

Bracing For The Superstorm

Eastern U.S.
Prepares For
Storm Threatening
50 Million People

BY JENNIFER PELTZ
AND ALLEN G. BREED
Associated Press

NEW YORK — From Washington to Boston, big cities and small towns Sunday buttoned up against the onslaught of a superstorm that could endanger 50 million people in the most heavily populated corridor in the nation, with forecasters warning that the New York area could get the worst of it — an 11-foot wall of water.

“The time for preparing and talking is about over,” Federal Emergency Management Administrator Craig Fugate said as Hurricane Sandy made its way up the Atlantic on a collision course with two other weather systems that could turn it into one of the most fearsome storms on record in the U.S. “People need to be acting now.”

Airlines canceled more than 5,000 flights and Amtrak began suspending train service across the Northeast. New York and Philadelphia moved to shut down their subways, buses and trains Sunday night and announced that schools would be closed on Monday. Boston, Washington and Baltimore also called off school. And non-essential government employees in the nation’s capital were told not to report for work in the morning.

As rain from the leading edges of the monster hurricane began to fall over the Northeast, hundreds of thousands of people from Maryland to Connecticut were ordered to evacuate low-lying coastal areas Sunday, including 375,000 in lower Manhattan and other parts of New York City, 50,000 in Delaware and 30,000 in Atlantic City, N.J., where the city’s 12 casinos were forced to shut down for only the fourth time ever.

“We were told to get the heck out. I was going to stay, but it’s better to be safe than sorry,” said Hugh Phillips, who was one of the first in line when a Red Cross shelter in Lewes, Del., opened at noon.

“I think this one’s going to do us in,” said Mark Palazzolo, who boarded up his bait-and-tackle shop in Point Pleasant Beach, N.J., with the same wood he used in past storms, crossing out the names of Hurricanes Isaac and Irene and spray-painting “Sandy” next to them. “I got a call from a friend of mine from Florida last night who said, ‘Mark, get out! If it’s not the storm, it’ll be the aftermath. People are going to be fighting in the streets over gasoline and food.’”

Authorities warned that the nation’s biggest city could get hit with a surge of seawater that could swamp parts of lower Manhattan, flood subway tunnels and cripple the network of electrical and communications lines that are vital to the nation’s financial center.

Sandy, a Category 1 hurricane with sustained winds of 75 mph as of Sunday evening, was blamed for 65 deaths in the Caribbean before it began churning up the Eastern Seaboard. As of 5 p.m., it was centered about 530 miles southeast of New York City, moving at 15 mph, with hurricane-force winds extending an incredible 175 miles from its center.



President Barack Obama talks to workers at FEMA Headquarters in Washington Sunday.

POOL: DENNIS BRACK/BLACK STAR/MCT

Storm Surge Poses ‘Worst Case Scenario’

BY SETH BORENSTEIN
AP Science Writer

KENSINGTON, Md. — The projected storm surge from Hurricane Sandy is a “worst case scenario” with devastating waves and tides predicted for the highly populated New York City metro area, government forecasters said Sunday.

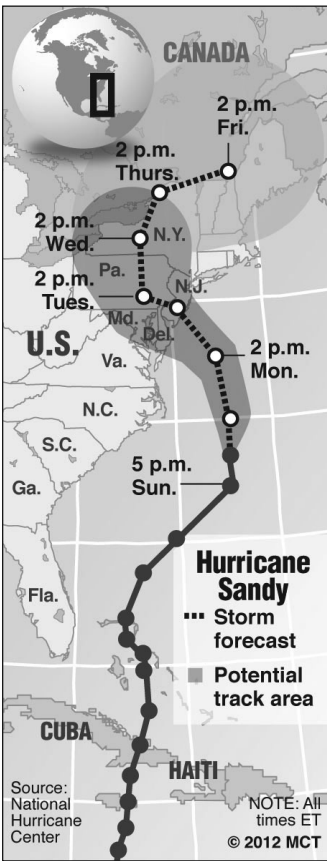
The more they observe it, the more the experts worry about the water — which usually kills and does more damage than winds in hurricanes.

In this case, seas will be amped up by giant waves and full-moon-powered high tides. That will combine with drenching rains, triggering inland flooding as the hurricane merges with a winter storm system that will worsen it and hold it in place for days.

Louis Uccellini, environmental prediction chief for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, told The Associated Press that given Sandy’s due east-to-west track into New Jersey, that puts the worst of the storm surge just north in New York City, Long Island and northern New Jersey. “Yes, this is the worst case scenario,” he said.

