

Students Practiced For Possible Tornado

BY SUSAN USHER
At mid-morning Wednesday (Feb. 24) students across Brunswick County huddled in school hallways, waiting for the all-clear to sound. It was a tornado drill, held statewide during Severe Weather Awareness Week. Practice tornado watches and warnings issued by the National Weather Service were relayed through the Brunswick County Emergency Management Office. Brenda Freeman, administrative assistant in the emergency management office, said Brunswick County's drill began at 9:20 a.m. Wednesday and ended shortly before 11 a.m. Along with the Brunswick County Schools, county fire and rescue personnel were notified as weather conditions supposedly changed: a "watch" is issued when conditions are ripe for a tornado to occur; a "warning" is issued when a tornado has been sighted. "As soon as they called, we did it right then and there," said Douglas Dietz, school system administrative secretary. "It worked real well." While often telephones at the 12 schools and central office are constantly busy, the alert traveled quickly Wednesday, she said, "It

happened to be a day when all the phones were quiet." Unlike the hurricane that is more familiar to coastal North Carolina residents, a tornado strikes with little or no warning. In mere seconds a tornado marches through, leaving a path of almost total destruction. The tornado is the most destructive child of a thunderstorm. A violently rotating column of air which descends from a thunderstorm cloud system, a tornado moves at about 30 mph on average, cutting an average path of one-fourth mile. Though their time on earth is short and their destructive path rather small, tornadoes are still considered nature's most violent storms. While violent winds associated with tornadoes cause the most physical damage, according to the National Weather Service most tornado injuries and deaths result from flying debris. Over the past 33 years, an average of 15 tornadoes have been spotted annually across North Carolina, according to spokesman Denise Privette of the N.C. Division of Emergency Management. However, last year 28 tornadoes were recorded, along with three tornado-related fa-

talities. Two people were killed near Hillsborough on Nov. 23 and one person was killed in Charlotte on March 10. Another 93 people were injured. North Carolina's busiest year of tornado activity was 1984, when 24 tornadoes were sighted, most during an outbreak of killer tornadoes that roared through the Carolinas in March. North Carolina reported 14 tornadoes that month alone. Statewide a record 42 people were killed. The previous record for fatalities had been set in 1936, when 14 persons were killed. "We've had fewer fatalities in re-

cent years than in the early 1980s," said Privette. "We're attributing that to the public education campaigns that have been held." Most tornado activity in North Carolina occurs from March through June, Privette said, but in recent years, including last year in Hillsborough and in 1987 in Raleigh, tornadoes have struck in November. "They can occur any time of year," she emphasized. She said the two broad areas of greatest hurricane activity are the western Piedmont and the Sandhills and Central Coastal Plain, neither of which includes Brunswick County.

Parks Depart. To Sponsor Photo Contest

The Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department will sponsor an amateur photography contest whose theme will be coastal North Carolina rivers, streams, lakes and waterways. Entries must be received by Friday, May 14, and photographs should not be submitted any earlier than May 1. Photos entered for competition must be taken in the months between August 1992 and May 1993. They may be in color or black-and-

white and must be either 5 X 7, 8 X 10, or 11 X 14. The contest is open to all amateur photographers in coastal North Carolina. Prizes will be awarded to winners. Photos will be on display during June at the Franklin Square Art Gallery in Southport. For more information, contact Emma T. McGraw, special events coordinator at the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department at 253-4357 or 1-800-222-4790, extension 257.

Seek Shelter In Tornado

What do you do when a tornado threatens or is likely to occur? Denise Privette offers these tips from the N.C. Division of Emergency Management, noting that you may have only seconds or minutes in which to act once a warning is issued:
1. Stay in touch with local radio and television stations (particularly the local Emergency Broadcast Network stations) for advisories from the National Weather Service.
2. When a watch is issued, start paying attention to weather conditions and preparing for a tornado.
3. If a warning is issued, "that means to be doubly prepared," said Privette, to seek shelter and to protect your head.
4. "The safest place to go is in the basement of a house," she said. With basements at a premium along the coast, most area residents opt for second best choice: a ground-level interior room such as a hallway, closet or bathroom without windows or exterior doors or walls. Here you will be safer from flying debris. Also such rooms are less likely to experience roof collapse.
5. If in a vehicle or mobile home, take shelter in substantial structure as quickly as possible. If there isn't enough time to reach shelter, get out of the vehicle and lie flat in the nearest ditch with your hands shielding your head.

Hazardous Materials Course Scheduled

A class in operations for the hazardous materials responder is set for Saturdays and Sundays in March and April through Brunswick Community College's Continuing Education Department. Eddie Gardner will be instructor for fire, rescue and police personnel who wish to take the course. The classes are set for the Supply Volunteer Fire Department Building, N.C. 211. Beginning on Sunday, March 14, through Sunday, March 28, and on Sunday, April 18, the class will meet from 8 a.m. until noon and from 1-5 p.m. It will also meet on Saturday, April 3 and 10, during the same hours. Participants who must attain the hazardous material/responder awareness level earn 4.8 continuing education units. There is no registration fee for fire, rescue and police squad members. For more information, call Brunswick Community College Continuing Education Department at 754-6900, 457-6329 or 343-0203.

