

AFTER HURRICANE FRAN

POWERLESS

Fran called worst storm in CP&L's history

By BETTIE FENNEL
Staff Writer

Because of damage from Hurricane Fran, Carolina Power & Light Co. is having to rebuild a significant part of its system.

Many people consider devastation from Hurricane Hazel in 1954 as a benchmark, but CP&L may use Fran, which has taxed resources and manpower in the Southeastern United States. "I've never seen anything like it," said Bill Cavanaugh, CP&L president and chief executive officer. In terms of such widespread damage, Mr. Cavanaugh said, Fran is the worst storm in CP&L's history.

The company, however, still hopes to have power service restored to 97 percent of its customers by Friday.

Philip H. Morgan of Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. said there were still fewer than 1,000 customers without power.

A spokesman for Four County Electric Membership Corporation said almost 70 percent of all their customers have power. All 28,000 of their customers in Bladen, Duplin, Pender and Sampson counties had lost electric service.

'I've never seen anything like it.'

Bill Cavanaugh
CP&L president and CEO

Updates weren't available Monday from Four County electric cooperative.

CP&L's president said Fran caused three times as much damage as Hurricane Bertha, which cost the company about \$1 million.

To help restore power, tree crews and linemen from the Southeast, north to Pennsylvania and Illinois and as far west as Arkansas and Louisiana have converged on North Carolina.

Finding rooms for the workers has been a logistical nightmare across the state because of the number of people who left hurricane-ravaged areas.

CP&L made a plea for 150 rooms in people's homes that have electricity. People with rooms should call CP&L at 256-7221.

The company has talked with New Hanover County school officials about housing some workers.

Please see POWER on page 4A



Stuart Carter surveys the water at his home off Shaw Highway, between Rocky Point and Burgaw. The water is from the Northeast Cape Fear River.

River still rising in Pender

By ANNE MINARD
Star-News Correspondent

BURGAW — The Northeast Cape Fear River continued to defy its banks Monday, sending swift, tea-colored water toward lawns, roads and homes.

Pender County emergency officials said the river is expected to crest late Wednesday.

Forecasters with the National Weather Service said Wilmington residents need not worry. By the time the floodwaters brought by Hurricane Fran reach the mouth of the Cape Fear, they will seem like a high tide, said meteorologist Chuck Holtzinger.

Pender County hasn't been as fortunate, and things could get worse. "Until the Cape Fear goes down, we're going to have a backlog of flooding into Pender County," said Shari Ireland of the Weather Service in Wilmington.

She said she hasn't received water level readings since Sunday from Lock and Dam No. 2 at Elizabethtown because high water is keeping boats from the gauges.

Further north, the river was falling in Bladen County. A Monday afternoon reading at sock and then No. 3 measured 14 feet above the flood stage there, down from 17 feet Sunday.

But Mrs. Ireland said a storm system predicted for

The flooding should not affect the immediate Wilmington area. It likely will just seem like a very high river tide.

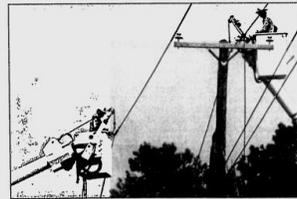
the area late tonight and early Wednesday could bring more bad news for riverfront residents.

"More rises are possible through the end of this week," she said. "Right now, it's hard to say how high."

The river's overflow made the following Pender County roads impassable Monday: N.C. 53 east of Burgaw, N.C. 50 near the Onslow County line, N.C. 210 between Shaw Highway and Hampstead, Old Maple Hill Road, Band Road, Croombsbridge Road and Lizard Lick Trail. Flooding was also reported near the Wildlife Resources boating access on U.S. 117 at the New Hanover County line.

Flooding farther north near Chinquappin in Duplin County, where residents were evacuated Sunday, appeared to be subsiding Monday. Duplin County officials said.

Please see FLOODS on page 4A



Finding rooms for electrical workers has been a logistical nightmare across the state. Some may end up sleeping in school gyms.

PERISCOPE

Section A
NATIONWORLD-12 OPINION 10-11

Section B
LOCAL COMICS 4 DEATHS 4

Section C
SPORTS 1-4 MONEY 5-8 5-8
MIXEDS 5-8 SINGS 3-8

LIFESTYLE 1-40 MOVIES 4
TELEVISION 4 CLASSIFIED 4-10

FLORIDA? GEORGIA? WILMINGTON? NO!

Saying the unthinkable: Hortense

By JEFF SELINGO
Staff Writer

There's no limit to the number of hurricanes that can hit one area in a single season.

That's why local forecasters are keeping a close eye on Hurricane Hortense, churning in the Caribbean.

A cold front moving across the country could block the storm from making landfall in Florida and guide it up the East Coast. But the same cold front and one that is following close behind could also keep the storm off the mainland and only bring rough seas to North Carolina.

"We're at the peak of hurricane season now, and people need to be aware of the conditions going on," said Shari Ireland, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Wilmington.