In a measurement of pure kinetic energy, NOAA’s hurricane research division on Sunday ranked the surge and wave “destruction potential” for Sandy — just the hurricane, not the hybrid storm it will eventually become — at 5.8 on a 0 to 6 scale. The damage expected from winds will be far less, experts said. Weather Underground meteorologist Jeff Masters says that surge destruction potential number is a record and it’s due to the storm’s massive size.

“You have a lot of wind acting over a long distance of water for hundreds of miles” and that piles



the storm surge up when it finally comes ashore, Masters said. Even though it doesn’t pack much power in maximum wind speed, the tremendous size of Sandy — more than 1,000 miles across with tropical storm force winds — adds to the pummeling power when it comes ashore, he said.

The storm surge energy numbers are bigger than the deadly 2005 Hurricane Katrina, but that can be misleading. Katrina’s destruction was concentrated in a small area, making it much worse, Masters said. Sandy’s storm surge

energy is spread over a wider area. Also, Katrina hit a city that is below sea level and had problems with levees.

National Hurricane Center Director Rick Knabb said Hurricane Sandy’s size means some coastal parts of New York and New Jersey may see water rise from 6 to 11 feet from surge and waves. The rest of the coast north of Virginia can expect 4 to 8 feet of surge.

The full moon Monday will add 2 to 3 inches to the storm surge in New York, Masters said.

“If the forecasts hold true in terms of the amount of rainfall and the amount of coastal flooding, that’s going to be what drives up the losses and that’s what’s going to hurt,” said Susan Cutter, director of the hazards and vulnerability research institute at the University of South Carolina.

Cutter said she worries about coastal infrastructure, especially the New York subways, which were shutting down Sunday night.

Klaus Jacob, a Columbia University researcher who has advised the city on coastal risks, said, “We have to prepare to the extent we can, but I’m afraid that from a subway point of view, I think it’s beyond sheer preparations. I do not think that there’s enough emergency measures that will help prevent the subway from flooding.”

Knabb said millions of people may be harmed by inland flooding.

A NOAA map of inland and coastal flood watches covers practically the entire Northeast: all of Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware, and Connecticut; most of Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts and Vermont, and parts of northeastern Ohio, eastern Virginia, North Carolina, and western New Hampshire.

Romney, Obama Reshuffle Plans Due To Storm

CELINA, Ohio (AP) — Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney and President Barack Obama frantically sought to close the deal with voters with precious few days left in an incredibly close race as this year’s October surprise — an unprecedented storm menacing the East Coast — wreaked havoc on their best-laid plans.

Ever mindful of his narrow path to the requisite 270 electoral votes, Romney looked to expand his map, weighing an intensified effort in traditionally left-leaning Minnesota. Obama sought to defend historically Democratic turf as the race tightened heading into the final week.

Wary of being seen as putting their political pursuits ahead of public safety, the two White House hopefuls reshuffled their campaign plans as the storm approached. Both candidates were loath to forfeit face time with voters in battleground states like Virginia that are likely to be afflicted when Hurricane Sandy, a winter storm and a cold front collide to form a freak hybrid storm.

“The storm will throw havoc into the race,” said Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va.

Obama, preparing to depart for Florida Sunday, a day early to beat the storm, got an update from disaster relief officials before speaking by phone to affected governors and mayors.

Failure Of Latest Syria Truce Reflects Diplomacy

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria’s air force fired missiles and dropped barrel bombs on rebel strongholds while opposition fighters attacked regime positions Sunday, flouting a U.N.-backed cease-fire that was supposed to quiet fighting over a long holiday weekend but never took hold.

The failure to push through a truce so limited in its ambitions — just four days — has been a sobering reflection of the international community’s inability to ease 19 months of bloodshed in Syria. It also suggests that the stalemated civil war will drag on, threatening to draw in Syria’s neighbors in this highly combustible region such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

“This conflict has now taken a dynamic of its own which should be worrying to everyone,” said Salman Shaikh, director of the Brookings Doha Center think tank.

The U.N. tried to broker a halt to fighting over the four-day Eid al-Adha Muslim feast that began on Friday, one of the holiest times of the Islamic calendar. But the truce was violated almost immediately after it was supposed to take effect, the same fate other cease-fires in Syria have met.

Activists said at least 110 people were killed Sunday, a toll similar to previous daily casualty tolls. They include 16 who died in an airstrike on the village of al-Barra in northern Syria’s mountainous Jabal al-Zawiya region.

