

# Heartache rises with the water

**T**he wind was just a diversion.

Water was the hurricane's real weapon. That became clear in the hours after much of eastern North Carolina awakened Thursday to what appeared to be relatively light damage.

We didn't know how many people had retreated to their roofs or to trees.

We didn't know that many roads were covered with water, and that more water was on the way.

We didn't know Wilmington was marooned, and that loved ones who had fled the storm couldn't get back.

We didn't know that thousands of homes had been submerged, and that the waters would soon submerge more. Neighbors in Duplin County were among the hardest-hit.

We didn't know that farmers already battered by the troubles of tobacco, drought, and of another hurricane two weeks ago, now faced the loss of crops,

equipment, buildings and homes.

We didn't know, in short, that while the sun shone brightly, disaster was rising, rushing, inundating eastern North Carolina.

The vastly improved Federal Emergency Management Agency will be dispensing dollars, as will insurance companies. Those dollars can eventually replace much of what was lost. But not all.

Some losses won't be covered. Others can't be replaced at any price - family homes and personal possessions such as the photographs, papers and mementoes that document our lives.

Those of us who merely lost shingles, trees and electricity now realize how lucky we were.

Thousands of our friends and neighbors are suffering, and it may be months before they get back to something resembling normal life. They need our understanding and our support.