

# Heat wave sizzling Dixie

From Staff And Wire Reports

Temperatures around North Carolina continued to sizzle in the 90s Wednesday, and drought conditions forced more calls for water conservation, but a forecaster said relief may come later in the week as a cold front approaches from the north.

In Henderson County, temperatures reached a record setting 93°F. and social service organizations scrambled to help disadvantaged and elderly citizens stay cool Wednesday.

"It definitely is hot," National Weather Service Asheville Airport station technician Andy Scott said. "The hottest July 9 on record. (The previous record of 92°F. was set in 1984)"

The Southeast sweated for a fourth day Wednesday under a blob of hot, humid air that has killed chickens, heightened demand for air conditioning and fans and worsened a water shortage in the drought-stricken region.

By midday, temperatures were well into the 90s from Virginia into northern Florida. National Weather Service offices in Kentucky and Arkansas warned that the combination of heat and humidity would push the heat index, a measure of how warm the air feels, to as much as 110 degrees.

The high pressure system pinning the muggy air over the Southeast "will remain the dominant weather feature

through the week," said the weather service office in Atlanta.

Cooler air pressed down from the North, but its collision with the persistent hot air was marked by thunderstorms paralleling the Mason-Dixon line.

South of that line, Richmond, Va., broiled at 96 at midday, while Washington, 100 miles to the north, was at 75 degrees.

On Tuesday, Washington's Dulles International Airport had reached 99 degrees, and the wheels of a United Airlines plane sank 1½ feet into new asphalt.

South Carolina and Georgia utilities reported record demand for electricity

Tuesday, a day after similar reports in Maryland, Delaware, Ohio, Indiana, New Jersey and New York.

The hot temperatures meant a busy day for the Henderson County Council on Aging, who try to provide relief for needy elderly citizens with donated fans or air conditioners.

"We are just being swamped with calls from the elderly, wanting something, anything — fans or air conditioners — to help with the heat," HCCA volunteer coordinator Bessie Staton said Wednesday.

"It's getting to be a real crisis," she said, in some of the government housing areas in the county.

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## Heat wave is baking South

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"In some of the housing areas, they're so close together they can't breathe," she said. "They need help."

The council is hoping that fans and air conditioners, or money to buy the items, will be donated to help the economically disadvantaged elderly keep their cool — and their health.

"Some fans were brought in this morning, and they have already been delivered," she said. "We would like to be where we would not have to turn anybody away." Persons interested in donating fans or money can call the council at 692-4203, or bring the items by their office at 120 Chadwick Ave., she said.

The hot weather and lack of rainfall is also affecting agriculture in the area, County Extension Agent Rich Owings said Wednesday.

"It's the same with all the crops — it's hurting everybody who doesn't have irrigation," he said. "It's going to be more critical for things that have been planted late," from yard ornamentals and grass to field crops and ornamentals, Owings said. "Field corn and things that were planted much earlier are certainly much better off."

But though yards are beginning to turn brown from the lack of rain, Owings said drought won't itself kill an established yard. He warned, though, that the combination of drought, disease and/or insect infestation can wipe a yard out.

Scott, with the weather service, predicted Wednesday that there "will be no major changes in the weather" for several days, though he said slightly lower temperatures could possible be seen Thursday as a slight cloudcover moves into the Hendersonville area.

"We're just awful dry," Scott said.

Around the state the Associated Press had the following reports, a Carolina Power & Light Co. substation near Rex Hospital in Raleigh "kicked

out" about 4 p.m., leaving 5,000 customers without power, said company spokesman Wayne Ennis.

Ennis said crews were working to restore electricity to the area, which includes Crabtree Valley Mall, but he didn't know when power would be back on.

At 4 p.m., the temperature at Charlotte-Douglas International Airport reached 101 degrees, breaking the previous record high of 100 degrees set in 1977.

The lowest noon temperatures around the state were 89-degree readings at Cape Hatteras and New Bern. At Grandfather Mountain in western North Carolina, the unofficial morning temperature was 77 degrees with wind gusts to 100 mph, said Harris Prevost of the scenic attraction.

Despite the 89-degree reading on the Outer Banks, visitors were staying in their air conditioned cottages or retreating to cool malls and historic sites.

George Holdaway, president of an air conditioning firm, said his crews are working 24 hours a day to service cooling units in rental cottages.

"There is a very high demand for service for this time of year," Holdaway said. "We don't usually get this kind of heat until late in August."

He said the problems are "compounded by the fact that people want cottages air conditioned and the windows open at the same time so they can smell the ocean."

John Hughes, North Carolina Power Co. manager in Manteo, said the utility's distribution facility was at a peak because tourists were staying in their cottages and motel rooms.

Duke Power Co. reported a new summer peak record of 12,313,000 kilowatts of electricity Wednesday, breaking the previous record of 12,063,000 set Tuesday, company spokeswoman Mary Boyd said. The all-time use record was 12,687,000 kilowatts set on Jan. 21, 1985, she said.

"It was a very tight power supply situation, but we were able to meet that demand without any extraordinary conservation measures," Boyd said.

CP&L reported a new summer peak record of 7,450 megawatts at 6 p.m., marking the third day in a row that CP&L customers have set summer usage records.

"We didn't have any difficulty meeting our customers' demands for energy today," Ennis said.

Other hot spots were Goldsboro, Rocky Mount and Wilson, all at a blistering 96 degrees at noon. No records were broken by noon.

In the Jacksonville area, relief from clammy heat was nowhere in sight despite a thunderstorm that knocked out power to nearly 2,000 customers Tuesday night. The storm left behind a trace of rain.

Inmates at the state prison in New Hanover County thought it was too hot to work Wednesday and refused to work on a state Department of Transportation road gang, said Superintendent Sam Stallings.

DOT brought the inmates back to the prison, but Stallings sent the inmates back to work, saying that if the DOT employees could work, so could the prisoners.

Drought conditions in foothills and piedmont areas of Virginia and North Carolina have created hazardous conditions at Corps of Engineers lakes, the corps said.

John H. Kerr Reservoir was three feet below its normal 299.5 level and Philpott Lake in Bassett, Va., was three feet below its normal 973.5 level, the corps said. Falls Lake, B. Everett Jordan Lake and W. Kerr Scott Reservoir in North Carolina were 3.5 feet below normal pools.

The corps advised boaters to be careful of stumps, roadways and bridge abutments in the lakes.

Several cities continued asking for voluntary water conservation.