Palestinians To Press Forward With U.N. Status

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — The Palestinian president is moving forward with his plan to seek upgraded observer status at the United Nations next month, despite American and Israeli threats of financial or diplomatic retaliation, officials said Sunday.

The decision sets the stage for a new showdown between Israel and the Palestinians at the world body, following last year’s attempt by the Palestinians to seek status as a full member state. Although that initiative failed to pass the U.N. Security Council, it caused months of diplomatic tensions with Israel.

“We will go to the U.N. regardless of any threats,” said Tawfik Tirawi, a senior member of President Mahmoud Abbas’ Fatah movement. “I expect the Israelis to take punitive measures against us, if we win this status, but this is our choice and we will not retract it.”

This year, the Palestinians are seeking “nonmember state” status in the U.N. General Assembly, where passage is assured. The 193-member assembly is dominated by developing nations sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. Officials say they are looking for what they call a “quality” majority that includes European countries as well, though Germany and Britain, for instance, have been cool to the Palestinian plan.

While upgraded status would not change the situation on the ground, the Palestinians say the move is still significant. They will ask for international recognition of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, territories captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war.

Opposition Parties Make Push In Ukraine Vote

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine’s opposition parties performed strongly in Sunday’s parliamentary vote, according to an exit poll, but President Viktor Yanukovich’s party could still retain control of the legislature as its members are likely to sweep individual races across the country.

The West is paying close attention to the conduct of the vote in the strategic ex-Soviet state, which lies between Russia and the European Union, and serves as a key conduit for transit of Russian energy supplies to many EU countries. An election deemed unfair would likely turn Ukraine further away from the West and toward Moscow.

Opposition parties alleged widespread violations on election day, such as vote-buying and a suspiciously high amount of home voting, but a local election monitor said those violations were isolated. Authorities insisted the election was honest and democratic.

The Fatherland party, led by the jailed charismatic former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, the Udarny (Punch) party together received more than 50 percent of the vote on party lists, outnumbering Yanukovich’s Party of Regions and its traditional ally, the Communist Party.

AP: Advantage Obama In Hunt For 270

BY THOMAS BEAUMONT
Associated Press

AMES, Iowa — President Barack Obama is poised to eke out a victory in the race for the 270 electoral votes needed to win re-election, having beaten back Republican Mitt Romney’s attempts to convert momentum from the debates into support in all-important Ohio, according to an Associated Press analysis a week before Election Day.

While the Democratic incumbent has the upper hand in the electoral vote hunt, Romney has pulled even, or is slightly ahead, in polling in a few pivotal states, including Florida and Virginia. The Republican challenger also appears to have the advantage in North Carolina, the most conservative of the hotly contested nine states that will determine the winner.

While in a tight race with Obama for the popular vote, Romney continues to have fewer state-by-state paths than Obama to reach 270. Without Ohio’s 18 electoral votes, Romney would need last-minute victories in nearly all the remaining up-for-grabs states and manage to pick off key states now leaning Obama’s way, such as Iowa or Wisconsin.

To be sure, anything can happen in the coming days to influence the Nov. 6 election.

The AP analysis isn’t intended to predict the outcome. Rather, it’s meant to provide a snapshot of a race that has been stubbornly close in the small number of competitive states all year. The analysis is based on public polls and internal campaign surveys as well as spending on television advertising, candidate visits, get-out-the-vote organizations and interviews with dozens of Republican and Democratic strategists in Washington and in the most contested states.

The analysis shows that Obama probably would win with at least 271 electoral votes from 21 states, including Ohio, Wisconsin and Iowa,

and the District of Columbia. Romney seems on track for 206 from 23 states, including North Carolina. Obama won that state in 2008 and campaigned aggressively there this year. But Obama’s team acknowledges it is the most difficult state for him to win, and he’s paid less attention to it recently.

Colorado, Florida, Nevada, New Hampshire and Virginia, with a combined 61 votes at stake, could go either way.

“I’m counting on Iowa! Iowa may be the place that decides who the next president is!” Romney said on

one of two visits to the state last week. In Ohio last week, a hoarse Obama reminded a Cleveland audience near the end of a six-state marathon: “I need you, Ohio. America needs you, Ohio.”

Romney is banking on what his supporters say is late momentum. Obama is betting that his aggressive effort to register and lock in early voters, mainly Democratic-leaning younger and minority voters, will give him an insurmountable advantage heading into Election Day, when more Republicans typically vote than Democrats.

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