

Storm's Ferocity, Length A Surprise To Officials And Residents

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Manager David Batten. But by late Monday night only isolated customers remained without power.

While Logan said the storm was less powerful than either Hurricane Hugo or Hurricane Diana when they made landfall, during a hurricane high winds usually last only a few hours, Batten noted. But Saturday gale force winds blew continuously for 12 to 14 hours.

"We'd restore power in an area and it would be knocked back out again."

Batten said he tried to line up outside help Saturday morning, but that no help was available because most utilities across North Carolina and in neighboring states were coping with storm-related problems of their own. Approximately 100 BEMC crew members worked throughout the storm, along with approximately 20 regular contract people and one-fourth the office staff, who were called in to answer telephones that jangled non-stop.

Loss of electrical power disrupted cable television service in the county, said Atlantic Telephone Membership Corp. customer service representative Percy Woodard, while power surges damaged some cable equipment. Few telephone customers experienced ser-

vice disruptions, only some of those served by aerial drops.

Brunswick County Sheriff's Department responded to numerous minor auto accidents, some involving drivers who told officers they were "out looking at the storm." Officers said their biggest problem was "sightseers" going to the beach to watch the storm, said Lt. Carl Pearson.

The sheriff's department, which was operating on back-up generators Saturday night, was "swamped" with telephone calls, many from non-residents property owners asking that their property be checked for damage. Unable to keep up, the department switched the calls to the county's emergency communications center.

As of late Monday night only isolated Brunswick Electric and Carolina Power & Light customers in Brunswick County remained without power.

A lack of power or delays in a return of power cut the school day short Monday at three county schools, said Assistant Superintendent Bill Turner, but the storm caused less structural damage than anticipated.

At North Brunswick High School, students arriving at school were sent immediately home because CP&L had not yet restored full power and the main building was

cold. At Boiling Spring Lakes, power was restored late Sunday but cold buildings led principals to release South Brunswick High and South Brunswick Middle school students early, at 1 p.m. Without power, the schools' central office at Southport was closed Monday.

Turner reported slight roof damage to buildings at West Brunswick High School and Supply Elementary School that is covered by warranty and a few downed fences at several schools. "We were very fortunate," said Turner. "I was really surprised when I made the rounds Sunday. We had no problems at Union Elementary (where contractors are replacing a roof) or with any of the trailers."

Should the county qualify for disaster assistance, local governments and not-for-profit agencies can seek reimbursement from the federal government for storm-related losses and expenses.

Logan estimated county damages and costs in excess of \$8 million, ranging from water system telemetry damaged by electrical power surges to downed fences and signs, debris removal and overtime pay. "We don't have a cost figure yet for the parks," he said.

Utilities Director Jerry Webb said erosion caused a loss of pipe on the out-of-service water line across

Lockwood Folly Inlet connecting Long Beach and Holden Beach that is scheduled for eventual rerouting. Water service was lost 30 minutes to 60 minutes at Ocean Isle Beach and Sunset Beach because of a power outage at a pump station.

Webb praised Carolina Power & Light Co. and Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. for giving the county water department priority in handling power outages. That allowed the department to keep its pumping facilities operating, he said.

At Varnamtown Mayor Judy Galloway said one tree had fallen on a mobile home and another on a car. Other than missing shingles and messy yards, she said Varnamtown was fortunate. "It's been bad, but we've been lucky down here. It could have been a lot worse."

The community's commercial fishing fleet came through the storm unscathed, but there was some damage to riverfront docks. "The water got real, real high—the highest I've ever seen it."

All coastal waters in North Carolina remained temporarily closed to shellfishing Tuesday due to heavy rainfall, extremely high tides, hurricane force winds and power outages associated with the storm.

Holden Damage Estimated At \$8 Million

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the strand. "We have catwalks coming out of our cars," Carroll said.

Included in the damage were 17 town-owned beach accessways, which Parker estimated will cost \$1,000 each to replace. Holden Beach also lost about 100 trash barrels that were set up along the beach.

"It's a lot of damage. On a small town budget, that's quite an impact," Parker said. "The town has to give up some of the other things it was working on and take care of these things first."

Holden Beach Bridge was closed to everyone except residents, homeowners and contractors from noon Saturday until 3 p.m. Sunday. Nobody was allowed on the bridge for several hours Saturday when the winds were at their strongest.

"There were so many problems out here with hazardous conditions," Parker said of the bridge closing. "The board of commissioners felt we couldn't allow total free access."

Parker said town officials didn't want people coming on the island to gather lumber and other materials that were scattered up and down the beach. "You had to have a good reason to be out here."

