

Aftermath mixes emotions

Carolina Beach residents relieved

By CORY REISS

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CAROLINA BEACH — With moods that might be described as cheery under other circumstances, property owners and residents of Carolina Beach and Kure Beach returned home Friday morning to begin cleaning up after Hurricane Floyd rumbled through.

"All in all, I think we're pretty lucky," said David Pfaff before he paddled away in a john boat using a broom to navigate floodwaters around the Carolina Beach lake.

The Snow's Cut bridge opened at 10 a.m. for residents who grinned in the face of lost shingles, porches, beach walkways, and windows, because damage wasn't close to expectations. The bridge opens at 6 a.m. today to the general public.

On Carolina Beach Avenue North, the road closest to the ocean at the north end of the island, Regan Arbina had lost the companion to her washing machine, which lay face down in a first-floor room.

"We haven't found the dryer yet," she said, while looking outside through an open door. The room was demolished and full of sand, but she figured storm surge damage could have been much worse.



Richard Berg inspects his neighbors' home Friday on Carolina Beach Avenue North, where storm surge from Floyd filled the house with 3 feet of sand. Many Carolina Beach residents returned to their homes Friday to assess the damage.

Across the street, Stewart Bruner was strangely uplifted for someone with a bulldozer as he dug 3 feet of sand out from beneath his house.

Carolina Beach Avenue North, where damage was worst, was buried under about 4 feet of sand.

Watching the bulldozer work, Mr. Bruner said he was "ecstatic."

After Hurricane Fran, he found the house ripped from its pilings and thrown across the street. The damage from Hurricane Floyd couldn't compare.

"We were pretty nauseous driving onto the island this morning," said his wife, Paula, also all smiles.

But down the street three blocks, Richard Berg, 26, shook his head. He was in the process of boarding up a neighbor's beachfront vacation and rental house to protect it from further damage.

Inside, two feet of sand covered the first floor. The storm surge had shoved all the furniture into a pile of wreckage against the street-side wall — just as with Hurricane Fran, he said.

The Carolina Beach lake flooded surrounding neighborhoods with 4 to 5 feet of water, which in most cases did not reach the first floors of the raised homes. Lake Shore Drive was submerged under more than a foot of water.

Town Council member Dennis Barbour said the flooding would linger in that area for at least three days as pumps continued to work.

Storm damage was estimated to be at least \$2.5 million, Mr. Barbour said. He called the damage minimal to moderate.

Front-loaders would have Carolina Beach Avenue North clear by Monday, he said.

Farther south, Kure Beach Mayor Betty Medlin said damage was minimal. Please see BEACH on page 6B

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mal there. Streets that were covered in sand had been cleared by late afternoon. Damage estimates had not been completed late Friday.

Both towns reported power was on for nearly all residents. There were no curfews in place Friday.

Most people here gauged Hurricane Floyd's damage level between those of hurricanes Fran and Bonnie.

Jim Fritch, owner of the Silver Dollar restaurant and bar on the Carolina Beach Boardwalk, shies away from predicting what a storm will do to the town's homes and businesses.

"You just have to come back and see what it is. You'll make yourself crazy if you put things in your mind," he said.

He felt lucky when he returned and found a few inches of water in his kitchen but nothing more. The Boardwalk, buried under several feet of sand after Hurricane Fran, had some scattered debris on it but little else.

However, Mr. Fritch lamented a neighbor's misfortune. Down the street about a block, the roof of one vacant building had blown off and struck the neighboring H&S Sports building, ripping its roof off as well.

Both roofs lay smashed in surrounding streets.

"This is devastating," Mr. Fritch said, while surveying the damage to his friends' building. "These people are such good people."

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