

Hurricane Andrew strikes Cajun coastline

NEW ORLEANS — Hurricane Andrew unleashed its ravaging fury on Louisiana Tuesday with 140 mph winds that raked the coastline after residents boarded up and fled. The storm, blamed for the deaths of at least 17 people in Florida and the Bahamas, was estimated to have caused \$15 billion to \$20 billion in damages in south Florida. If those preliminary figures hold up, it would be by far the most expensive natural disaster ever in the United States. Andrew began lashing coastal parishes by nightfall. At about 10 p.m., Bob Sheets, director of the National Hurricane Center, said the doughnut-shaped wall of the storm around the eye had struck the marshy coastland, with 140 mph winds. At least three tornadoes were reported in LaPlace, west of New Orleans, striking a subdivision and doctor's office, authorities said. The sheriff, operating without electricity, called for ambulances and said there were "multiple injuries," but details weren't immediately available, state police Capt. Ronnie Jones said.

Andrew began lashing out at coastal parishes by nightfall. Hurricane-force winds over 74 mph prevented sheriff's deputies from responding to rescue calls from a stranded 60-foot boat and stalled cars in Terrebonne Parish south of New Orleans, even though the storm's eye was still about 40 miles offshore, civil defense coordinator Morris Duplantis said. "It's beginning to look pretty bad," he said. Lockport, east of Terrebonne Parish, lost power at 7:15 p.m. amid reports of 100 mph wind gusts. "We've got trees in the road and power outages all over the place. We've got 2,700 people in shelters and more out looking for shelters," Lafourche Parish sheriff's Maj. Sonny Hanson said. A turn to the north late Tuesday meant New Orleans could expect 100 mph winds and more hurricane than previously forecast, according to the National Hurricane Center. "It's going between the more populated areas of Louisiana between Lake Charles and

Lafayette, putting the brunt of the storm into New Orleans and Baton Rouge," said hurricane specialist Martin Nelson. After roaring across the Gulf of Mexico, Andrew had been expected to move ashore again sometime around midnight Tuesday, the National Hurricane Center said. It was expected to spare New Orleans its full fury, striking farther west in the low-lying Cajun country. Buoys near the mouth of the Mississippi River recorded hurricane-force winds as Andrew swirled toward land. Flooding was feared as forecasters said the storm could turn parallel to the coast and slow, pummeling a wide swath with heavy rain. "People are getting the idea this is serious now," said Steve Bierhorst, civil defense director for the town of Patterson, a coastal community under mandatory evacuation. Debris swirled through Plaquemines Parish in the afternoon and trees were damaged as the storm cruised to the south, parish President

Luke Petrovich said. "This is the closest threat we've had in the last 22 years," Petrovich said. "She's as dangerous as when she hit Miami." Gov. Edwin Edwards declared a state of emergency for all of Louisiana. More than 2 million people in Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas were asked or told to leave their coastal homes. Traffic heading north from the Cajun coastland was bumper to bumper for as far as the eye could see on U.S. 90. Traffic was also tied up on Interstate 49. Sandbag walls were erected around the South Central Bell telephone building in New Orleans and French Quarter bars boarded up. Floodgates were closed in the complicated system of levees that protect the city, and the Orleans Levee District said it had run out of sandbags for the public. The hurricane warning was posted along 470 miles of coast from Pascagoula, Miss., to near Galveston, Texas.

Clinton, Bush vie for vets at Legionnaires' meeting

CHICAGO — Bill Clinton appealed to veterans Tuesday not to oppose his presidential candidacy just because he avoided serving in Vietnam. President Bush pointedly reminded them that when his time came to serve in World War II, "I was scared but I was willing." The presidential rivals appeared two hours apart before an American Legion convention, first Bush extolling his experience as a wartime fighter pilot and commander-in-chief, then Clinton trying to bury the controversy over his Vietnam-era draft status.

"Like everybody else, the economy is the issue," said Ohio delegate Gerard Entingh. "Whether Clinton served or not is not an issue, although it is to some of these people." Roger Munson of Ohio said, "President Bush is a veteran and a Legion member. Sure it matters." Clinton, saying he owed veterans "one final statement" on the issue, told the group he got a draft notice in 1969 and was told by his draft board he could finish his school year. He said he then joined an ROTC program to avoid the draft, but soon reversed that decision and submitted to the then-new draft lottery, only to draw a high number and never be called.

