

AFTER THE FLOOD

STATE OF RECOVERY



Sylvia Liner talks about how the water came into her home in Carolina Shores during the heavy rains that hit the area three weeks ago. KEN BLEVINS/STARNEWS

Brunswick residents still putting their lives back together

By Adam Wagner
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CAROLINA SHORES — Fred and Sylvia Liner's dining room table is still where it was Oct. 2 as they ate salmon, listening to the rain and watching the water rise.

It's one of very few pieces of furniture that is.

Pretty much everything else — from their stove to

Fred's mother's furniture in their bedroom to the furniture Sylvia had owned since the eighth grade — is gone, lost to a flood of water that seeped into their Sunfield Drive home.

Soon, the table will need to go, too, because its legs were soaked in the contaminated water. Sylvia needs somewhere flat to work on starting over, though, so for now it stays.

The Liners' home was one of 44 in Carolina Shores that received some kind of damage during the flooding, said John Mendenhall, the town's administrator. Much of that damage was minor, but the storm that dumped more rain on Carolina Shores than 1999's Hurricane Floyd brought at least half a foot

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of water to six homes.

Municipal expenses

In all, the town of fewer than 4,000 people spent between \$5,000 and \$10,000 on overtime during the storm, had about \$20,000 in damage to roads, and will likely spend about \$200,000 removing debris from the town's canals, ditches and storm drainage system, Mendenhall said.

Brunswick County has tallied \$105,000 in storm-related expenses thus far, said Ann Hardy, the county's manager, of which about \$100,000 was payroll expenses, primarily in overtime salaries. That number could go up as the county's utilities department determines how much it will cost to repair damage to the county's system.

New Hanover County estimates its costs at more than \$100,000, though figures are still being finalized, county spokeswoman Ruth Ravitz Smith said.

Carolina Beach's government spent about \$48,000 responding to the storm and also suffered about \$166,000 in damage to public property.

Governments, though, could still be in line for some aid. North Carolinamanagement officials could release damage estimates from the storm as early as Monday, said Julia Jarema, a N.C. Emergency Management spokeswoman. If those numbers total more than about \$13 million, the state could receive some Federal Emergency Management Agency funds through the public assistance program.

That money would be distributed on the local level to counties that suffered at least \$3.56 in damage per person. Brunswick, for instance, would need to suffer at least \$382,000 in damage across the county to receive any potential funding.

Rebuilding one room at a time

Fred and Sylvia Liner's driveway has a large storage pod in it, holding items that weren't among the four dump-trucks-full that were taken away. Behind the storage pod sits a purple van, all of its doors and trunk open because Fred is hoping it will dry out enough to be



Photo albums dry out on top of an ironing board at Fred and Sylvia Liner's home in Carolina Shores.

PHOTOS BY KEN BLEVINS/STARNEWS



The Liners' rose bed was moved a few feet during the heavy rains that came through Carolina Shores recently.

usable again.

Individual homeowners like the Liners will not be receiving federal emergency funding because too few homes received major damage according to federal guidelines, Brian Watts, Brunswick County's emergency management director, said Monday.

Before they left that Friday evening, Sylvia called their insurance company to let them know the house was being flooded. Fortunately, their mortgage required flood insurance.

"It's like, what do you do? Think about what you would grab," she said, recounting that night.

For her, it was an evening dress, wedding photos and a Bible. Her husband grabbed three guitars and a trumpet.

Fred put a keyboard up on their bed and Sylvia, a Mary Kay saleswoman, stashed her makeup stock in the bathtub.

Then they left, their wheels spinning out for a few heart-stopping seconds at the end of the driveway, only the mailboxes guiding them to safety because the road was hidden under water.

They beat a hasty retreat to the Econo Lodge in Shallotte.

The Liners returned to their home Saturday with a crew from Back to Normal Restoration Services. The crew stayed from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., soaking up water throughout the home, ripping up sopping carpet and setting up high-power dehumidifiers.

It would be Monday, Oct. 5, before the water would recede and the Liners would return to their house again. The dehumidifiers had been running nonstop since Saturday.

"I used as much electricity in three days as I usually use in a month," Fred said.

The cleaning-out process continued, with crews cutting away wet drywall, ending the walls about knee-level throughout the house. All of the Liners' possessions were moved into the front yard where they had to decide what was salvageable and what would be tossed into one of the trucks.

"That was hard," Sylvia said, looking at a cellphone picture of one of the trucks, its bed filled with the possessions they'd spent a lifetime

The cost of rain

How much did the rains from Oct. 2-5 cost Brunswick County governments?

Carolina Shores: \$230,000 (\$200,000 removing debris, \$20,000 damage to roads, up to \$10,000 overtime)

Brunswick County: At least \$105,000 (\$100,000 overtime, about \$1,100 for mosquito control after the storm, could rise because county utilities are still assessing damage)

Carolina Beach: \$214,000 (\$166,000 in damage to public property, \$48,000 in personnel and response expenses)

cobbling together.

Now, the Liners are about four to six weeks away from moving back into their home. In the meantime, they're staying rent-free in the Sunset Beach house owned by a fellow member of their First Baptist Church North Myrtle Beach congregation.

Sylvia had begun redesigning her house before the flood, planning to go room by room. She'd only completed her son's room, the one where her husband redid the floor and painted.

The flood gave her no choice but to hurry up her project, and she's already chosen fabrics for her sunroom, new couch and a chair for their living room.

"Now," Sylvia said, "I don't have to go one room at a time."

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