

Area bids farewell to Diana

Sun shines after hurricane's visit

- Lights come on again, 1B
- Where's Diana? 2A
- Through the camera's eye, 1E

From staff reports

While many hurricane volunteers slept late for the first time in days this weekend, and area residents basked in sunlight rather than huddling under flashlights, the Red Cross was making plans to help families disrupted by Hurricane Diana.

The Red Cross has estimated that 3,554 families suffered minor or major losses during the hurricane. It will open assistance centers Monday for them.

The centers will open at three locations: the Community Arts Center in Wilmington at Second and Orange streets; Carolina Beach Town Hall at Carl Winner Drive and Canal Street; and the International Longshoreman's Association building in Southport at 10th and Caswell streets.

The centers will operate from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily until people stop coming in, said Jo Ann Jones, communications officer for the Red Cross.

"It's for anyone who needs to be helped to get back to a normal living situation," Ms. Jones said.

Caseworkers will be assigned to people and families, who must bring identification to the centers. Available assistance includes food; clothing; essential household items such as bedding, stoves and refrigerators; medical assistance; and occupational tools for those who lost home businesses.

The caseworkers also will refer people to other sources of assistance.

Saturday afternoon, the Red Cross closed its last hurricane evacuation center, at Hoggard High School in Wilmington.

Long Beach, one of the towns hardest hit by Hurricane Diana, released a damage estimate Saturday totaling \$18.5 million. The town's assessment team found four homes and one garage business destroyed; 152 homes, three multi-family homes and six businesses with major damage; and 433 homes and three businesses with minor damage.

About 75 percent of Long Beach homes were still without power Saturday, said Mayor Ben Thomas. Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. was still working on restoring power Saturday.

At noon Saturday, Long Beach began allowing only property owners into the restricted beachfront areas of 58th Street west to



Staff photo by Charlie Archambault

This Caswell Beach house lost a roof, a flag and the kitchen sink to Hurricane Diana.

the Point at Lockwood Folly Inlet and Davis Canal south to the ocean. The rest of the town was open Saturday.

Thomas said officials hope to have the beachfront open by 7 a.m. today. But he said individuals should check this morning with Long Beach Police before they return.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has determined that an old transformer that ruptured on East Beach Drive during the hurricane did not leak any polychlorinated biphenyls, Thomas said. The transformer leaked only mineral oil, he said. PCBs have been banned because they cause cancer.

As the remnants of Diana spun back into the Atlantic, its survivors exchanged stories — some dramatic, some tragic, some funny. Some just reflected on twists of fate, on fear or on luck.

Commercial fishermen Joe Thomason and Charlie Hall spent Wednesday night scrambling about their boat at Carolina Beach Marina, trying to keep from losing it and possibly their lives.

"We were working in 80 to 90 mile per hour winds and rain," said Thomason, who owns the boat.

Thomason and Hall spent

Tuesday and Wednesday nights on their boat in the marina. The most frightening moments came Wednesday night, when a crewless shrimp boat bounded into the marina and came within a foot of their boat before banging into a pier.

"Bumper" Jack Benton told about the crewless shrimping boat in a separate interview.

Benton, also a commercial fisherman, stayed on board the *Big Tee* in the municipal marina Wednesday night and watched Diana do its thing.

"It was like being in an old agitation washing machine," he said.

Benton said he "watched the whole thing," and saw the trawler *Lauralei* break her moorings and drift into a piling before turning around and heading for a pier.

The vessel came alongside as if someone were at the helm, Benton said. He said he then tied her up.

"The good Lord had to be co-pilot," he said.

Marvin Lewis, who lives south of Tabor City, said power went out there around 10 a.m. Thursday and trees had fallen all over

Please see DIANA, 4A

Diana

Continued from 1A

town. "It is just a good first-class nasty day with gusty winds at this point," Lewis said about noon Thursday.

"We've got corn flakes and water. We rode through Hazel, you know, so we at least know to do something."

Thursday afternoon in the shelter at West Brunswick High School, evacuees paced, talked or just stared out at the storm. Some huddled around a television set hooked up to a generator that supplied the only power in the building. Still others gathered around the light from a few candles.

The roof was torn and the buildings dark. The sound of dripping water echoed around the quiet hum of voices.

"The mood's been fine. It's not a festive mood, but no one's panicked. People have been very nice," said Harriet Ackis of Dunn as she waited for the storm to end. She said she and her husband, Hunter, had expected to spend the week at their oceanfront summer house on Holden Beach.

"We want to go back and look," Mrs. Ackis said.

The couple came to Holden Beach Sept. 8 but left for Dunn three days later, on Tuesday, when the order was given to evacuate. They returned Wednesday when they thought it was safe. They left again at 10 p.m. Wednesday, just ahead of Diana.

"We called the police to find out where to go and they told us to come here," Ackis said.

"They were very well organized," Mrs. Ackis said.

At Yaupon Beach Thursday, a lone soul walked with some difficulty toward the strand. She fought with her umbrella, braving stiff winds to see what was happening on the beach. "Nobody's crazy but me," she said.

Diana did not budge Ruby Oldham from her Carolina Beach home. In the 45 years she has lived at the beach, she said, she has never left for a hurricane and never intends to.

"I've been through too many to get scared about this," Ms. Oldham said. "I feel just as safe here as anywhere."

She said she thought the storm



Staff photo by William Howard

Myra McMillan of Fair Bluff plays cards with friends at Whiteville Primary School emergency shelter Thursday night. Also shown are Pam Wright (center) and Sylvillan Carter (looking on) of Whiteville.

was "definitely at least as strong as Hazel. But it didn't really bother me. I don't get excited too easily."

As the winds died down Thursday, Brenda Symes of Kure Beach could be found sitting outside the Laney High School gymnasium smoking a cigarette.

"I'm a loner," said Mrs. Symes, who brought her 13-year-old daughter to the shelter early Tuesday afternoon. "I go stir crazy in there."

"I'm not scared," she said. "I've been through tornadoes and all. I'm just waiting on the word to go home."

Evelyn Burge sat holding her 2-week-old grandson in the Trask shelter Thursday and wondering about her home in Rainbow Trailer Park. She and her family had left home about midnight Wednesday "when the winds were rocking the trailer so hard, I thought sure it would turn over."

"I've never been so scared in my entire life," she said.

David Boswell said Thursday he wasn't scared for his safety because "I really feel pretty secure right here." But he was concerned about his home in Black Forest Trailer Park in Seagate. He and his wife Elaine went to Trask at about 7 p.m. Tuesday.

"Everything we have is at home," he said. "And it might not be there when we get back."

"I think everybody is just holding their breath," he said. "I went through Hazel, Donna and David. But this thing is just so unpredictable. Hazel and Donna just came in and did what they were going to do and left, but this one just keeps hanging on."

Maurice Lechel of Carolina Beach sat with his wife outside the Hoggard High gym Thursday.

"It's the only place you can smoke," Lechel said. "We heard the water tower went right down next to where we live. We're not hoping for too much when we get back."

Nancy Blake of Winnabow was at the Hoggard High shelter Thursday waiting for her husband to leave Southport. He was working for Carolina Power and Light.

"They can't get the workers that

need to come in, in — so those workers who are there are stuck," Mrs. Blake said.

Mrs. Blake and others left the shelter Wednesday to pick up supplies.

Please see DIANA, 5A

Bel

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