Floodwaters from Sandy rushed into New York City late Monday, submerging cars up to their headlights on East 14th Street in Manhattan. The storm is expected to lash the Northeast through the week.

Sandy Hits Coast, Floods New York

By Jamila Trindle, Michael R. Crittenden and Michael Howard Saul

Superstorm Sandy carved a harrowing path of destruction through the East Coast on Monday, inundating Atlantic City and sending cars floating through the streets of lower Manhattan.

Accelerating Monday evening as it made landfall on the New Jersey coast, the storm promised a legacy as one of the most damaging ever to menace the Northeast, from North Carolina to New England.

Some 5.2 million people were left without electricity across the region Monday evening—the most since the 2003 blackout. In New York, more than 250,000 Con Ed customers from 39th Street south were left without power. One of the city’s major hospitals was forced to evacuate the coastline of its state. He urged people in one-story homes to move to their roofs. “This is a Katrina-like warning we are issuing,” he said.

The impact was mounting. As night fell Monday, a record breaking 13-foot surge of seawater hit New York City, flooding New York’s Brooklyn-Battery tunnel, a major traffic artery, as well as portions of the city’s subway system. Subway service could be crippled for “at least a week,” the head of the municipal transportation authority said late Monday.

The Oyster Creek nuclear power plant in New Jersey declared an alert due to high water levels in its water intake structure, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission said Monday evening. An alert is the second lowest of four levels the NRC uses to characterize events at power plants, and the NRC said conditions were still safe at and around the plant in Lacey Township, N.J., and at all other U.S. nuclear plants.

Economic damages from Sandy, which is expected to affect some 20% of the U.S. population, could be in the range of $10 billion to $20 billion, according to EQE CAT, a catastrophe-risk modeling firm. That compares to Hurricane Irene, which caused $10 billion in damage last year. Insured losses from Hurricane Katrina in 2005 alone topped $45 billion, adjusted for inflation.

Over the course of Monday, as winds strengthened to 90 miles per hour, waves swept away a historic pier in Ocean City, Md., Monday and left Atlantic City, N.J., largely submerged—the sea rushing over its iconic boardwalk, surging through the streets, and leaving hundreds of people in need of rescue.

In New York City, the backup power at NYU Langone Medical Center on First Avenue in Manhattan failed, prompting an emergency evacuation of patients, Mayor Michael Bloomberg said Monday night.

“The one thing that we had not counted on, New York University’s hospital backup power—in case of them making ours, again, ing us that it’s been tested—stopped working,” the mayor said during a late news conference at the city’s Office of Emergency Management in Brooklyn. “And we’re working with them to help move people out.”

In parts of West Virginia and Maryland, the National Weather Service issued a rare blizzard warning. “I can’t ever remember a hurricane causing a blizzard warning,” said Joe Palko, a Pittsburgh-based hydrologist with the National Weather Service.

At least 4.7 million public school students—about the population of Norway—stayed home Monday or will stay home Tuesday as a result of Hurricane Sandy, according to a Wall Street Journal tally. That estimate doesn’t include private-school students; there may be more school closings that weren’t reported to state education departments.

Sandy was relabeled from a hurricane to a posttropical cyclone on Monday morning. Earlier
Mammoth Storm Churns Ashore

Hurricane Sandy was already wreaking havoc along the Eastern Seaboard even before it made landfall.

- **Probability of tropical-storm-force winds**: winds 39 mph or faster:
  - 20% to 40%
  - 40% to 60%
  - 60% to 80%
  - 80% to 100%

- **Western Maryland**: A blizzard warning was issued for mountainous areas—rare during a hurricane.

- **West Virginia**: Beckley, one of the state’s bigger cities (pop. 17,000), expected to get 22 inches and Snowshoe, WV, expecting as much as three feet.


- **Outer Banks, N.C.**: Early Monday, the Coast Guard rescued 15 members of a crew forced to abandon the tall ship HMS Bounty. One is still missing.

- **New Hampshire**: State of emergency declared and nonessential state workers were released from work Monday afternoon. One hundred New Hampshire Guard soldiers were put on active duty.

- **New York**: Floodwaters rushed through lower Manhattan, knocking out power in some areas and threatening a prolonged shutdown of the mass-transit system. Mayor Michael Bloomberg told an estimated 375,000 residents to evacuate before the flooding began.

- **Atlantic City, N.J.**: Much of the city was under water Monday. Tourists placed their last few bets Sunday morning before gambling was shut down and casinos evacuated.

