

HURRICANE PREDICTIONS UPDATED: NUMBERS EXPECTED TO INCREASE

ALISHA GORE

STAFF WRITER

As we enter the peak of hurricane season, experts are predicting that this year's season will be even more active than they originally thought.

"Many of the hurricanes this season will develop over the tropical Atlantic and move westward as they strengthen. These hurricanes could pose a threat to the United States and/or the Caribbean Islands," said Dr. Gerry Bell, head of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's seasonal prediction team in a recent news release.

Forecasters are now predicting 12 to 15 tropical storms and seven to nine hurricanes, including three to four major hurricanes with winds of at least 111 mph. The average hurricane season brings ten tropical storms and six hurricanes.

The 1995-2002 time span has been the most active period in the past 50 years.

Forecaster William Gray also updated his predictions, saying that the majority of the hurricanes will be forming in October.

This raises concern among individuals in southeastern North Carolina, especially those who reside in Wilmington.

Within the past ten years, the Wilmington, NC area has been hit by four major hurricanes: Bertha and Fran in 1996, Bonnie in 1998 and Floyd in 1999.

These hurricanes cost the area millions of dollars in damage. Therefore, it is a wise idea for UNCW students to learn the policies that are in place in New Hanover County and at UNCW concerning hurricane evacuation and school closure.

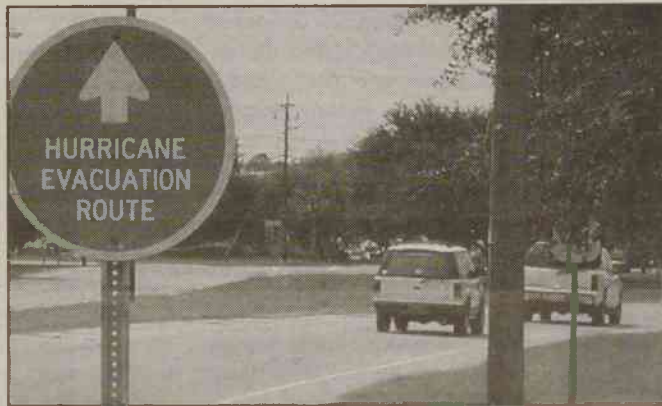
In 2000, a year after hurricane Floyd hit eastern North Carolina, UNCW revised its hurricane policy. The university currently has a three-phase plan corresponding to the National Weather Service's issuing of a hurricane warning for Wilmington.

"There is not much difference in the hurricane plan itself, but it's giving us a broader plan for all crisis situations," said Dean of Students Terry Curran. "I'm comfortable where we are right now."

He said there is a committee still working to make better the evacuation plan.

UNCW reserves the right to evacuate the campus before the evacuation and closure of New Hanover County beaches. This system is designed to allow students enough time to evacuate campus and arrive safely at their homes or another alternative destination.

Once the NWS issues a hurricane warn-



Jeff Wunsch/The Seahawk

As the 2003 hurricane season gets under way, locals prepare for increase in bad weather.

ing, university officials evaluate the weather situation, based on how fast the storm is moving, the size and strength of the storm and the amount of daylight left before mandatory evacuation. They then may cancel classes and issue a voluntary evacuation. Once New Hanover County officials close the beaches, UNCW issues a mandatory evacuation.

Hurricane warnings are typically issued between 24 and 36 hours before 40 mph winds are expected to reach land.

Those students who are unable to go home or anywhere else are set up with host families in the area during the duration of the hurricane. Students who do not return home during the duration of the hurricane are advised to let their families know of their whereabouts.

For up-to-date information on class cancellations and evacuations during hurricane weather, call the university's hurricane hotline at 962-3991 or toll free at (888) 657-5751.

CHANCELLOR OFFERS REWARD FOR ARREST OF SEAHAWK MASCOT SWIPERS

SARAH BRDOERS

NEWS EDITOR

The seahawk wasn't able to welcome students back onto campus this year

The university's mascot, the bronze seahawk statue, was stolen in late July, leaving only its two osprey talons perched on the rock in front of the Warwick Center.

The 75-pound statue was found July 23 in a stairwell of an apartment complex on Kerr Avenue, however the individuals responsible have not been apprehended.

Chancellor Rosemary DePaolo is currently offering a \$250 reward for the arrest of the individuals responsible for damaging and stealing the school mascot.

"We've been trying to identify who stole it but we have not found them yet," said Captain Willis, of the UNCW police force. "We've just been asking for anyone with information. We still don't have any other leads yet."

Since its dedication in 2000, the sea-

hawk has been a good luck charm for many UNCW students.

"I think it's bad. If it was someone who goes to school here, that's just bad school spirit," said Courtney Byrd, senior.

University officials said that it might not be until the third week of September before the bronze seahawk can be fixed and returned to its granite perch, depending on how fast an artisan can be hired.

The seahawk's sculptor, Joe Orlando, no longer lives in the area. Until then the bird will be stored in a safe, secure location.

It is not yet known how long it will take or how much it will cost to rehabilitate the 3-foot statue.

The UNCW police have reported the statue's value at \$12,000. The university, however, values the bronze statue and its granite perch at \$70,000.

Anyone with information about the statue's kidnappers are urged to call the university police at 962-3184 or anonymously on the UNCW Crime Line at 962-8477.

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