**HURRICANE FLOYD STRIKES**

Region hunkers down, waits for storm’s punch

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**From staff reports**

As Hurricane Floyd approached the coast of Southeastern North Carolina, the Morning Star dispatched Wednesday morning reporters and photographers to various counties in the region. Here is their report:

**NEW HANOVER**

By 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Wrightsville Beach was empty, except for those doing last-minute preparations.

Outside Vito’s Pizzeria, owner Don Womble and his son Jack waited until the last minute because they were being optimistic.

"Floyd was enough, I don't want to even see this one," Jack said. The Wombles live in Porters Neck and were planning to evacuate to Greensboro.

Jack said he works at Crocker's Marine, where employees pulled boats out of the water Tuesday.

"The Wombles were boarding up the restaurant and putting sandbags inside to prevent water from the Lumina Avenue pizzeria, Mary Ann and Billy Manger, owners of Circles Garden Deli and Ice Cream, were lifting off the floor and boarding up.

"I'm more nervous about tornadoes than the hurricane itself," Mrs. Manger said.

Wrightsville Beach is under a 10 p.m. curfew until further notice. The town was bracing for the worst.

"It's going to damage this beach like we have not seen since Hazel," Public Information Officer Michael Stokes said.

Rob Alford, another Wrightsville Beach resident, never rides out the storm and does not want to this time. But Wednesday, Alford was having a problem leaving the island. His brother borrowed his car Tuesday morning and was not back into Wrightsville Beach.

"They won't let him leave because they know his brother is stranded," Mr. Alford said.

"I don't want to stay, I like comfort and air conditioning," he said. "I had two roommates who stayed during Bonnie and they said they would never do it again. They thought they were going to die."

Further south on Carolina Beach, the only action early Wednesday afternoon was at the Exxon station on Lake Park Boulevard where people were gathering up. On the boardwalk, police on foot checked businesses to make sure people had evacuated.

**BRUNSWICK**

As raining poured down on Brunswick County Wednesday, the predictions for Hurricane Floyd were grim.

Nearly 5 inches of rain had fallen by midday, and Brunswick County officials have directed the county's emergency management for Brunswick County, agreed that mandatory evacuation of the beach communities was going well.

"More people have left for this than for Bonnie and Dennis put together," Mr. Logan said. "We have people evacuating that haven't even evacuated before.

A county-wide curfew was scheduled for 10 p.m. - Sheriff Hewitt doubled patrols in the areas that were evacuating.

"There is a lot of water," Mr. Logan said. "Road systems will definitely be bad. He explained the ditches are already full and the water table was up before the rains of the past couple of days.

"Get that much water on the ground, with the wind, will uproot trees, power poles and signs. That's what we're concerned about," he said.

In the Southport-Oak Island area of Brunswick County, officials and residents were making last-minute preparations.

At the Hannford superstore on Long Beach Road, Steve Smith, and Gene Martin bought two 24-packs of Coca Cola.

Long lines of last-minute shoppers clogged the aisles at the store Wednesday. Mr. Martin and Mr. Smith, Southport residents, were on their way to a 45-foot commercial fishing boat they plan to stay on during the storm. Mr. Martin said during hurricanes he takes the boat to the Yellow Banks area of the Intracoastal Waterway. The men will stay there, protected by 30-foot banks, until the storm is over, Mr. Martin said.

"We'll be in a big ditch," he said.

Another shopper, Tim Sipes of Oak Island, planned to stay at a friend's house on the island across the street from the condo where he had evacuated.

In Sunset Beach, town officials planned to tie off the pontoon bridge and cut off utilities to the island by 9 p.m.

The town of Shallotte issued an 8 p.m. curfew for today. To re-enter, residents will need proof of residency which can include bills, tax receipts or driver's licenses.

Hollin Beach Mayor Jim Lollis reported no problems with evacuation. Mr. Lollis planned to stay at his business, the Bankroll.

"It'll be a little closer to things but that doesn't mean I'll be an idiot and stick my neck out in it," he said.

**PENDER**

As heavy rains from the outer bands of Hurricane Floyd began lashing Surf City, residents of the Topsail Island community hastened to finish storm preparations before fleeing to the mainland.

Surf City, like the other two communities on the island, was under a mandatory evacuation order Wednesday afternoon.

At Hennings Outdoor Sports, Steve Bailey and Scott Moulton were busy restocking the last of 60 kayaks down the street to a covered garage.

They had only tied the boats down and left them outside for Dennis.

"Floyd's a real storm," Mr. Bailey said. "Dennis was a little cup of wind."

**COLUMBUS**

Bracing for a direct hit from Hurricane Floyd, Columbus County officials in the area declared a state of emergency about midday Wednesday.

Communities along the Waccamaw River already were experiencing flooding and residents headed to emergency shelters set up by county schools.

County emergency operations staff, worried that if wood's predicted path held the storm making its way to Myrtle Beach, S.C., and cutting inland into Columbus County at the state line.

"We're just expecting the worst," said John Moore, city emergency services director.

ONSLOW

Onslow officials ordered a mandatory evacuation North Topsail Beach and all other low-lying areas Wednesday morning and began urging residents to shelter outside of the county.

A curfew has been set for Onslow County through today.

Officials opened 12 shelters in Onslow County, including seven that will be manned by local officials. Those shelters will not be furnished with costs or other basic necessities.

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**Area wide**

At 1 p.m. Wednesday, utility companies were bracing for the storm but had no reported power outages.

Carolina Power & Light mobilized an initial force of 7,000 power restoration workers. The crews will work to repair the impacted areas as quickly as possible to begin work to restore power.

Four County Electric Membership Corporation Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. also had extensive outages on standby.

The U.S. Coast Guard evacuated their Oak Island Wrightsville Beach stations Wednesday afternoon.

Staff writers Brian Foggman, Bettie Frisvold, Stacey Garrett McGrath, Tommy Perkins, Mike Ramsey, Cory Amy Turnbull, Tricia Vance and Co-Conte Smith contributed to this report.