Most of Holden Beach lost elec-

tricity at least temporarily. Power was restored to most of the island by Saturday night, with side streets finished early Sunday.

Carroll said part of the seawall at Surfside Pavilion caved in under the huge waves, leaving the ends of Ferry Road and Holden Street with little protection against erosion.

Waves broke through the dune in several areas, including the 200 block of Ocean Boulevard East and the 500 and 700 block of Ocean Boulevard West. The street was covered by more than a foot of water in those areas Saturday.

Ocean water also washed over the small dune beside Holden Beach Fishing Pier and flowed through the parking lot.

Pier manager Gil Bass said the pier lost some braces, but none of the pilings were damaged. "It could have been a lot worse, but it was bad enough," Bass, a town board member, said of the storm.

Mayor Ausley said he expects town commissioners to discuss repairing the oceanfront dunes when it meets March 24. He said filling in several holes in the dune will be the top priority.

Based on conversations Monday with coastal experts, Ausley said the best way to repair the dune may be

hauling in sand from somewhere else and dumping it on the beach.

"Obviously that's a costly way to improve it," he said. "The question would be how much to do and how to pay for it."

Holden Beach officials said the winter storm wasn't nearly as severe as Hurricane Hugo, which caused approximately \$30 million in property damage in September 1989.

However, Parker said very few people expected the weekend storm to do the damage it did. Hugo, which leveled oceanfront dunes, was tracked several days before it slammed the coast.

"It was without warning really," Parker said of Saturday's storm. "There was no warning the storm on the coast would hit the way it did. It was sort of out of the blue."

Carroll was one of the few people who wasn't surprised. "I don't think people were expecting it. I was. When the weatherman said the storm of the century was coming up the coast, I took his word for it."

Parker said the town's trash hauler, Waste Industries, will have a truck on the island through Friday picking up debris that is left beside the road. Storm debris also will be removed during the normal trash pickup next week.

Sunset Bridge Push Begins Anew

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the day, but Knapp elected to wait and leave when the bridge reopened. "The mayor did everything he could," Knapp said, adding, "I wouldn't have died if I'd had to wait until the next morning."

While acknowledging the unpredictable force of Saturday's storm, Knapp said he doesn't believe the bridge should be closed to traffic until a police car is stationed on the island and residents are given the option to evacuate.

However, the mayor says the storm made him even more convinced that as long as those kinds of logistics are necessary, people's lives will be in danger.

"It's time to get on with the program" of replacing the bridge in the interest of safety, he said, even if some residents and property owners object.

The town council resolved unanimously to seek an acceleration of the court-ordered environment impact statement which must be completed before construction of a new bridge can proceed.

Council has the support of new N.C. Department of Transportation board member Odell Williamson of Ocean Isle, in whose honor the

"People sat over there all that time running their engines for heat and running out of gas...They looked like they'd been through the Battle of the Bulge."

—Mayor Mason Barber

South Brunswick Islands' first high-rise bridge was named. "I'm for that 100 percent," Williamson said in a Tuesday telephone interview, adding that the present is "a good time to move, since the president has pledged to get people working on roads and bridges."

In his first DOT board meeting two weeks ago, Williamson had an additional \$100,000 appropriated to the Sunset Beach bridge replacement project to cover preliminary engineering, utilities and right-of-way costs. Williamson said \$1.8 million has been appropriated so far, though construction of the bridge is

not currently in the state's Transportation Improvement Plan.

Thirteen years ago DOT began making plans to replace the pontoon swing bridge with a fixed high-rise span. The proposal met stiff opposition and was instrumental in the formation of the Sunset Beach Taxpayers Association, of which Knapp is a leading member.

In 1990, SBTA won a court battle aimed at halting construction of the bridge. U.S. District Judge Earl Britt ordered the environmental impact statement and voided all permits already obtained for the multi-million project. Estimates are that, at the current pace, the statement could take another year or longer to complete.

Last November, DOT staffers at a public meeting presented townspeople with plans for several types of bridges, including drawbridges in several heights or the fixed high-rise bridge. Most who turned out said they want something more efficient than the existing bridge, but short of the high-rise span first proposed by the state.

Damage Estimated

Sunset Beach, with its low erosion rate and broad beach, fared better than other South Brunswick Islands beaches in Saturday's storm. Building Inspector Danny Cordell estimated damage to structures at \$200,000 and erosion damage at \$30,000. An average 10 feet of dune was lost on the east end, but "the west end held," he said.

Overwash from the marshes and waterway made it necessary for the causeway to be graded after the storm.