- **Delaware**: Gov. Jack Markell ordered the evacuation of about 50,000 people in coastal communities.

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*over the 120-hour period beginning Monday at 2 p.m. EDT
Sources: NOAA; news reports

Rex Rhoades/The Wall Street Journal
its classification as a Category 1 storm, the least powerful category of hurricane, was deceiving. Scientists say the storm has an unusually low atmospheric pressure near its center, an important measure of a storm's strength.

The National Weather Service warned of potential flooding in coastal areas and damage well inland. Up to 12 inches of rain were expected over some parts of the mid-Atlantic states. The storm shut down the federal government for a second straight day Tuesday.

Snow began falling in the mountains of West Virginia on Monday and was expected to intensify across Appalachia over the next day as Sandy collided with cold air from the west.

Coastal communities were already grappling with the storm's impact by early Monday. The Coast Guard rescued 14 members of the crew of the HMS Bounty—a replica "tall ship" built as a movie prop in the 1960s and used more recently in "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest." Two crew members were reported missing off the coast of North Carolina after the vessel sank in high seas. Late Monday, one of the two had been found.

Hurricane-force winds extended as much as 175 miles from Sandy's center. As of Monday, more than 14,200 flights had been canceled in and out of airports stretching from Washington, D.C., to Boston, according to FlightAware.com, a flight-tracking service—well above the roughly 10,000 flights canceled by airlines in August 2011 for Hurricane Irene.

Several major U.S. companies, including pharmaceutical giant Pfizer Inc. and power-plant operator NRG Energy Inc., postponed quarterly reports because of Hurricane Sandy on the East Coast.

President Barack Obama and the Republican challenger for the presidency, Mitt Romney, both canceled campaign events Monday and Tuesday. Mr. Obama returned to Washington from Florida to focus on a response to what he called a "difficult storm." Federal emergency officials said they have plenty of money available—about $3.6 billion—to pay for disaster relief and response. That is a contrast to last year, when dwindling coffers at the Federal Emergency Management Agency led to a political fight after Hurricane Irene caused widespread, costly flooding in the Northeast.

State and local officials issued dire warnings about the storm to residents Monday, urging them to get out of harm's way. Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley warned of possible fatalities and predicted Sandy would "sit on top of Maryland, and beat down on Maryland for a good 24-36 hours."

"There will be people who die and are killed in this storm," Mr. O'Malley said. Maryland suspended early voting on Monday and Tuesday.

During a news conference Monday evening, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie repeatedly attacked Atlantic City Mayor Lorenzo Langford for allowing people to stay in city shelters, including a school a block away from the boardwalk. "He was sending out a message that was counter to my message," Mr. Christie said. "I'm very disappointed."

Mr. Langford didn't respond to requests for comment. In a telephone interview on CNN, Mr. Langford described Mr. Christie as ill-advised and misinformed.

Mr. Christie also expressed concern about people who refused to evacuate from seaside areas. "It's just stupid," he said in public remarks Monday.

On the barrier Island of Brigantine, 50% of residents refused to evacuate, state officials said. Many in Cape May, a national historic landmark, also planned to stay put, despite flooding Monday.

Overall, an estimated 116,000 New Jersey residents were under mandatory evacuation orders. Flooding near Atlantic City had already extended to waterways inland about 18 miles.

In flooded Atlantic City late Monday, National Guard and other officials were trying to rescue nearly 500 people from their homes, said Tom Foley, the city's director of emergency management. The city relies heavily on tourism; it drew 31.4 million visitors who spent an estimated $7.5 billion in 2008, the most recent figures available, according to a Rutgers University study.

In Delaware, many residents of beach towns heeded mandatory evacuation orders and a driving ban, and hunkered down at shelters, hotels, and friends' houses. Melissa Yeager, 27 years old, evacuated her home on the second floor of a building in a low-lying area in Lewes, Del., to ride out the storm at a high school with her two daughters, Rosemary, 6, and Krissy, 3.

"I wanted to make sure my children were safe and I knew this was the safest place for them," Ms. Yeager said as she played board games with her daughter.

In Philadelphia, officials worried about flooding from the Schuylkill River, which runs through the heart of the city.

In New York City, roughly 2,500 people had booked into emergency storm shelters, less than 4% of the total capacity, nearly 24 hours after Mayor Michael Bloomberg ordered an evacuation of 375,000 people from the city's low-lying areas. Last year, when Mr. Bloomberg ordered the same evacuation of low-lying areas as Tropical Storm Irene barreled up the East Coast, roughly 60% complied, the mayor estimated.

