

2 feet of rain, and 'nowhere for it to go'

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3-4 minutes

At first, Jane Kazee's greatest fear was that Tropical Storm Fay would bring tornadoes to her Melbourne-area home.

But as the system hovered over Brevard County on Wednesday, the resident of the Lamplighter Village retirement community realized that rising floodwaters were a far greater threat.

The 69-year-old's street had become a river 3 to 4 feet deep by Wednesday afternoon. The water was high enough to swallow much of a sign on the front lawn of her yellow manufactured home: "Life is good," it read. "Bless this house."

Kazee's reaction: "I'm scared to death."

Across much of southern Brevard, residents and rescue workers struggled as Fay put neighborhoods under waist-deep water. The storm is set to hit Volusia today.

As of Wednesday, Fay dumped up to 25 inches of rain on the Melbourne area, prompting the Florida National Guard and other emergency workers to go house to house looking for voluntary evacuees in several south Brevard neighborhoods.

Authorities could do little to ease the flooding, said Robert Lay, Brevard's emergency operations director.

"Our pumps are working but there's nowhere for it [the water] to go," Lay said.

In Lamplighter Village, egrets waded through the cold, brown water and dodged floating debris. The water drowned flowers in flower pots, threatened to cover the tires of cars parked in carports and inched up the stairs of front porches. Authorities planned to cut electricity to the neighborhood to prevent electrocutions.

"I don't know what I'm going to do," Kazee said as a passing pickup pushed more water into her carport.

At nearby Sherwood Elementary, which opened as a shelter Wednesday, about 30 evacuees arrived by that afternoon. Fifty more were expected in the evening.

Evacuee Rosanne Lahn, 76, said she left her Lamplighter Village home as a precaution. The flooding from Fay is far worse than that of hurricanes in 2004, she said.

When she woke Wednesday, Lahn could see the neighborhood lawns. Within hours, rising waters submerged them.

"I'm afraid it's going to take over our first floor, and we don't have a second," Lahn quipped.

Fay's impact

*Deaths: A Highlands County man's death Saturday has been attributed to Tropical Storm Fay. A preliminary investigation shows John Robert Graves, 54, died of carbon-monoxide poisoning. He was preparing for the storm by checking two generators in his garage. The storm was blamed for 20 deaths in the Caribbean.

*Schools closed: Brevard and Volusia district schools will remain closed today.

*Insurance claims: Citizens Property Insurance, the state's largest provider of homeowners coverage, reported Wednesday that 518 people had filed insurance claims. In Barefoot Bay, where a tornado touched down Tuesday, 29 have filed claims with Citizens.

*Sea turtles: Volunteers are trying to save sea-turtle nests disturbed by the storm. People who see eggs exposed by the storm should not touch them; call the Sea Turtle Preservation Society at 321-676-1701 for help.

*Beach erosion: Volusia and Brevard beaches reported minor storm-related erosion. New Smyrna Beach lost up to 3 feet of sand, most from a \$7 million sand project this summer. The erosion didn't reach any homes or sea walls, officials said.