

Eastern United States Struggles to Recover from Huge Storm

From VOA Learning English, this is IN THE NEWS in Special English.

This week, a huge storm named Sandy brought death and destruction to Caribbean countries and the eastern United States. Sandy started as a tropical storm in the Caribbean, where it left at least sixty five people dead.

Sandy's next target was the eastern United States. The storm caused damage up and down the coast, from North Carolina to Maine. There were damage estimates of up to fifty billion dollars.

American officials have blamed Sandy for at least ninety deaths. Police say at least fifty-nine of the victims were in New Jersey and New York. The number will most likely increase as rescue workers find more bodies.

Recovery efforts are continuing in the affected areas. On Thursday, more than five million people were without electricity, mostly in New Jersey and New York. On Friday, New York's main power company said it hopes to return power throughout Manhattan island by Saturday.

The storm also affected telephone service. As a result, many New Yorkers witnessed a rare event -- people standing in line to use pay phones on the street.

Those with phone or Internet service used websites like Twitter and Facebook to share how they were dealing with the storm, both good and bad. Some government agencies used Twitter to keep people informed on the storm and recovery efforts.

New Jersey appeared to suffer the most damage. Workers in Hoboken are pumping millions of liters of polluted water from the city's streets. Tens of thousands of people lost their homes and belongings in coastal areas of the state.

Widespread fuel shortages are reported in both New Jersey and New York. Some people waited for hours in hopes of being able to buy gasoline. The long lines increased tensions and led to fights. Some gas stations refused to open without police protection. One driver, Betty Bethea, explains.



President Barack Obama hugs Donna Vanzant, the owner of North Point Marina, as he tours damage from Hurricane Sandy in Brigantine, N.J., Oct. 31, 2012. (White House/Pete Souza)

"It's terrible. You can't even get there. The police have blocked everything off. You cannot get no gas. Everywhere I went the police said 'no gas.'"

The storm forced New York City to close its popular subway system. Many underground areas were flooded and have

not been cleared of water. On Thursday, the subway re-opened with limited service. But it could be weeks before all the trains are running again.

The storm also closed the New York Stock Exchange for two days.

President Obama ordered the military to assist with the recovery efforts. He approved disaster declarations for New York and New Jersey, freeing up federal aid to help with property damage.

"My instructions to the federal agencies has been: do not figure out why we can't do something, I want you to figure out how we do something. I want you to cut through red tape, I want you to cut through bureaucracy. There's no excuse for inaction at this point."

The president suspended his election campaign for part of this week so that he could deal with Sandy. He has been urging federal agencies to do everything possible to help the storm victims.

This week, Mr. Obama went to New Jersey to witness the damage. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, a supporter of candidate Mitt Romney, praised Mr. Obama for his efforts.

On Tuesday, Mr. Romney changed one of his campaign events to raise money for victims of Sandy. He also suspended campaign events and has urged Americans to help with the recovery effort.

"I appreciate your generosity, it is part of the American spirit, the American way to give to people who are in need."

The presidential race continues to be close. It is not clear if or how Sandy will influence the vote.