



Beaches Picking Up Pieces After Hurricane Hugo

BY RAHN ADAMS

"Now when you speak of Camille and Hazel, you'll also have to speak of Hugo," was how Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady summed up the hurricane that last Thursday night ravaged the Brunswick County coastline.

While southeastern North Carolina escaped the brunt of Hugo's devastating blow to the Carolinas simply because the hurricane—with 135-mph winds and a massive storm surge—made landfall near Charleston, S.C., Brunswick County's beaches sustained an estimated \$89 million in damage.

Jim Herstine, regional director of the N.C. Division of Coastal Management office in Wilmington, indicated Tuesday that between 150 and 200 structures on the county's three hardest-hit beaches—Holden Beach, Ocean Isle and Long Beach—could be classified as being in "imminent danger" due to last week's storm.

Officials late Tuesday were waiting to hear if Brunswick County would be added to a list of North Carolina counties eligible for federal disaster aid. After surveying storm damage across the state, Gov. Jim Martin requested the disaster designation Saturday. Mecklenburg, Union, Gaston and Lincoln counties Monday night were declared federal disaster areas.

According to Buddy Jackson of the N.C. Division of Emergency Management, efforts were underway Tuesday to have the Federal Emergency Management Agency add Brunswick to that list. "Hopefully it won't be too long before we hear something from that agency," he said.

But when the designation had not come by late Tuesday, Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan said, "We're checking to see what the holdup is. If we don't get it (the designation) tomorrow, we may not get one."

Logan and Brunswick County Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson listed damage estimates at individual beaches as follows: Long Beach, \$36,470,000; Holden Beach, \$30 million; Ocean Isle, \$15 million; Bald Head Island, \$5 million; Yaupon Beach, \$2,335,000; and Caswell Beach, \$25,000.

Sunset Beach developer and town councilman Ed Gore said Sunset Beach's only structural damage was to its fishing pier, with damage estimated at \$350,000.

But at 3 p.m. last Thursday, similarities between Hugo and Hurricane Hazel—the infamous storm that made landfall in Brunswick County and wiped the southeastern North Carolina coastline clean in October 1954—brought dismay to many coastal residents.

"For a while there, the storm had actually turned to the north (toward Myrtle Beach, S.C.)," Canady said, "but our good fortune in our part of the world was that it kept its northwesterly track."

If the hurricane had made landfall in the Georgetown, S.C., area—60 (See BEACHES, Page 2-A)



THIS WAS THE SCENE Saturday afternoon at the corner of Ocean Boulevard West and Lions Paw Drive, where sand washed from the strand and underneath oceanfront cottages had to be bulldozed to the side to clear the roads. At left is the Lonnie Small cottage and the one on the right is the Blalock cottage. STAFF PHOTO BY EDDIE SWEAT

Hurricane Batters Holden Beach Oceanfront

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Mayor John Tandy says bad luck is the only explanation for the damage caused there by Hurricane Hugo.

"It's the same thing with a tornado," he said. "You don't know where it will cause the damage. There is no reason why we were hit harder by this thing than the other beaches other than bad luck."

Although some areas of the island were harmed more than others, the Town of Holden Beach sustained more damage than Ocean Isle Beach and Sunset Beach combined.

Building Inspector Dwight Carroll offered \$31 million as a conservative estimate for the storm damage. But he said it may be several weeks before town officials and property owners know the full impact of Hugo.

Oceanfront erosion caused by the hurricane could restrict development on a number of lots, he said, because there may no longer be enough of the lot remaining to accommodate a septic tank.

Carroll said the hurricane caused about \$5 million in structural damage to homes. The rest of the damage was erosion of beachfront property. Some areas of the island lost as much as 70 feet of beach, according to Commissioner William Williamson.

The overall estimate does not include damage to wooden walkways that offer access to the beach at many oceanfront homes. Without looking through files of old permits,

Carroll said he has no way of knowing what existed before the storm.

By Tuesday morning, the inspector said there were at least 75 homes listed as uninhabitable for different reasons. Houses with exposed or malfunctioning septic tanks or serious structural damage cannot be occupied, he said.

Carroll did not have a count on the number of homes that were destroyed by the hurricane. But there are at least three homes that cannot be salvaged and several others tilting toward the ocean on cracked or undermined pilings.

