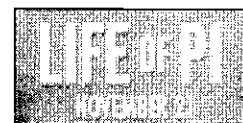


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# New Jersey Reels From Storm's Thrashing

By DAVID M. HALBFINGER

HOBOKEN, N.J. — New Jersey was reeling on Wednesday from the impact of Hurricane Sandy, which has caused catastrophic flooding here in Hoboken and in other New York City suburbs, destroyed entire neighborhoods across the state and wiped out iconic boardwalks in shore towns that had enchanted generations of vacationgoers.

Though the storm raged up the East Coast, it has become increasingly apparent that New Jersey took the brunt of it. Officials estimated that the state suffered many billions of dollars in property damage. More than two million customers remained without power on Wednesday, about half of those in the state. More than 6,000 people were still in shelters, state emergency officials said.

At least eight people died, and officials expressed deep concerns that the toll would rise as more searches of homes were carried out.

On Wednesday, President Obama visited the state and viewed the destruction with Gov. Chris Christie.

“The entire country has been watching what’s been happening,” Mr. Obama said at a stop in Atlantic County at the Brigantine Beach Community Center in Brigantine. “Everybody knows how hard Jersey has been hit.”

Perhaps as startling as the sheer toll was the devastation to some of the state’s well-known locales. Boardwalks along the beach in Seaside Heights, Belmar and other towns on the Jersey Shore were blown away. Amusement parks, arcades and restaurants all but vanished. Bridges to barrier islands buckled, preventing residents from even inspecting the damage to their property.

Localities across New Jersey imposed curfews to prevent looting. In Monmouth, Ocean and other counties, people waited for hours for gasoline at the few stations that had electricity. Supermarket shelves were stripped bare.

Two days after Hurricane Sandy struck, such distress was not limited to New Jersey.

Others parts of the Northeast, including Long Island, also suffered significant losses. Over all, the death toll from the storm passed 60, officials said Wednesday, and about six million people did not have power.

One of the most pressing crises was unfolding here in Hoboken, a city of 50,000 that is directly across the Hudson River from Manhattan.

"This is flooding like we've never seen," said Mayor Dawn Zimmer of Hoboken, where National Guard troops on Wednesday were trying to rescue thousands of residents trapped by sewage-laced floodwaters.

"It filled the city like a bathtub," she said.

When the storm surge hit on Monday night, the Hudson overcame the sea wall at the north and south ends of the city in a devastating westward torrent that made an island of the slightly higher, eastern half of the city.

After Ms. Zimmer appealed for aid on Tuesday, saying that as many as 20,000 people could be stuck in their homes, the first National Guard trucks arrived just before midnight. Overnight, they responded to emergency messages to find people and transport them to dry ground.

On the city's Facebook page, officials called on residents in need to listen for the trucks' approach. By midday on Wednesday, 12 National Guard trucks and two Humvee vehicles were in Hoboken for the rescue effort. City officials have not reported any fatalities in Hoboken so far.

Among the first to be rescued during the night were two babies, one 5 days old and another 3 weeks old. By midday Wednesday, the trucks at the unloading point by City Hall were bringing older people, including several in wheelchairs, and many families with babies and small children.

Robyn Pecarsky, who was eight months pregnant, was helped down from the back of a truck with her two children, who are 5 and 8.

"We saw the National Guard, and I sent my husband to tell them he had to get his pregnant wife out," Ms. Pecarsky said. She said the family lived in a third-floor apartment on Jackson Street that was not damaged, but as of this morning the water remained at thigh-high level on the ground floor of the building.

She said that the children had been in the house under the curfew since Monday, and that nerves were raw. When she heard that power, which remained out in much of Hoboken, might not return for days, she decided that the family had to leave.

City officials were worried because the floodwaters are a brew of rain and river water mixed with sewage, Ms. Zimmer said. A sewage plant on the west side of the city had been overwhelmed in the flood, she said.

Many power lines were down on the largely residential west side. Although power remained out in many parts of the city, there was concern that some fallen wires might remain active.

The PATH train station, on the south end of the city, remained closed after water from the Hudson rushed in Monday night. Port Authority officials said the PATH tunnel under the river was filled with water. Many commuters use the system to get to work in Manhattan.

Interviewed in the basement of City Hall, where rescue officials in a makeshift operations center were down to one working phone line on Tuesday, the mayor said the city had only a single pump station on the south end of town to drain its streets and, eventually, its basements.

In Sayreville, across Raritan Bay from Staten Island, the foundations of several homes were washed away, following the rush of a five-foot surge that had marooned some 200 people who were rescued, mostly by boat.

Mr. Christie visited the area, and several women cried in his arms as they told him how much they had lost. The governor alternatively embraced them, put his hands on both shoulders and spoke softly with an arm around their backs.

"I don't feel safe in my house and I don't know what to do," said one of them, Elaine Konopka.

As the governor walked down the street, he approached several people who wanted to show him their homes.

"Please help us," Theresa Mills said.

"That's what I'm here to do," he responded.

*This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:*

**Correction: November 1, 2012**

Because of an editing error, an earlier version of this article misstated the extent of power outages in New Jersey. More than two million customers, not people, lost power because of the storm.