

38 HOMES DESTROYED BY HURRICANE

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Written By Ron Stock

Thirty-eight homes were completely destroyed by the force of Hurricane Kate which swept through Wakulla County November 21.

So fierce was the storm in the county that coastal communities were flooded, trees and power lines fell and property damage amounted to millions of dollars.

County Civil Defense Director Eric Hindle said he expects the President to declare Wakulla County a disaster area. That designation would allow businesses and homeowners to receive low interest loans for repair and rebuilding of damaged property.

Hindle said the American Red Cross Damage Assessment team, which entered the county after the storm, reported some 22 businesses damaged. Of the homes totally destroyed, eleven (11) were at Oyster Bay, with six (6) homes totally destroyed in each of the communities of Shell Point, Live Oak Island and St Marks.

Records of the American Red Cross also show 153 residences in the county received damage of a major proportion. St Marks had 60 homes in that category, Spring Creek 29 and Shell Point 25.

“We are very fortunate that we had no lives lost,” said Hindle. He said the storm had winds in excess of 100 mile per hour gusts, twisters and severe flooding in coastal areas since the hurricane hit at high tide.

Hindle said many coastal homeowners who experienced flooding came home to find crabs and fish in their homes as well as mud. “It will be some time before they get the smell of the sea out of their homes,” he said. Homes receiving most damage were mobile homes, although that was not the total case. He said numerous permanent and vacation homes were destroyed.

“The American Red Cross Damage Assessment team has been here since early last week.” He said. They have also set up a Disaster Assistance Center at the livestock pavilion in Crawfordville.

The road and bridge department is continuing efforts to clear debris, repair and regard county roads damaged by the storm.

The Sheriff’s Office continues to patrol for looters in hard hit coastal areas, along with its routine patrols throughout the county.

The hurricanes of years past have been the talk of the county. Wakulla County has had numerous residents drown as a result of such storms. Ace and Raff Vickers drowned in a 1928 hurricane and Mr Kid Raker and others drowned in a 1941 hurricane.

County officials expressed pleasure with the cooperation they received from residents during Hurricane Kate, pointing out that cooperation helped keep casualties at 0.

Homeowners affected did not have to live along the coast. There were many reports of damage to homes caused by falling trees and winds. Those who lost their homes must see if they can rebuild as before or if they will be required to rebuild in conjunction with new regulations passed by county officials.

Barbara Faircloth Pyle, of Woodville, was one of a number of people who lost her home along the coast. She had a mobile home at Live Oak Island.

“One of my neighbors called me in Tallahassee to report I was the proud owner of a vacant lot,” she said.

“I’m going to try and figure out if the county is going to keep me from putting up a new structure with their new rules and regulations,” she explained.

“Do I have a place to rebuild or only a new, scenic view anytime I want to drive down?” she asked.