Huge swath submerged; rescuers save hundreds
By MIKE RAMSEY

Flooding waters left by Hurricane Floyd continued to spread as the Waccamaw, Cape Fear and Lumber rivers rose to record levels in Columbus, Duplin and Pender counties.

For the second day, Columbus County rescuers were sent to Craven Island to carry out residents who were trapped by water. The isolated area in the southeast portion of Columbus County near the Green Swamp was submerged.

But for the other island counties, the rescue seemed to be slowing as almost as many people who died near water had evacuated.

Around Wilmington, life was returning to normal, with county government and courts set to open today. The public schools remained closed, however.

Earl King, Pender County's assistant director of emergency management, said that between 300 and 400 people have been picked up from their Pender homes by rescue crews over the last few days.

"We have some people who have said, 'We are high and dry and we are going to stay,'" Mr. King said.

Bottled water is in short supply in most of the affected areas, and relief workers have begun handing out bags of ice. "Put it in a pot, and it will turn into water," Mr. King said.

Around Wilmington, the situation turned frustrating for city residents, their streets dry and power working, continued to be largely cut off from the rest of the region.

The University of North Carolina at Wilmington, which had announced it would no dormitories Sunday and classrooms today, said Sunday that state emergency management officials had not yet decided whether to close the campus until roadways improve.

"Until the roads have gone to a lot of effort to get prepped and open Monday, but consequently we have been told that the roads for our student and staff are not passable," said Chancellor James Louisell.

"We have students from every county in North Carolina going to UNCW," he said. "If we are told the roads are not passable, then we are certainly not going to go to travel."

John Moore, the emergency management director for Columbus County, said that one man who killed earlier this week when his car slid off road and into deep water. He drowned. Mr. Moore's name was not available.

The report brings the North Carolina death toll to 26.

From U.S. 701 eastward, thousands of acres are under water. Bogue Sound, Anson and Croco remain flooded, and floodwaters there were rising or expected to crest Sunday.

"We spent all day yesterday saving people out," he said.

At least 60 square miles of Duplin County were covered by water. The county received a truckload of food from the Federal Emergency Management Agency on Sunday, said James Pate, the assistant director of county emergency management.

Law enforcement workers have stepped up waterborne patrols to control looting, of which there have been several reports, he said.

Crews also are checking homes for missing people. There already have been three deaths in Duplin County.

In New Hanover County, flooding also was the central issue, said Bill Fontenot, emergency management spokesman.

"We have a lot of stranded citizens," he said. "The water is still rising."

He said the county has more than 100 impassable segments of road.

And in Brunswick County, Annie Norman of Oak Island said there has been uncontrolled access to the island during the day, which has led to looting.

"There's no protection," she said. "You have people walking in my backyard."

The town has limited the access to the beach area to property owners with IDs, but Ms. Norman said there was little enforcement.

Cecil Logan, the Brunswick County emergency management coordinator, said N.C. 211 and U.S. 17 have reopened to traffic, but N.C. 113 was closed due to rising floodwaters. Air rescue continued in Brunswick County Saturday night. A pregnant woman gave birth on a military helicopter on its way to New Hanover Regional Medical Center, Mr. Logan said.

Mr. Logan said grocery stores were beginning to receive residents' management of food.

Across the region, grocery stores were cleared of food. Runs on the stores prior to and following the storms, then floods spread on the roads prevented trucks from restocking the stores.

The warehouse is so backed up... Honestly it's a shortage across the board," said Jeff Priddy, the store manager of the Food Lion at 3600 S. College Blvd. as we are told the roads are not passable."

He said shipments were expected today. Other grocery store chains have already received shipments and are beginning to restock.

Power was restored to most people whose homes and businesses were not destroyed by rain.

Jones-Odowil and Brunswick electric cooperatives reported no significant failures, while Four County still had 2,790 customers without power on Sunday.