Costly storms batter N.C. coastline

By SHARON KEBSCHULL

A combination of astronomical events and a severe storm on the North Carolina coast left \$6.5 million in damages over New Year's Day, according to the National Weather Service.

A rare arrangement of the moon, sun and Earth caused unusually high tides. The tides, coupled with the storm, battered residences and businesses and eroded the beach in four counties.

Twenty-three public beach accesses were damaged, said Tom Dipt of the Emergency Manangement Bureau. In Topsail Beach, 114 homes had damage to their main buildings, and 128 had damage to their steps or decking. Water seeped into the town hall at Carolina Beach.

Kure Beach had the worst erosion, 20 to 40 feet horizontally, he said.

Topsail Beach already had \$3 million worth of damage from a Dec. 2 storm, he said.

"The water wouldn't have been so high without the coastal storm," said Joe Pelissier, meteorologist with the National Weather Service at Raleigh-Durham Airport. "It's the battering action of the waves from the storm that erodes the beaches."

The waves at Wilmington reached 5.2 feet, which is higher than normal, but only by a few inches, he said. For example, the high tides of Dec. 1 reached 5 feet, but they were just higher waves without the added battering action of the storm Jan. I. he said.

"There was sand on the streets,

and houses that had sand washed out from under them, so that they were kind of waving," said Jeffrey Luttrell, a freshman from Wilmington. "There was lots of erosion. The main damage happened New Year's morning at 8 a.m., because that's when high tide was."

Scott Tinsley, a sophomore from Wilmington, said the storm damaged the pier at his family's house in Wrightsville Beach. "Eight boards got pushed up and the support beams rotted out," he said, adding that he did not know how much it would cost to fix the pier.

The sun's strongest pull on the tides occurred Jan. 4, and the strongest lunar pull was Dec. 30, said Lee Shapiro, director of the Morehead Planetarium. The sun's strongest pull usually occurs once a year, and the moon's occurs about once a month. Because they rarely occur at the same time, they normally "cancel each other out," Shapiro said.

Such alignments of the moon, sun and Earth occur only about once every 181/2 years, he said.

"Those three key parts came about five days apart," Shapiro said. That stretch of time was not enough to keep the alignment from making the tides stronger because they were building up all along.

He added that the storm's effect made the low tides higher than the normal high tides. The alignment's tendency would be to make the low tides lower and the high tides higher, he said.

Lugar wins vote over Helms

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON - Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana said he gained a 7-0 vote of confidence Tuesday from Republicans on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina vowed to continue his campaign to become the panel's GOP leader.

"I see it as a vote of support for the leadership I've given, a vote of confidence," Lugar said.

But Helms called the vote meaningless because it came two hours before the 100th Congress

News in Brief

officially convened and before the committee had been formally constituted.

Soviet arrests target drugs

MOSCOW - More than 4,000 people were arrested as part of Operation Poppy '86, indicating that narcotics are the latest target of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's war on social ills, Pravda reported Tuesday.

Police begin enforcing seatbelt law

By MICHAEL A. KOLB

The new year rang in with a flurry of citations for violations of North Carolina's mandatory seat belt law.

Although the law has been on the books since October 1985, officers just began to enforce it Jan. 1 with a \$25 fine. Until then, violators only received a warning.

The N.C. Highway Patrol and all local police forces - municipal, county and campus - have the authority to issue fines for not

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buckling up.

The fine is an infraction that costs the driver neither insurance nor driver's license points. It can be paid through the mail or at a local magistrate's office. The violator does not have to appear before a judge unless he wants to dispute the citation.

During the first four days of the new year, the N.C. Highway Patrol issued 507 citations, Raleigh Sgt. B.W. Oakes said. Of these, 10 were issued on highways and interstates in Orange and Alamance counties.

The seat belt law requires the driver and front seat passenger of a moving car to wear a seat belt unless they are exempt from the law. There are a number of these special cases.

Exemptions are granted for medical reasons such as severe arthritis or a painful skin condition if the person has a statement from his physician with him that explains the condition. The state does not have any special forms for this, and no agency has to be notified.

KARATE

CLASSES

Built into the law are special exemptions for rural letter carriers who are moving at less than 20 mph between stops, cars that were manufactured before seat belts were made mandatory equipment, and farm trucks hauling materials for agricultural or commercial purposes.

Chapel Hill police have given out three citations since Jan. 1, police spokesman Keith Lohmann said.

Oakes said he thought the law would help convince people to buckle up.

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Shearon Harris plant tests reactor's reaction

By PAUL CORY

A chain reaction Saturday at the Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant near Raleigh signaled the start of the plant's low-power testing program.

"The reaction will continue for a while," Mac Harris, manager of News Services for the plant, said. "Over the next several weeks, the amount of power being produced will be gradually increased."

However, he said that the plant would not be in continous operation. "During testing, we bring the plant on line, run it up to a certain (power) level, then shut it down." This process will be repeated many times during the testing sequence, Harris

The testing process will continue for several weeks, cumulating in "acceptance tests," in which the plant is run at full power for 100 hours, then shut down. If it passes these tests, the plant is considered ready to go on line as a commercial power

plant, he said.

Dan Coleman, spokesman for CASH (Coalition for Alternatives to Shearon Harris), called the lowpower testing a "mistake."

"It was premature for the NRC (Nuclear Regulatory Commission) to give Shearon Harris a low-power testing license before (hearing) the allegations made by a confidential informant about serious problems with the plant's workmanship that would interfere with the plant's ability to operate and respond to an

emergency," Coleman said.
The confidential informant's allegations include falsification of documents, improper inspections and the improper substitution of materials, including the drawing up of blueprints to match the way the work was done, instead of working from the blueprints, Coleman said.

On Thursday, the NRC will hold a hearing with the Harris plant on the agenda. Two busloads of CASH members will be traveling to Washington, D.C., to participate.

Coleman said the hearing will probably not result in a full-power license for the Harris plant. "There is so much that needs to be done (in regards to Shearon Harris), even from the NRC's often foggy viewpoint, that the NRC would not want to go on," Coleman said.

He also pointed to the NRC's recent troubles with a plant in Texas, where NRC inspectors have been accused of improperly approving work and intimidating workers, as evidence that the NRC will be reluctant to license the Harris plant

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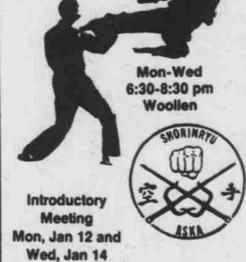
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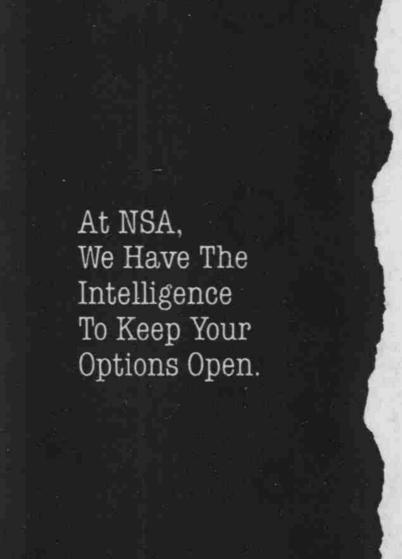
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