Like town officials elsewhere, Holden Beach Commissioners said most all of the damage caused on the island was the result of the storm surge and not wind. Fueled by the hurricane, waves flattened dunes along much of the island and crashed through ocean-facing walls on many older homes not elevated on pilings.

A.R. Stanton said he expected the hurricane to do a lot more damage to his home at 278 Ocean Boulevard East than it did. Hugo's high tides broke through his wooden sea wall and caused some water damage inside the house.

"I was looking for this house to be laying down," he said Friday as he started cleaning up. Stanton, who lost one home during Hurricane Hazel in 1954, said he was debating whether or not to move his house back from the ocean.

Away from the oceanfront, the storm caused no major problems. In

many cases, owners of second row homes said damage was limited to a few missing shingles. In the island's three canal subdivisions, some homeowners reported minor flooding due to the canals overflowing. A number of floating docks were also damaged.

Overall, however, most property owners off the beachfront expressed relief at the lack of damage caused by the hurricane.

"We were just lucky it didn't come in here," said Elwood Fulford, who owns a second-row home at 195 Hillside Drive. "If it did, I think we'd have lost the beach. I don't think there would have been one house left."

Greensboro Street homeowner Dick Jones was more concise with his damage assessment report: "We were lucky as hell."

Due to the widespread oceanfront damage, commissioners decided Monday to keep the island closed to the general public at least through Oct. 7. The same restriction applies to vacationers who are renting a home on the island for less than 30 days.

However, the town board was scheduled to meet early Wednesday morning to reconsider that decision, according to Town Manager Gus Ulrich. He said officials were also expected to discuss funding dune replacement and allowing walking on the beach.

Following the hurricane, electrical service was restored to all homes on the island by the end of the day Saturday. It was Sunday

afternoon, however, before every house received water service.

Utilities Supervisor Henry Thompson said there were no water line breaks during the storm. Over the weekend, water service was restored to one area at a time as water meters at the uninhabitable homes were cut off.

In addition to beachfront homes, high tides from the hurricane also damaged a section of the island's main street. About 150 feet on the north side of Ocean Boulevard West was undermined and caved in. Workers with the state Department of Transportation filled in the area around 665 O.B.W. with sand over the weekend. It will be repaved later.

DOT workers are also assisting the town in removing piles of debris from the island. Homeowners have been asked to place any unwanted wood scraps or other debris in the Ocean Boulevard right-of-way at least five feet from the edge of the pavement.

North Carolina National Guardsmen from Fair Bluff arrived at Holden Beach late Friday morning to assist police officers with securing the island. Several guardsmen were stationed at the entrances of the canal subdivisions to keep boats from entering.

Also assisting town personnel throughout the emergency were officers with the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, N.C. Highway Patrol and state Division of Motor Vehicles.

Ulrich said Tuesday that the National Guard would remain on the island on a day-to-day basis. He said the unit was running three roving patrols around the clock to ensure the safety of private property.

With Hugo bearing down on the southeastern United States, Mayor Tandy had signed a proclamation last Thursday afternoon ordering everyone off the island by 5 p.m.

It was almost 24 hours later before officials decided to allow property owners and residents back on Holden Beach. During the day, damage assessment teams surveyed the island and clean-up crews worked to remove debris from the main road. The hurricane left as much as two feet of sand on Ocean Boulevard in some areas in addition to lumber from homes and decks.

Throughout the day, land owners gathered on the mainland side of the bridge became increasingly upset with town officials. They said police officers were allowing certain property owners past the roadblock but were refusing access to others.

"It's not right the way they're doing this," said Norma Swarts, a full-time resident of the beach. "There are people out on that island that have no more right to be out there than I have."

Many said they had driven a long way to check on their property and others contended that town commissioners have no authority to keep people from their private property.

(More Coverage Pages 6-A, 7-A)

Ocean Isle Beach 'Fixing Up' After Disastrous Date With Hurricane Hugo

BY RAHN ADAMS

It was fitting that lights blinked back on at Ocean Isle Beach Town Hall midway through the town board of commissioners' emergency meeting Saturday morning—a session that began with tears over the damage inflicted by Hurricane Hugo, but ended on an optimistic note over clean-up efforts.

