

Coastal inhabitants ready for hurricane

CHARLESTON, S.C. -- Hurricane Hugo advanced faster and with renewed fury Thursday on Georgia and South Carolina as a flood of coastal residents grabbed what they could carry and fled inland on jammed highways.

By late afternoon, Hugo was upgraded to category 4 on the Saffir-Simpson scale of hurricane strength, the second mightiest category, indicating it could cause extreme damage.

Hugo's muscle reached winds of 135 mph, up from 105 mph the day before. North and South Carolina can expect tornadoes linked to Hugo for the next two days, according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

The coastal area could expect hurricane-force winds for 10 to 12 hours once the eye comes ashore, officials said.

The leading edge of Hugo was most likely to hit between Savannah, Ga., and Charleston any time after 8 p.m. EDT. A hurricane warning was in effect between Fernandina Beach, Fla., and Oregon Inlet, N.C.

At 6 p.m., Hugo was 180 miles south of Myrtle Beach, S.C., near latitude 31.2 degrees north and longitude 78.2 degrees west and moving northwest at 20 mph. It was expected to turn gradually to the north, the National Weather Service said.

The timing of the landfall was

critical because of the storm's tidal surge, a dome of water 10 to 15 feet high that would feed a normal 5-foot high tide that peaks after 2 a.m.

"On top of that will be waves, and so (on) . . . barrier islands (in) many places the buildings will be swept clean off of those islands," Bob Sheets, director of the National Hurricane Center, said from Coral Gables, Fla.

Evacuees queued up at gas stations and stripped store shelves of bottled water, bread and batteries. Officials warned coastal dwellers not to linger because gale force winds and flash floods could block escape routes. Five to 10 inches of rain is expected to fall.

The Navy moved ships out of coastal harbors to ride out the storm at sea. Army bases in coastal states moved helicopters inland or into shelters. Officials at Pope Air Force Base in Fayetteville, N.C., ordered 12 to 14 C-130 transport planes to Arkansas to wait out the storm.

South Carolina Gov. Carroll Campbell declared a state of emergency and dispatched 400 National Guardsmen to assist a mandatory evacuation of coastal barrier islands and shorefront. About one-fifth of the state's 3.1 million residents live in eight coastal counties.

By early afternoon, the windswept streets of the resort island of Hilton



Andy Manhart/Daily Nebraskan

Head were deserted. Stores were fortified with boards and most homes were empty. State troopers guarded the island's entrance.

The Georgia Emergency Management Agency opened shelters and advised about 142,000 people -- more than 95,000 of them in Chatham County -- to leave their homes. Gov. Joe Frank Harris declared a state of emergency in six counties.

Hugo has killed 26 people, left 50,000 homeless and caused hundreds of millions of dollars of damage in the Caribbean. Its pass through a string of resort islands began early

Sunday at Guadeloupe and culminated Monday when parts of Puerto Rico were leveled.

The storm pummeled the U.S. Virgin Islands, triggering a looting frenzy and lawlessness. The vanguard of 1,100 soldiers dispatched by President George Bush entered the Virgin Islands at St. Croix on Thursday.

Local police and the National Guard plundered stores with machete-wielding gangs and escaped prisoners, creating "chaos and near anarchy," according to Adm. William Crowe.

Judge awards custody to woman in embryo case

MARYVILLE, Tenn. -- A woman fighting for control of seven frozen embryos in an unprecedented divorce case was awarded temporary custody Thursday by a judge who ruled that life begins at conception and the woman should be allowed to carry them to term.

Blount County Circuit Judge W. Dale Young, ruling in favor of Mary Sue Davis over her estranged husband, Junior Lewis Davis, declared that their embryos were children, not property.

"I'm thrilled. It's definitely what I wanted," Mrs. Davis told a news conference in Titusville, Fla., where she now lives.

Davis said he would appeal in the state court system, and potentially beyond. "They are going to force me to become a father against my wishes," he said.

Mrs. Davis said she would not try to get pregnant before January. "I'm waiting to see about the appeal then hopefully after that try to have a child," she said.

"As far as we are aware, this is the first judicial decision which has declared an embryo a human being," said Charles Clifford, Davis' attorney, adding that he would ask the court to prevent Mrs. Davis from implanting the embryos until appeals are settled.

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U.S., Soviet Union plan to hold summit

WASHINGTON -- President George Bush met with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze on Thursday, opening three days of high-level talks likely to set a general time frame for a superpower summit and spur chemical and nuclear weapons cutbacks.

After nearly two hours of discussions, Shevardnadze said the two sides had not set a date for a summit between Bush and Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev but "we have concluded that a summit is necessary. There is no doubt about that."

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