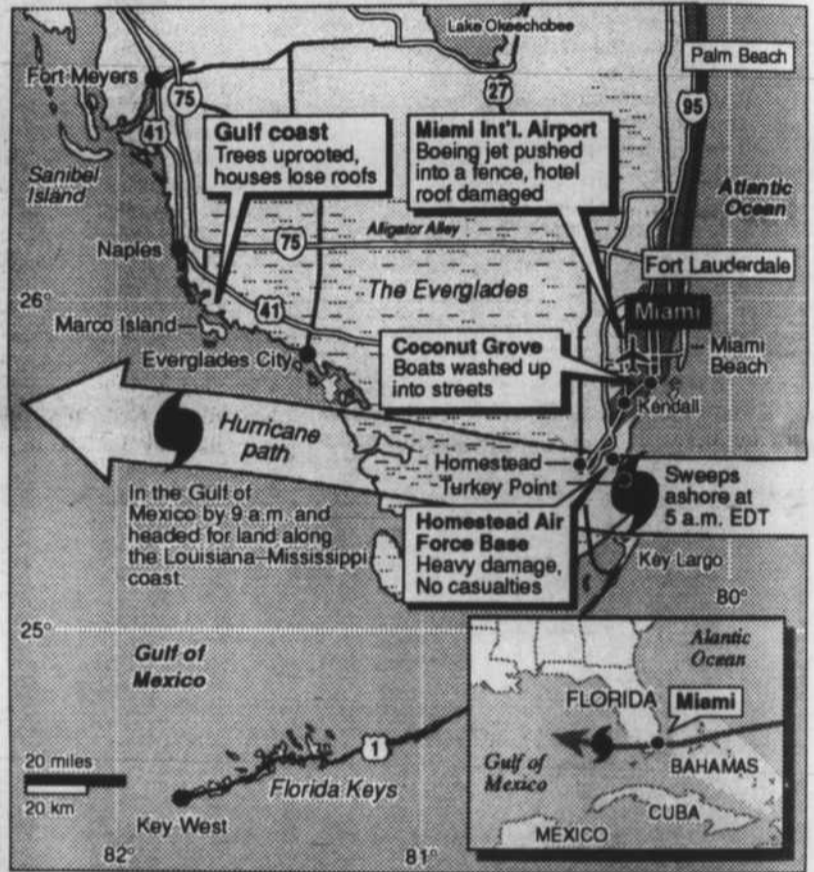
"I would have served and gone to Vietnam if called," he said. "But I have to tell you the truth: I was relieved when I saw my number was 311, not because I didn't want to serve my country but because I believed so strongly that our policy in Vietnam was wrong." Clinton promised to honor veterans "with deeds, not words." He pledged to protect and expand veterans' health and other programs, and open the Pentagon files on Americans missing in action. Clinton said Presidents Lincoln, Wilson and Roosevelt had no military experience but sent American troops into battle. "I do not relish this prospect, but neither do I shrink from it," Clinton said. Bush also promised a full accounting of missing American servicemen. The president promised to protect health programs, and said the new job-training proposal he unveiled Monday would help outgoing servicemen and defense workers in transition. "I hope I have earned your trust," said Bush. "The bond we share links us."

"You know I never served in the military; you know I opposed the war in Vietnam," the Arkansas governor said. "But I want you to know this: I was never against the heroic men who served in the war." "If you choose to vote against me because of what happened 23 years ago, that's your right and I respect that," Clinton said. "But it is my hope you will cast your vote while looking toward the future with hope rather than remaining fixed to the problems of the past." "If I should lose this election on the real issues, I shall be satisfied that I tried my best and was fairly judged," Clinton said. Bush defended himself against accusations that he stopped the Gulf War too soon rather than sending troops into Baghdad to crush Saddam Hussein's government. "We are not in the slaughter business," Bush said. "We were in the business of stopping aggression and I don't like these historical revisions. We did the right thing." Bush said his top military advisers as well as Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf on the scene, had told him the battle had been won and it was time to stop.