BEGAN TEACHING PROGRAM IN 1990

Hewett Named State's DARE Officer Of Year

Lt. Ronald Hewett of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department was named North Carolina's "DARE Officer of the Year" at the annual convention of Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) Officers in Raleigh last week. Hewett, who founded Brunswick County's DARE program in 1990, was chosen from among the 350 law enforcement officers who coordinate the program in school systems across the state.



HEWETT

and for making the DARE program work in Brunswick County. "There's no way I could function as well as I do and achieve this honor without the assistance of the school board, the support staff and most especially, our teachers. They have all accepted me and the program with open arms," Hewett said. The DARE program began in Los Angeles in 1983 and was soon adopted in a cooperative effort between police and school systems across the country. North Carolina began offering the DARE curriculum in 1987.

Hewett graduated from DARE officer training in 1990 and began conducting classes that year. He teaches about 800 students annually in the county's six middle schools.

DARE officers take fifth-grade students through a highly structured 17 weeks of class work with different topics each week. Subjects include drug identification and effects, drug laws, the consequences of drug abuse, how to handle peer pressure, ways to say no, self-esteem, stress management, resistance techniques,

assertiveness, the portrayal of drugs in the media and alternatives to drug abuse. At the end of the course, each child writes an essay about "What DARE Means to Me" and reads it out loud in a contest held at graduation. This year's graduation ceremonies will be held May 11-13. Besides helping young people avoid the pitfalls of drug abuse, Hewett said the DARE program has been good for him, too. Since his first law enforcement position with the Holden Beach Police, when he was the state's youngest police offi-

cer in 1983, Hewett had risen through the ranks to become a lieutenant and narcotics investigator. "Before I got involved with DARE, all I saw was the bad in people and the dark side of humanity," he said. "It seemed like I wasn't making a difference. Just working eight hours every day and going home. "Through DARE, I know I'm making a difference by educating young people. Because drugs are out there, and the only way we can cease drug use is through education."

BCC Schedules GED Tests

Test dates are scheduled at Brunswick Community College for those who wish to obtain their high school equivalency diploma (GED) in March. GED tests will be given at Brunswick Community College's main campus, U.S. 17 Business, Supply, on Tuesday, March 9, from 5-9 p.m. and Tuesday, March 16, from 1-5 p.m. Any test except the writing skills test can be taken. Any GED test can be taken at BCC's Southport campus, on North Lord Street, Thursday, March 4, from 5-9 p.m. The Southport campus will offer all tests except writing skills on Thursday, March 18, from 5-9 p.m. The Leland campus will offer all

but the writing skills test on Wednesday, March 24, from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. Any GED test can be taken there on Wednesday, March 10, from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. Students may enter classes for GED instruction at any time. They should phone Brunswick Community College at 754-6900, 457-6329 or 343-0203 for a listing of classes in their towns. Individualized assistance in preparing for the GED is available at the college's learning lab in the Administration/Learning Resource/Student Center building on the main campus. The learning lab is open Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. Drop-ins are welcome.

Contest Promotes Respect For Coast

Students in Brunswick County in grades five through 12 are eligible to enter the seventh annual Operation Beach Respect Poster Contest. Deadlines are due April 17 from students in 18 coastal North Carolina counties. Sponsored by the North Carolina Beach Buggy Association, the contest offers \$1,000 in prizes in two divisions: Division I for grades five through eight and Division II for grades nine through 12. Entries may be submitted in either the individual or classroom categories. The purpose of the contest is to reinforce students' awareness and stewardship of coastal resources of the state. The association encourages recognition of the five respects of Operation Beach Respect, namely, respect for beaches, dunes, wildlife, vegetation and others. Contest rules have been sent to 135 schools or may be obtained from the Superintendent, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Route 1, Box 675, Manteo, N.C. 27954. Prizes include \$175 for first place; \$75, second; and \$50, third, in each division and category. Judging is by national park rangers at Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Soles Is Speaker For State Extension Service Conference

State Sen. R.C. Soles, D-18th District and deputy president pro tempore of the Senate, was guest speaker at the State Cooperative Extension Advisory Conference Feb. 23 at N.C. State University.

by the research people. This is Cooperative Extension's role." The N.C. Cooperative Extension Service is an educational organization which receives support from state, federal and county governments. It has close ties to N.C. State University and N.C. A & T University, the state's two land grant colleges. Soles, who has served as a member of the Legislative Agriculture Committees for 25 years, reminded the conference of the support given the General Assembly by N.C. State University, the N.C. Extension Service, the N.C. Farm Bureau and local citizen volunteers.

The creation of new knowledge is one area where the nation is the unquestioned and unchallenged leader," Soles told the group. "The beauty of our system, and the part that no other nation on this globe has been able to duplicate, is represented by extension education. "We not only have the research ability; we also have the means of delivering the knowledge generated

Divorce can be a traumatic time in the lives of those involved. If you are one of the many who is currently divorced or perhaps in the process of one, you may benefit from our workshop on "Surviving Divorce." This workshop starts 3/9 from 7-8 pm. The cost of the workshop is \$15 reg. fee and \$10 a week. The class will meet for 4 weeks.

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