

Riding out the storm 2A  
Jitters Along the Cape Fear 2A

Adjusters converge on area 3A  
State of emergency declared 3A

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**Hurricane Fran**

Today: Heavy rain and flooding are expected as Hurricane Fran hits the area



Complete forecast on 10A

# Morning Star

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## IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

### Hurricane takes aim for area's coastline

By JEFF SELINGO and SCOTT WHISNANT  
Staff Writers

Hurricane Fran barreled toward the Southeastern North Carolina coast Thursday, causing weather forecasters to predict what should be obvious by now: The storm was headed for a major clash with our coast.

The hurricane was expected to make landfall early this morning near the North Carolina-South Carolina line, just before high tide.

Fran began turning northward Wednesday and continued that track Thursday, changing its predicted point of landfall from Charleston, S.C., to Myrtle Beach, S.C., and finally to the North Carolina line.

Richard Anthony, meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Wilmington, said forecasters first predicted a front in Tennessee would clear out, allowing Fran to barrel in on Georgia or South Carolina. But the front held, he said, pushing the storm northward.

As of Thursday afternoon, the best scenario for residents here would be if the storm curved north enough so that the west side hit here, on a path similar to Hurricane Bertha's in July.

Instead, the combination of the powerful, fast-moving hurricane and high tide could mean storm surges ranging from 12 to 16 feet along the coast, said the Weather Service. Storm surges, the most deadly part of a hurricane, are walls of water that come ashore during a hurricane. They are worse during high tide.

High tide was between 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. today at North Carolina's southern beaches.

A locally based coastal geologist predicted even higher storm surges.

If the storm made landfall around Myrtle Beach, surges could reach 21 feet in Brunswick County and 17 feet at Bald Head Island, said Dan Pearson, who is studying the storm as he rides it out near Wrightsville Beach.

The northeast section of Fran is the storm's strongest area. So if the storm hits northern South Carolina, the Wilmington area would get the brunt of the storm.

A huge storm surge would flood most islands, Mr. Pearson said.

"Anything above 21 feet would be sticking out of the water," Mr. Pearson said. "And waves of a couple of feet would be splashing at the tops of those structures."

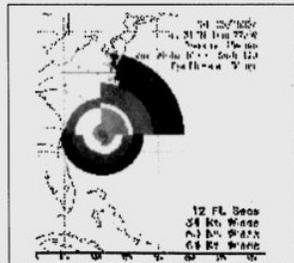
The storm may also create new inlets, particularly in the Pamlico and Albemarle sounds behind the Outer Banks, he said. But it could happen at barrier islands near here.

Water could rush into waterways and sounds behind barrier islands, already bulging with water from recent heavy rains. After the storm passes, the water will want to ebb back to the ocean, and the switch in winds will drive the water that way, also.

Mr. Pearson said anywhere there is a deep waterway channel, such as one dredged to make room for boats, near a narrow section of the island, water could cross the island to get to the ocean — and create a new inlet. Wrightsville Beach is an example of a barrier



Bumper-to-bumper traffic lines up about noon Thursday on South College Road as drivers head toward Interstate 40 ahead of Hurricane Fran.



Map shows the extent of hurricane-force winds from the eye of Hurricane Fran. Via the Internet from the Center for Ocean-Land Atmosphere Studies of the Institute of Global Environment and Society, a

inlet where this could happen, he said.

Another problem posed by Fran is the length of time the storm will likely batter the coast. Mr. Anthony said the area would get hurricane-force winds starting at 5 p.m. Thursday and lasting into this morning, Mr. Pearson said those strong winds would last even longer.

At 1 p.m., the center of Hurricane Fran was near latitude 32.0 north, longitude 77.6 west or about 140 miles south-southeast of the North Carolina-South Carolina line. The storm had increased its forward speed to 16 mph and had maximum sustained winds of 115 mph and gusts to 130 mph. Mr. Anthony said

### Presstime was early

Today's Morning Star was closed early to allow printing to be completed before Hurricane Fran knocked out power to our presses. It contains information available by mid-afternoon Thursday as Fran remained offshore.