In Brooklyn, police officer Ralph Tomo found it hard to persuade people to heed evacuation orders. Dozens gathered Monday to gawk at the rising water levels along a waterfront. They carried takeout coffees, walked their dogs, and took pictures of one another standing in front of the crashing East River waves with their cellphones.

Kristin Franchek, who stayed with her husband and three children on the Rockaway peninsula in Queens, NY, despite an evacuation order, said Monday night their basement was flooded with 8 feet of water and their power was out.

New England was battered with winds and heavy seas.

Storm warnings provoked extra jitters in Vermont, which only 14 months ago was ravaged by Tropical Storm Irene.

—Heather Haddon, Reed Albergotti, Lisa Fleisher, Laura Nahmias, Jennifer Maloney, Will James, Jennifer Levitz, Kris Maher, Joseph De Avilla, Mike Esterl, Jacob Gershman and Sean Gardner contributed to this article.
Clockwise from above, a boarded-up Saks Fifth Avenue; the Hudson swells over its banks in Hoboken; a tree is uprooted on Carlton Avenue in Brooklyn on Monday.

Sandy Wallops Region

Greater New York reeled Monday night under a ferocious assault from superstorm Sandy, a deadly weather system that knocked out power to millions of homes and endangered tens of thousands who ignored evacuation orders.

By Michael Howard Saul, Sean Gardiner and Jacob Gershman

Storm surges of more than nine feet sent flood water gushing into Lower Manhattan and other parts of the city, trapping residents and forcing emergency responders to make dangerous rescues. Hurricane-force winds ripped the facade off a Chelsea building, nearly knocked a crane off the top of a residential tower under construction in Midtown and felled countless trees.

A 30-year-old man identified as Tony Laino of Flashing in toppled onto a house and pinned him, New York City police said. A Queens woman was electrocuted, authorities said. Two people were killed in Mendham, N.J., about 40 miles west of Manhattan, when a tree fell on their vehicle at about 2:30, authorities said. New York officials said at least five people were killed in the state.

NYU Langone Medical Center was being evacuated of intensive-care patients Tuesday morning, after a power generator failed. They were being taken to Mount Sinai Hospital.

"This is dangerous," said Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who urged residents Monday night to stop overloading the 911 system with calls that aren't about "life-threatening emergencies." "This is a once-in-a-long-time storm."

Authorities said they were increasingly concerned about 50 people trapped on Fire Island, were washing across the narrow barrier island and flowing into the Great South Bay, putting parts of the beach community completely under water. Earlier in the day, firefighters made a dramatic rescue of 11 people on Fire Island who had ignored evacuation orders and then called for help.

As the wind and flooding reached a crescendo Monday evening, authorities from New Jersey to Connecticut said they had largely given up efforts to rescue people who stayed behind. "They are now in harm's way," New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie said. "I don't know if we can get them out or not, given the conditions."

Most of Manhattan below 39th Street lost power. Consolidated Edison took the unprecedented step of shutting down power in Lower Manhattan preemptively to save underground but most of the outages weren't planned, officials said.

Overall, nearly four million homes and businesses in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut were without power Tuesday morning, including 475,000 in New York City, almost 800,000 on Long Island and 155,000 in Westchester County. Even more power failures were expected by Tuesday morning, officials said.

Officials warned it could be more than a week before power is restored because work crews can't begin repairing lines until the storm has subsided.

The New York City subway and all mass transit into the city was shut down for Tuesday, and officials said it may be days before service returns. Bridges and tunnels were closed across the region, including the Verrazzano Bridge, the Holland Tunnel, the Tappan Zee Bridge and all spans across the East River.
Authority of New York and New Jersey has closed four airports near the city: Kennedy, LaGuardia, Newark Liberty International and Teterboro Airports.

The nation’s largest school system was ordered shut on Tuesday for the second consecutive day.

Across the Hudson River, Jersey City and Hoboken officials said their cities were inundated and requested emergency help from the state.

Concern was growing along the region’s vulnerable coast lines, where hundreds of thousands of people had been under orders to evacuate since Sunday.

Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy said Monday night that thousands of people were already stranded in their homes from flooding. About eight towns were of the most concern, including Greenwich, Stamford, Bridgeport and Norwalk. Another 10 towns could also see significant damage, including New Haven, