

THE WILMINGTON

THE PORT CITY OF PROGRESS AND PLEASURE

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Storm Cost \$11 Million

RALEIGH (AP)—Private property owners bore the brunt of Hurricane Helene's damaging winds, with their losses estimated at 6½ million dollars.

The figure represented the major share of total storm damages estimated at just over 11 million dollars, State Civil Defense Director Edward F. Griffin reported Thursday.

Gov. Hodges, who released Griffin's report, announced quick federal action to aid hurricane victims. He said the Federal Small Business Administration will open a temporary field office at Wilmington to receive loan applications from owners of storm-hit homes and businesses.

SBA Administrator Wendel B. Barnes has declared eight coastal counties disaster areas, making the loans available to private property owners at 3 per cent interest. The counties designated are Beaufort, Brunswick, Carteret, Craven, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico and Pender.

Other damage estimates in Griffin's preliminary report were: agricultural \$3,700,000; highways \$450,000; other public property \$355,000. Griffin said his figures did not include an estimated \$100,000 damage to sand dune rebuilding work at the Cape Hatteras National Seashore Area, principally on Ocracoke Island.

Hodges said he was pleased with prompt federal action following Helene's sweep of the Tar

Heel coast last week. The governor wired President Eisenhower Monday asking a disaster area designation for the territory hit by the storm. The President replied favorably on Wednesday.

In contrast, Hodges recalled, "Following the last hurricane we ran up against the nicest bouquet of red tape you ever saw in trying to get money."

The governor said the Army Corps of Engineers has arranged to bring a hopper dredge from Tampa, Fla., on an emergency basis to clear the partly blocked ocean channel at Morehead City. The work is expected to begin Monday morning.

An eye witness account of northwesterly winds holding back heavy seas from the storm was given by the Governor, who was on the coast during the storm. "If I didn't believe the biblical story of the Red Sea, I can believe it now," he related.

Weather Bureau reports said the wind direction and low tides when Helene struck held down damages. Wind velocities, ranging up to 135 miles per hour, were more severe than in Hurricane Hazel of 1954.

Road damage from the storm was most severe in the first highway division, where damage was estimated at \$238,767, the Highway Commission reported. Roads were hit particularly hard on Ocracoke and Hatteras islands.

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It is God that girdeth me, and maketh my way perfect. — Psalm 19:32.

He provides armor also. It is not enough to be pretty good, we should aim at perfection. A tiny wound from a rye straw caused the death of a supreme court judge. We are wrong to say we do not need God's armor.

24-Hour Weather Service

The manner in which the local office of the Weather Bureau functioned during the pre-hurricane period last Thursday and Friday by going on a 24-hour schedule and making other necessary arrangements to meet any emergency was a most commendable example of efficiency.

Similarly, commendation is due the many other agencies both in Wilmington and at the nearby beaches for the excellent preparation for emergency and the ability to put such programs into action without any loss of time.

But, of course, in the moments of anxiety last weekend as citizens prepared for the worst, it was the Weather Bureau round-the-clock duty which offered reassurances, and which did so much to separate the fact from fancy and rampant rumor.

But aside from the urgency created by storms, what the situation of this past week-

end also illustrated was the need for the local weather bureau to maintain a 24-hour schedule on a permanent basis. The weekend emphasized that fact.

Round-the-clock service is routine in various other bureaus in the state. There are many reasons why the same schedule should be in operation in Wilmington. Aside from the obvious need during emergencies, farmers and commercial fishermen in this area need that service, so do transportation and shipping concerns, airlines and so on. Also, the growth of Bluetenthal field offers another reason.

Plans for establishment of such service have been on the agenda for some time.

Now that attention has been drawn again to that possibility of service, we hope real progress can be achieved within a reasonable length of time. The need will remain.