Delivery may be delayed, as hurricane conditions are expected over much of our circulation area during normal delivery times. We apologize if your paper has been delayed, but the safety of our carriers comes first.

In Fran's aftermath, the Morning Star will provide news updates on our StarLine telephone service, at 762-1996, and on our World Wide Web site, <http://starnews.wilmington.net/>

offshore waves were as large as 22 feet.

Forecasters expected the storm to strengthen as it passed through the warm Gulf Stream Thursday evening. The increase in forward speed is bad news for those living inland in the path of the storm. The Weather Service predicted hurricane force winds as far as 100 miles inland.

The Weather Service also predicted 5 to 10 inches of rain.

Mr. Anthony said many beach structures won't be able to withstand hours of heavy wind. He said the storm really isn't comparable anymore to Hugo, the major hurricane that hit Charleston in 1989. Hugo was moving forward a little faster, and this storm has taken a different track, he said.

Instead, the storm more closely resembles one any older here can tell you about — the vaunted Hurricane Hazel of 1954.



Rex Bennett packs in dirt Thursday in a doorway of the building where he planned to ride out the storm in Carolina Beach. The sign is a reference to Hurricane Hazel, a powerful storm that wallpopped the area in 1954

### HURRICANE EVACUATION / Utility companies preparing for massive cleanup

## Thousands seek shelter from the storm

From staff reports

All of Southeastern North Carolina mobilized Thursday in preparation for the onslaught of Hurricane Fran.

Tourists and residents evacuated barrier islands by the thousands and headed for local shelters or for roads away from the coast. Power and utility crews prepared to enter the region from all points in expectation of a long and costly cleanup.

Bessie Hyatt, who was eating breakfast Thursday morning at the Gulf Stream Restaurant in Carolina Beach before evacuating, seemed to speak for thousands of coastal residents who were fleeing the storm.

"There's no use in taking a chance," she said. "You restore your house, but you can't restore your life."

Emergency officials throughout the region

stressed that anybody staying in the region should hunker down throughout the storm, and expect to hunker down after the storm has passed, as well. Police asked that nobody leave their homes after the storm arrives unless it is an emergency.

And expect lots of lines and delays long after Hurricane Fran has gone.

"What we would like to stress is that we are at this point expecting a fairly significant storm, with the kinds of winds that can cause significant damage," said New Hanover County Manager Allen O'Neal on Thursday morning. "To recover is going to require a lot of patience."

The region was certainly well-prepared by the time the storm came:

### New Hanover County

Most beach towns in the area were evacuated by noon, and emergency officials were

strongly recommending that people in low-lying areas and mobile homes leave for safer shelter.

After complaints from people who work with the homeless that many of their clients had trouble getting to shelters during Hurricane Bertha, county officials made a special effort to transport anyone who needed assistance.

"We've had a few calls for transportation," said county Tax Administrator Roland Register, who was handling media calls Thursday morning. The county was using a pair of vans, and the Sheriff's Department also was assisting people who needed a ride to a shelter, he said.

About 20 people boarded vans at the Good Shepherd House to Johnson Elementary School, one of three designated primary shelters in New Hanover County, said Mel Smith, administrator of the day shelter for

homeless people.

The Good Shepherd House, which also serves a hot lunch on weekdays, will be closed today, he said.

By 12:30 p.m., the New Hanover County Animal Control shelter was full, said Mr. O'Neal.

UNCW officials worked Wednesday night and Thursday morning to evacuate more than 1,900 students from residence halls.

By 11 a.m. Thursday, all but about 40 students — most of them international student — had either gone home or gone to student friends.

"That number may be trimmed down," said Maj. Bob Riley of the campus police. He hoped to find most of the remaining students an alternate place to stay.

Those who remain will be at the University Union, he said.

Please see FRAN on page 4c

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