocean. After Big Lake in Boiling Spring Lake overflowed onto N.C. 87, the State Highway Patrol began directing traffic through 3 feet of water on the two-lane road, said Jim Fulmer,

Boiling Spring Lakes fire captain.

If the water continues to rise in Big Lake, Fulmer said, the town will also have trouble at the lake's dam at Alton Lennon Road, near the federal government's railroad line to the Sunny Point Army Terminal.

North Lake, which flows into Big Lake, was also overflowing on Boiling Spring Road. The Army Corps of Engineers arrived Thursday to sandbag North Lake, slowing the flow of water from North Lake into Big Lake and relieving the pressure on the dam, Fulmer said.

Sunset Beach apparently went almost unscathed by Diana. "We had very little damage," said Wallace Martin, town manager. No power lines were down and town official reported very little erosion, Martin said.

Sunset Beach residents will be permitted to return today at 8 a.m.

**Columbus County**

In Columbus County, a two-man Red Cross damage assessment team reported Thursday afternoon that some trees and limbs were down and some shingles were missing but they found "no housing that was uninhabitable," said JoAnn Rhodes, executive director of the Columbus County Red Cross chapter.

Businesses were closed in Tabor City Thursday. All police and rescue squad personnel were on duty, Iris Bonknight, police dispatcher reported.

Clewis of Riverview near the Waccamaw River in eastern Columbus, said trees were uprooted with many trees falling across power lines. The road into Riverview, which parallels the river, was flooded and barely passable. No injuries were reported.

The Columbus County corn crop has been extensively damaged by the high wind, farmers reported.

Aadams National Guardsmen arrived in Whiteville Thursday night to help distribute food to the 16 shelters in Columbus County. A contingent of guardsmen sent to Whiteville earlier was transferred to the coast.

Electrical service was intermittent in Whiteville throughout Thursday.

In Lake Waccamaw, winds were bending moss-draped cypress trees and whipping up whitecaps around 2:30 p.m. Thursday.

Pat and Crowell Hinson, owners of Pinewood Manor Mobile Homes — with sales offices in Shallotte and Whiteville — estimated damages to their inventory of mobile homes at \$2 million or more.

The Hinsons were waiting out the storm at the Lake Waccamaw Motor Lodge with about a dozen others.

**Bladen County**

About 1,300 people took refuge in various shelters in Bladen County early Thursday as Hurricane Diana's winds began uprooting trees, particularly in the southern part of the county. Electric power failures were extensive. Most of the Four County Electric Membership problems occurred on N.C. 87 and N.C. 211 south of Elizabethtown. Power failed for some CP&L customers on U.S. 701 south of Elizabethtown.

A steady wind of 30-40 mph per hour was reported at Elizabethtown Thursday afternoon with gusts of 55 mph.

Contributing to the *Morning Star's* coverage of Hurricane Diana were Ray Belew, Shannon Brennan, Keith Cate, Bettie Fennell, Leslie Gruber, Candy Hatcher, Mark Harrison, William Howard, Paul Jennewein, Deborah Kelly, Debbie Norton, Anne Silverstein, Judith Tillman, Merton Vance, and Mary Wilson of the city and regional reporting staff; Clifton Daniel, Patty Morgan, Bobby Parker, Martin Proffitt, Ben Seelmeier, and Gina White of the lifestyle staff; correspondents Dan Hendrick, Joe Lanier, Donna Long and Jack Murphy and Ray Wyche; photographers Charlie Archambault, Gray Honeycutt, Dan Sears and Jack Upjohn; artist Robert Holst; and editors Hayes Clement, William J. Coughlin, Mark Farber, Mark Fisher, John Herbert, Susan Kille, Ken Meyer, Frank Stanfield, John Strayhorn and Fred Vultee.