

STORM HURTS MERCHANTS

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While Wakulla County homeowners were surveying the damage left behind from Hurricane Kate, business owners in the county had additional concerns over losses as the power companies struggled to restore power.

Many businesses took precautions against the storm, but some food losses were still felt. Some homeowners were forced to throw away items that had spoiled in their homes and business owners had the same problems at work.

Pat Williams, of Williams General Store, north of Crawfordville, said that damage was estimated at about \$10,000 at her establishment. A feed barn was blown down by Hurricane Kate and much of the feed was lost. The store went 3 ½ days without power and lost many food items inside as well.

The rebuilding process went on in a hurry as Williams said they had to have the feed barn back up right away. Finding suppliers was also difficult because they were also hurt by Hurricane Kate north of Wakulla County. Dairy items, frozen food and meats were counted as losses.

Williams said that it would take some time before the food items could be built back up again, but noted that the operation was returning to normal. "Now if we could just get a few days rest," she said.

In Crawfordville the Wakulla IGA suffered losses similar to other stores throughout the county. Mike Fedorak stated that losses included a variety of meats and dairy products.

Fedorak said that his family camped out in front of the store just in case any glass windows blew out.

The deep freeze and some dairy products did well because the store crew covered the food up. Fedorak said that he hadn't totaled losses, but he added that insurance should cover them. "We were lucky," Fedorak said, "it could have been a lot worse."

A few signs blew down in the wind and some tin was torn off the sheds behind the store, but overall Fedorak was relieved.

Hugh McCallister, of Mac's Grocery, fared well with one store, but had problems with another. McCallister said that his store in Medart suffered very little damage to food, but his store in the Shadeville area had to be rescued from disaster.

McCallister said that he moved the food from the Shadeville store as the power was out in the Shadeville area for nearly a week. The store used a refrigeration truck to preserve items from spoiling. "We weren't hurt too bad," he said.

Michele's Restaurant in Shadeville spent \$800 to purchase a generator to help them through the storm.

Part-owner Nadine Joos said that they felt the purchase of the generator would be cheaper than losing all their food. They operated with candles and began making ice as soon as their power came back on. She counted losses in the refrigerator, but freezer items fared well.

Business was heavy during the storm and Michele's owners decided to stay in the county rather than go home to Tallahassee during it. Joos said that she was amazed that there weren't many injuries considering the amount of damage Hurricane Kate left behind.

In St Marks, Hurricane Kate was not kind to homeowners or business people. Dewey Goldenetz of the St Marks Country Store, and Joy Brown, of Bo Lynn's Grocery, suffered from the storm winds and rising tides.

Both Goldenetz and Brown said that anything that was touched by salt water was lost. Brown added that her store suffered losses in the thousands of dollars. Goldenetz said that salt water touching anything metal created rust.

Brown noted the loss of appliances as water touched their motors. An inspector marked inventory that had been touched by water and those items were carted off to the dump, Brown said.

The electricity was off for less than 24 hours within the town, but the damage was still high. Some roof damage was covered by insurance but the loss of food was not covered, Brown said.

Despite her losses, Brown was able to see a positive side. "Everybody worked together," Brown said, "that is what makes St Marks special"

In Panacea Jo Barksdale, of the Bayside IGA, said that the crew worked very hard to save food items. She added that there were losses in the meat and frozen food departments. Barksdale said that the store rented a refrigerated trailer to help with the power failure. Some food was transferred to the deep freeze, but some could not be saved. Barksdale said the process of moving food to the parking lots was much easier than moving back into the store.

The IGA opened quickly after the storm, but was not able to sell perishable items until they had been inspected. Some dairy losses were felt, but overall the results were not

as bad as they could have been. “Charles is still figuring out the damage,” Jo Barksdale said, of her husband.

When Hurricane Elena made her presence felt in late August Bayside IGA was able to transfer goods to a cooler in Crawfordville. Hurricane Kate knocked off power throughout the county.