Floridians assess damage

MIAMI — South Florida fought off looting, disease and desperation Tuesday in the wake of Hurricane Andrew, and the storm's dazed survivors jammed roads and formed lines in a scramble for necessities. Labradors trained to sniff out bodies joined the effort to measure the full devastation left by the hurricane, which may be the nation's costliest natural disaster. One preliminary estimate put the toll at up to \$20 billion. "It's pandemonium," said Thomas Moore, an official at a shelter filled with 70 ill, elderly nursing-home evacuees in the hard-hit Richmond Heights area, about 10 miles south of central Miami. One evacuee died earlier, and Moore said everything from medicine to adult diapers was needed. Federal and state government relief efforts were joined by donations from supermarkets and bottled-water companies, kitchens set up by the Salvation Army and Southern Baptists, and U.S. military field rations. Andrew whirled across the Gulf of Mexico toward coastal areas in Louisiana. The storm on Monday badly damaged an uncounted number of homes, as well as an Air Force base, Miami's popular zoo, mobile home parks and department stores. At least 12 people died when Andrew pounded Miami's southern suburbs and nearby farm communities with winds that topped 160 mph. The storm had left three confirmed deaths in the Bahamas on Sunday. "Some bodies are caught in the wreckage and they have had to be left for the time being," said Jay Eaker, a Federal Emergency Management Agency spokesman in Tallahassee. Three Labrador retrievers trained in body recovery for the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission were sent to the wreckage of shopping centers in Cutler Ridge, a town on the southern fringes of metropolitan Miami where authorities suspected some people were buried under debris. Police, bolstered by 2,000 National Guardsmen, promised a hard line against looting as a 7 p.m.-to-7 a.m. countywide curfew was extended Tuesday night. Police made at least

Hurricane Andrew's Florida path



Source: National Hurricane Center

35 arrests Monday. "We will fill the jails up until they're running over," said Detective Donald Blocker of the Metro-Dade police. Gov. Lawton Chiles set up a command post in a Miami Lakes hotel running on its own generator and said he would direct the government from South Florida until the crisis is eased. He visited more ravaged neighborhoods Tuesday, after touring Monday with President Bush. "These folks need to know we're going to try to help them," Chiles said. "There's some things I think we can do to cut red tape." Disaster officials said 50,000 people were homeless, with nearly 35,000 still in shelters.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency set up a Miami office to direct relief efforts and take applications for assistance. Some 1,800 mobile homes were being shipped for temporary housing. The Miami International Airport remained closed for repairs, and Tamiami Airport was also shut down. CSX Transportation suspended freight train operations south of Jacksonville because of track damage. Thousands of people rushed out under sunny skies in search of food, water and supplies to offset the lack of power. Florida Power & Light Co. officials said 2 million people remained without electricity early Tuesday.

Link between smoking, cataracts found

CHICAGO — Smoking more than a pack of cigarettes a day doubles the likelihood a person will develop cataracts, the clouding of the eye lenses that afflicts 3 million Americans, two new studies found. The studies, involving almost 70,000 men and women, suggest about 20 percent of all cataract cases may be attributed to smoking, said a researcher who found a link between the eye disease and smoking in an earlier study. More research is needed to determine precisely how smoking damages the lens, Sheila West of the Dana Center for Preventive Ophthalmology at Johns Hopkins Hospital said in

an editorial accompanying the studies in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association. "For now, it appears that the litany of ills associated with smoking is growing, as we add to it cataracts, the world's leading cause of blindness," she wrote. More than a million Americans undergo cataract surgery each year at a total cost of billions of dollars. The latest studies involved 17,824 male U.S. physicians tracked from 1982 through 1987 and 50,828 female U.S. nurses tracked from 1980 through 1988. In the Physicians' Health Study,

subjects who smoked 20 cigarettes or more a day were 2.05 times more likely to be diagnosed with a cataract than subjects who had never smoked, the researchers said. Of the 17,824 men, 1,188 smoked 20 or more cigarettes daily, and 59 cataracts developed among them, a rate of 2.5 cataracts per 100 eyes. Among the 9,045 men who had never smoked, 228 cataracts developed, a rate of about 1.3 cataracts per 100 eyes. Smokers of fewer than 20 cigarettes daily had no increased risk compared with non-smokers, the researchers said.

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