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NATION
THE BATTALION

Thursday, September 18, 2003

Up to 90,000 urged to evacuate East Coast

By Allen Breed
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOREHEAD CITY, N.C. — Many weather-tested Outer Banks residents sniffed at a weakening Hurricane Isabel, but forecasters warned that it still had to cross the warm waters of the Gulf Stream, which one expert called "high-octane fuel" for the still dangerous storm.

Isabel weakened from a Category 5 monster with 160 mph winds to a strong Category 2 early Wednesday, with sustained winds near 110 mph. Up to 90,000 residents along the North Carolina coast were urged to evacuate before the storm makes its expected landfall early Thursday along the Outer Banks.

Forecasters predicted little change in strength prior to landfall for Isabel, the biggest storm to hit the region since Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

Joe Hardison was prepared to leave his houseboat on Bogue Sound in Morehead City if Isabel had been packing winds of 120 mph or more. But now he figures he'll stay aboard the 35-foot craft and ride it out, as he did Hurricanes Hugo, Fran, Bertha, Bonnie and others whose names he can't even remember.

"We have mullet blows that are that hard," said the 59-year-old air conditioning man, who has stocked the vessel with 120 pounds of ice, 50 gallons of water and a half gallon of rum. "If (the boat) breaks loose, it's going to run around somewhere. If it does, I'll step off."

Coastal residents from South Carolina to New Jersey boarded up homes and businesses and

stocked up on batteries, water and other supplies. Colleges and universities in eastern Virginia, including the College of William & Mary, said they would close Wednesday for the rest of the week, and ordered students to leave.

"People still need to understand this is a very formidable hurricane," said Max Mayfield, director of the National Hurricane Center in Miami. "Its track has been very consistent."

North Carolina Gov. Mike Easley declared a state of emergency, allowing him to use the National Guard and also seek federal disaster relief after the storm passes. Thousands of tourists and others abandoned parts of North Carolina's Outer Banks as rough surf pounded the thin, 120-mile-long chain of islands.

By Tuesday evening, grocery stores and restaurants were closed or shuttered and the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse was barred to visitors. The main beach highway, N.C. 12, was unusually barren of traffic and the beaches nearly desolate.

"Even a lot of old salts are bailing out," Brian Simmons said as he placed plywood across the window of Stoney's Seafood in Avon. "I don't know if it's some vibe they feel or something."

But some hearty residents treated the evacuation orders as just a suggestion.

"It's easier to stay on the island," Margie Brecker said as she and her husband boarded up their Christmas shop in Rodanthe near North Carolina's Cape Hatteras and prepared to hunker down. "That way, we are right here when it's time to clean up, and we're able to help others."

David Kidwell, a 64-year-old retiree, was staying put at his home in Kitty Hawk.

"If it was a 5, I'd be gone. If it was a 4, I'd be gone. But right now it's looking like a 2 or less," he said. "That's just nothing more than a big nor'easter as far as I'm concerned."

Mayfield reminded that Floyd was a Category 2 storm that caused up to \$4.6 billion in damages and 56 deaths in the United States. After hitting land, Isabel could also spread heavy rain — 6-10 inches, Mayfield said — from North Carolina all the way to New England.

At 2 a.m. EDT, Isabel was about 480 miles southeast of North Carolina's Cape Hatteras, moving northwest at around 8 mph.

A hurricane warning was in effect from Cape Fear, N.C., northward to the North Carolina/Virginia state line. Northward from there, a hurricane watch was in effect to Chincoteague, Va., including Chesapeake bay and the tidal Potomac. A hurricane warning means hurricane conditions are possible within 24 hours.

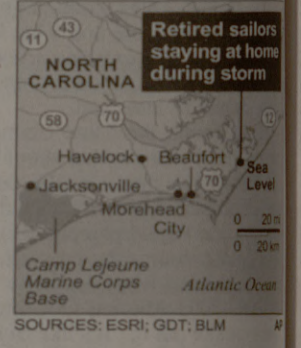
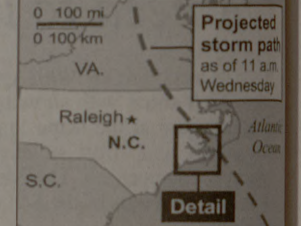
About 6,000 military personnel and their families on or near Langley Air Force Base in Hampton, Va., were ordered to leave.

Navy ships manned by 16,400 sailors headed out to sea from Norfolk, Va., and Earle, N.J., to ride out the storm and keep from being battered against their piers. Military aircraft were flown to airfields inland.

In Atlantic City, N.J., Miss America Pageant officials said they were prepared to postpone Friday's Boardwalk parade and

Old sailors not moving for Isabel

After living through the worst the sea could throw at them, the seamen at Snug Harbor retirement home in Sea Level, N.C., are determined to ride out the storm. They see it only as an inconvenience.



SOURCES: ESRI; GDT; BLM

even the pageant itself on Saturday, if necessary.

Isabel kept home-improvement stores bustling as people bought everything from plywood to generators to chain saws. Lowe's estimated it sold 10,000 generators in nine days to coastal residents, and The Home Depot said it had trucks coming in from as far as Toronto and Texas to help meet demand.

In Maryland, National Guard troops began preparations Wednesday after Gov. Robert Ehrlich declared a state of emergency the day before.

NEWS IN BRIEF

House Democrats will try to force vote on media ownership resolution

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats say they will try to force a vote on a resolution repealing new media ownership rules, defying the Republican leadership which pledged to kill the measure.

The fight over the resolution moved to the House after the Senate approved the legislation with a 55-40 vote Tuesday. The resolution seeks to undo changes to Federal Communications Commission regulations governing ownership of newspapers and television and radio stations.

Critics say those changes could lead to a wave of media mergers and ultimately stifle diversity and local viewpoints in news and entertainment.

Democrats will try to collect the 218 signatures needed for petition to force a House vote on the resolution, said Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass.

To succeed, the resolution — called a "congressional veto" — needs majority approval in the Senate and House.

A congressional veto has been used successfully only once before. In 2001, the Republican-controlled Congress and White House used it to repeal workplace safety regulations issued during the Clinton administration.

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Volume 1

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Repub halt fir Demo

By Kelly THE ASSOCI

AUSTIN

Senate ap Republican Thursday to enforcing tholars in f Democrats wh to block a C tricting plan.

However, t placed the De tors on pr January 20 Democrats lo break a quot told, they wo the \$57,000 a that Republ already impos

Under the Sen. Kyle Jan the 11 Dem able to agai their office including pos lar phone use get to use the ing spaces. If ators are abs

sufficient ex than 72 hour dance has bee "call" by th chamber, the tions would b

The vote favor of the pl ators were pr fell almost party lines.

Bicyc

By Soni THE BA

Campus-wid have increased t the past two year a total University Poli officials said.

UPD statist during the 200 year 289 bikes. During the 200 year 312 bikes, said UPD Sgt. During the fi of the current s bike thefts have