In the meantime, both cold

Projected paths of Hurricane Hortense



fronts are going to bring rain to the region. At least another 2 inches is expected tonight and Wednesday, Mrs. Ireland said.

"Flooding conditions are still going to be a problem," she said.

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At 11 p.m. Monday, the center of Hurricane Hortense was located near latitude 17.4 north, longitude 66.4 west. The storm was moving toward northwest at 7 mph with maximum sustained winds of 80 mph.

Forecasters at the National Hurricane Center are predicting the storm will hit the Florida Keys if the cold front doesn't push it north. In Puerto Rico, islanders boarded up windows and lined up to buy water, then rushed to the beaches to watch the churning sea.

The National Weather Service hurriedly issued a hurricane warning for Puerto Rico Monday morning and authorities posted a hurricane watch for the Dominican Republic's south coast.

Forecasters called Hortense, the eighth storm and third hurricane of the Atlantic season, volatile and dangerous.



Father of bluegrass dies

Bill Monroe, who laid the foundation of country music as the universally recognized father of bluegrass, died Monday in Springfield, Tenn. He was 84. **Story, 3A**

AFTER HURRICANE FRAN

Power

Continued from page 1A

in school gymnasiums. While trying to keep power restoration moving as fast as possible, company officials are looking nervously southwest at Hurricane Hortense churning in the Caribbean.

The East Coast doesn't need another hurricane now, said Roy Anderson, CP&L senior vice president of customer services.

Another storm, he said, would be a major problem for both local and out-of-state workers, who are spending long hours on the job here and will need a long rest when they're finished. But they would be dispatched to the next hurricane-damaged area if needed, he said.

Fran has also taxed resources. At one time, CP&L had doubts whether there were enough replacement power poles available in the Southeast. It ordered all the power poles its suppliers have in South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia.

The company that supplies transformers to CP&L is going to start turning out 120 a day until CP&L tells it to stop.

CP&L officials said they had never run short of transformers before Fran. Those that can be repaired are being taken to the shop to be refurbished and sent back out to go on poles, company officials said.

The company has rented a variety of equipment and vehicles like helicopters, airplanes and military-type half-tracks to reach swampy areas and remote locations.

It's those hard-to-reach and se-

verely damaged areas that will slow recovery, CP&L said.

"The next few days are going to be extremely challenging, because this is going to be the hardest part of the job," said Mr. Cavanaugh, company president.

Areas hardest hit include Kure Beach; the communities of Wrightsboro, Regeewood, Delco and Holly Ridge; and Porters Neck, Bayshore and Belvedere subdivisions, said Greg Pittillo, president for the region extending from Interstate 95 to the coast.

Water damage to individual meters will slow restoration of power to beach houses, Mr. Pittillo said.

He said 99 percent of the company's customers in the region were without power immediately after the storm.

Fran also destroyed 1,000 poles and 4,000 miles of line in the area. Statewide, the storm broke about 4,000 poles and ripped down 1,000 miles of line, Mr. Cavanaugh said during a news conference

Monday at the company's eastern transmission office on Market Street. A reporter asked about the background because the office didn't have power.

Despite the problems, about a half million of the company's 760,000 customers statewide had power restored by Monday. That leaves 222,000 statewide without electricity — about half of them between Interstate 95 and the coast.

And it will be days before many of those get their power back. Thunderstorms and torrential rains have hampered the recovery, CP&L officials said.

Friday morning, after Fran cut a wide swath from the coast north to the Virginia line, only 25 percent of CP&L's customers had electricity.

As CP&L gets lines repaired, Time Warner Cable in Wilmington is restoring cable television service with help from crews from other Time Warner companies.



John Wells Jr. (right) and Luther Gore push Mr. Wells' car out of a flooded section of N.C. 53 outside Burgaw. They were trying to get to Jacksonville.

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Floods

Continued from page 1A

ciels said a shelter at Chinquappin Elementary School was closed after no one showed up Sunday night.

Riverside residents in Pender County, who had seemed almost chipper as waters began to rise Sunday, were weary as they moved cars to higher ground — again — and evacuated their families.

Joe Lanier was one of about 20 residents who paddled boats Sunday to the still-rising end of Cape Fear Drive off N.C. 53.

On Monday, he led his 4-year-old grandson, clad in a lifejacket, up the same street in a boat. He planned to send him with relatives to Virginia, he said.

At Holland's Shelter Creek,

water rushed mercilessly toward low-lying areas, with little respect for boat docks, landscaping or even some residents' front doors.

Though 3 feet of water surrounded the shed and submerged the air conditioner in Daniel Ramsey's back yard, he considered himself lucky so far. He still had several inches to spare before the brown water invaded his home.

"I'm sick of this..." he said. Mr. Ramsey and his brother, Greg Ramsey, dangled their feet in the swollen river from a porch swing, near a position boat they'll use to go for supplies.

Mr. Ramsey and his neighbors, Stuart and Karen Carter, said floodwaters at their homes were already 2 inches higher than at the peak of the August 1992 floods, which caused \$1 million in damage to the same areas of Pender County.