Shallotte To Pick Up Storm Debris

BY DOUG RUTTER

Shallotte residents who accumulated branches, shingles and other debris in their yards during the weekend winter storm don't have to get rid of the junk on their own.

The town is pitching in. At their meeting Tuesday night, aldermen decided to have town employees pick up storm debris at residences and businesses through March 31.

There's a catch. Workers won't go into your back yard to do the actual cleanup. But they will pick up debris left by the side of the road. For service, residents need to call town hall.

Building Inspector Albert Hughes said there's plenty of cleanup needed in town following Saturday's storm, which caused more damage



DON WARREN, chairman of the Brunswick County Commissioners, reads a letter from County Manager/Attorney David Clegg informing the board of his decision to resign, effective Monday at 5 p.m. Shown with him are commissioners Tom Rabon (left) and Wayne Vereen.

Clegg Resigns Amid Rumors Of Pressure, Firing Threat

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and had "heard rumors" that Clegg was sending out resumes and "looking at other employment." He said he did not put pressure on Clegg to resign.

Democratic Commissioner Tom Rabon said Clegg resigned "for some reason unknown to me" and added, "He will be missed." Rabon said he hopes the county can find a replacement as soon as possible.

Republican Commissioner Jerry Jones said the county "just lost a tremendous employee" and called Clegg a "truly professional" county manager. Jones said he did not know if Clegg had been forced out of his position.

"We all know in our minds if that was the case," Jones said. "That's only for Mr. Clegg and the other commissioners to know."

Several citizens spoke in support of Clegg during the public comment portion of Monday's meeting.

"I am absolutely overcome with what I've heard," Helen Cashwell told the board. "I just don't understand what your mission is except to return to nepotism and to go back to what used to be before David Clegg."

"I think we are losing a fantastic county manager," said Frances Allen. "It will be hard to find one of his caliber and I think we're going to be sorry that he's gone."

"The citizens of Brunswick County are going to be the losers," said Cynthia Tart, evoking a loud round of applause.

"I think you are losing a tremendous, great man who did wonders for this county," said Wendy Jones. "He was honest and straightforward. It's going to be a real loss."

"We've all heard what was going to happen to David Clegg and we don't want to go back to the old back-room politics. I pity you," said Eileen Kellagher. She later shouted out, "Thank God for two-year terms!"

"I don't think it would have been productive for the board or for me to linger week to week when everyone knew what was inevitable."

—David Clegg

Warren directed Barefoot to begin the search for a new county manager immediately. He said he would like to close the application period within 30 days. There was no mention of advertising for a new county attorney.

Harvey will serve as interim county manager with a \$1,000-per-month increase in salary. He plans to maintain his office at the county planning department.

Asked why Doug Ledgett, assistant to the county manager, was not named as Clegg's temporary replacement, Warren said Ledgett's duties as director of emergency services would not allow him enough time to devote to the job of interim manager. Warren also noted that Harvey has previously served in the post during transitions between county managers.

Ramos will be paid a retainer of \$1,000 per month and \$75 per hour for meetings and other services.

In a telephone interview from Charleston, S.C., Tuesday, Clegg said he was "enjoying a few days of vacation" and would be back in the county later this week. He said he currently plans to take several months off "to get over this experience" and to spend time with his family.

"I am fortunate in that I have many options that I need some time to sort through," Clegg said. "I have

some very specific opportunities to look at. I will continue to be an active participant in civic and cultural affairs including the preparation of Miss Brunswick County for the Miss North Carolina Pageant."

Clegg would not elaborate about his reasons for his sudden departure, saying only that "the cleanest break heals the quickest." He said he had left "no loose ends" in county government and would remain available to the commissioners for consultation.

"Since December it was specifically stated (by Warren) that my service was to be from meeting to meeting. There was never a pretext of longevity," Clegg said. "I don't think it would have been productive for the board or for me to linger week to week when everyone knew what was inevitable."

More Tranquil Weather Ahead

South Brunswick Islands can expect near normal temperatures and rainfall over the next few days.

"So far it looks like this will be a much more tranquil week than the weekend proved to be," said Jackson Canady, Shallotte Point meteorologist.

Canady said he expects temperatures to average in the mid-40s at night and range up to the mid-60s during the daytime, with about a half-inch of rainfall.

For the period March 9-15, Canady recorded 1.34 inches of rainfall, most of which fell during Saturday's winter storm.

The maximum high for the period was 72 degrees, recorded March 10, and the minimum low was 20 degrees, recorded March 15.

An average daily high of 61 degrees combined with a nightly low of 37 degrees for a daily average temperature of 49 degrees, which is about 4 degrees below average, said Canady.

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