

# WILMINGTON *Morning Star*

Established in 1867 / Vol. 117, No. 295 / Price twenty-five cents / Wilmington, N.C.

Saturday, September 22, 1984

## Reagan OKs federal disaster aid for region

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President Reagan declared five counties in Southeastern North Carolina disaster areas Friday because of damage caused by Hurricane Diana.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency estimated that damage in New Hanover, Brunswick, Pender, Columbus and Bladen counties was \$79 million.

"We have tried everything we know to get this declared," said Clint Fuller, executive assistant for

Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C. "FEMA had an awful time finding enough damage to meet its criteria."

The disaster declaration means that New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender counties are eligible for both individual and public assistance. Columbus and Bladen counties are eligible for public assistance only.

In addition, those five counties and Duplin, Onslow and Sampson are eligible for federal aid for crop damage and other farm losses.

Reagan signed the declaration at 4:18 p.m. Friday.

New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender counties are eligible for

small business administration loans, temporary housing help, and grants for a number of things including medical care and tax help, Fuller said.

Columbus and Bladen are eligible for grants to state and local governments to repair publicly owned facilities including roads and sewer systems. Under this type of aid, the federal government pays 75 percent with the state and local governments sharing the remaining 25 percent, Fuller said.

The disaster declaration means the Army will be able to assist debris cleanup. New Hanover County

Manager Felix Cooper said Army representatives from Fort Bragg will be here Monday to discuss the cleanup.

The Army probably will be able to send men and equipment by Tuesday, Cooper said. County residents should have debris piled by the roadside for pickup some time in the next three weeks.

Cooper said the county probably will be reimbursed for manpower and debris removal costs, but said beaches are the areas that will benefit most from the declaration.

Carolina Beach Town Manager Rick McLean said Friday the decla-

ration might help the town hasten debris cleanup and the replacement of its collapsed water tower.

Carolina Beach's water tower was blown over by the storm. Although the town was already planning to build a new tower, the storm made the need more urgent.

Kure Beach Mayor Lee Wrenn said he was not certain what assistance the disaster designation might bring to his town but he welcomed the announcement.

"I think that's great news for the town," he said. "I know there are

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some people in our town that could use some help."

Disaster aid could include low-interest loans and other assistance to victims of the storm, but both McLean and Wrenn said it was too soon to tell exactly how much money would be available and who would qualify for it.

Brunswick County Manager William Carter said he is "real pleased" about the disaster declaration.

"A lot of people are going to need the help, especially our farmers," he

said. "It sort of brightens my day. Maybe now we can get back to normal and move forward."

Town and county officials will meet Monday morning to discuss what funds will be available and how they will be distributed.

Officials of Surf City and Topsail Beach said Friday that they anticipated the disaster declaration, but could not comment on its impact until they were officially notified. The Pender County beach towns had not gotten that notice late Friday afternoon.

Earl Dunn, manager for AT&T in Wilmington, said his company will be responsible for establishing

about 25 temporary phone lines in offices that will be set up for federal personnel.

"We've had a truckload of equipment standing by here since the day after the storm anticipating that the declaration would be signed," Dunn said.

While government officials are busy signing papers, the American Red Cross is still caring for those hurt most by the storm. Mary Summers, spokesman for the Red Cross, said three centers will remain open during the weekend.

The centers are the Community Arts Center, 2nd and Orange streets in Wilmington; Carolina Beach town hall, Carl Winner

Street and Canal Drive; and the International Longshoreman's Association Hall, 10th and Caswell streets in Southport.

The centers will be open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and from 1 to 6 p.m. Sunday.

"These hours are for people who haven't been into the service centers," Ms. Summers said. "We want to get each person living as normally as possible in their own house. That means we can help with groceries, clothing, household items, medical needs and some repairs."

Staff writer Candy Hatcher and correspondent Dan Headrick contributed to this report.