

# Toll mounts in human life, property

Associated Press

As Hurricane Floyd unleashed its fury on the tiny Edgecombe County community of Pinetops, Ben Mayo scrambled to his boat in the dead of night, desperate to save his family and friends.

On Sunday, as the swollen waters of Town Creek receded, rescue workers recovered Mr. Mayo's body. Later, they sadly postponed their search for the body of his 5-year-old granddaughter, Sheika, one of six people swept to their deaths when Mr. Mayo's boat capsized Thursday.

They were among at least 26 people whose deaths have been attributed to Hurricane Floyd.

While the storm's human toll has been counted, state officials say it will be days before they can begin to estimate how much damage was caused by the storm.

"It's difficult to get damage estimates in a normal hurricane situation," said Renee Hoffman, a spokesman for the State Emergency Response Team. "In this kind of situation, we can't even get in to begin damage assessment, and I don't expect we will have firm numbers for quite a while."

President Clinton, who declared the eastern two-thirds of the state a disaster area, planned to tour flooded areas today.

Hurricane Floyd saturated eastern  
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## Deaths

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North Carolina with 20 inches of rain last week. Floodwaters have virtually shut down the coastal plain east of Raleigh. National Guard helicopters are shuttling food to stricken towns whose grocery shelves are bare, and drinkable water is being rushed to several counties where wastewater treatment systems failed and tap water became undrinkable.

About 300 roads, including parts of Interstates 95 and 40, remained closed Sunday, and 6,400 people remain in shelters. Military helicopters buzzed around the skies looking for stranded people.

Record floods have already been recorded at six places, breaking records dating back to 1919, when the Tar River reached 34 feet in Tarboro. On Sunday, the river had reached about 43 feet and was still rising.

Greenville, a city of 44,000, faces still worse flooding when the Tar River crests today. Forecasters estimate that it will be more than five days before the Tar River falls below flood stage in Greenville.

It will also be at least that long before the Neuse River falls back into its banks in Goldsboro and Kinston. The Neuse is not expected to crest in Goldsboro until Wednesday, at 16 feet above flood stage.

Flood waters have isolated five shelters in Edgecombe and Greene counties, including a church in the town of Maury where about 40 residents looked for protection from the storm. Food, supplies and portable toilets have had to be transported to the shelters by boat or helicopter, state officials said.

In Pitt County, where Greenville is located, and nearby Edgecombe, all water was undrinkable. Shortages of food at some of those shelters had been alleviated by Sunday afternoon.

Twelve N.C. National Guard helicopters left Marion in the western part of the state Sunday to take bottled water to Kinston and Halifax.

In Pinetops, the 1,500 residents mourned the loss of the six members of the Mayo family.

"People are just still in shock," Town Manager Brenda Harrell said Sunday.

Rescue Squad Chief Steve Burress said the floodwaters were still too high Sunday afternoon to venture into the woods and underbrush to try to find Sheika's body.

"We're sad to have to leave without bringing closure to everybody," he said. "We'll be going back again tomorrow."

On Saturday, workers recovered the bodies of Mr. Mayo's wife, Vivian; Sheika's mother, Keisha; and neighbors Cabrina and Destiny Flowers, both about Sheika's age.

The recovery effort was the final chapter in a tragic story of heroism and hard luck.

Authorities said Mr. Mayo, who loved to fish the local streams for trout and croaker, grabbed his flat-bottomed boat and loaded 11 family members and neighbors into it as the wind and rain from Hurricane Floyd swirled around them.

Mr. Mayo was trying to take them to safety when the boat capsized. Six people survived.

"He rescued eight people before he went back and got his own family," said police dispatcher Wanda Joyner.

Kendall Mayo, 30, was not surprised that his cousin died trying to help others.

"He had a big heart," Kendall Mayo said. "He was trying to help another family. That's the kind of person he was."