"We're just not quite as pretty today as we were Thursday (prior to the storm)," concluded Ocean Isle Beach developer and town Utilities Supervisor Odell Williamson. "We'll just have to put on our lip-stick and rouge, and we'll be fixed up by Wednesday."

Ocean Isle Beach Commissioners are scheduled to meet today (Thursday) at 9 a.m. at Town Hall, to assess clean up efforts and determine whether or not to reopen the island to the general public. On Williamson's recommendation Saturday, the board voted unanimously to allow only property owners onto Ocean Isle at least until today's meeting.

After last Thursday night's storm,

the island was closed even to property owners until around 3 p.m. Friday, while preliminary damage assessments and emergency recovery measures were under way. A roadblock on the mainland side of the Odell Williamson Bridge was manned by town policemen, national guardsmen or N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles officers before and after property owners were allowed to return.

Williamson said allowing the public back on Ocean Isle before cleanup was completed would be a "big mistake," since nails and debris from damaged structures—mainly dune crossovers and the Ocean Isle fishing pier—were strewn along streets and in parking areas nearest the ocean.

First Street was covered with a layer of sand in several sections and had to be cleared Friday by Department of Transportation crews. The eastern end of First Street—devastated in Hugo's storm surge—was beyond DOT's help.

"I know there are going to be

some businesses here losing money," Williamson said, "but there's no one on this island who's going to lose more money than Odell Williamson...Our number one responsibility is to the property owners—the people who pay the taxes."

He estimated that cleanup would cost the town up to \$50,000 and that it probably could be completed by Wednesday (Sept. 27). The board voted unanimously to authorize Williamson and Mayor Betty Williamson to coordinate the effort.

At the outset of Saturday's meeting, Odell Williamson sobbed once as he began to relate preliminary damage estimates to the commission. "We've got more damage out there than the eye will show," he commented.

He said before Hugo's assault last week, the strand and dunes were in their best shape in 15 years—a situation that helped homes on all but the eastern end of the island weather the storm.

Building Inspector Druid Rober-

son Tuesday estimated Ocean Isle's damage at \$15 million, with \$7 million of that amount in structural damage to 50 homes, all located on the eastern end of the beach, and to 300 oceanfront crossovers. Hugo destroyed three east end houses, two of which already had been condemned long before the storm arrived last week.

Also, Roberston said Environmental Health officials Monday identified 26 houses on the east end that could not be inhabited due to uncovered septic tanks or other related problems. A preliminary estimate Saturday was that only 11 houses had sustained damage to septic systems.

Roberston noted Tuesday that some of the 26 homes may have second septic tanks that sanitarians were not aware of during Monday's inspection.

The fishing pier and swimming pools at two west end condominium complexes—A Place At The Beach and Ocean Villas—also were damaged, the building inspector said.

Roberston said the beach eroded from 15 feet to 60 feet on the east end and about 15 feet on the west end.

Also, he figured that water rose to an elevation of eight feet above sea level on Ocean Isle's canals during the storm. Although no official estimate was available, numerous private docks were damaged on the canals. Also ground-level rooms in many canal homes were flooded with about 18 inches of water.

"Bright spots" mentioned Saturday by Williamson and Roberston were that Ocean Isle's municipal sewer system was undamaged; power outages were not a major problem over most of the island; only seven homes were without water service Saturday; and the "wet sand beach" over most of the oceanfront did not erode in the hurricane.

As far as cleanup was concerned, Roberston said heavy rains on Monday didn't hamper contractors from burning debris on the east and

west ends or from sandbagging a line of oceanfront houses for homeowners. "In a battle, you don't have weather," he said. "You have conditions." (See Pictures Page 1-B)

Meeting To Focus On Lockwood Folly

The N. C. Environmental Management Commission's recent decision on Outstanding Resource Waters and what it means for the Lockwood Folly River Basin will be the focus of a Friday night meeting.

The Lockwood Folly River Action group will meet Friday at 7:30 p.m. in the Lockwood Folly (District II) Community Building on Stanbury Road, said spokesperson Annie Smigiel.

The meeting had been scheduled for last Thursday but was postponed due to Hurricane Hugo.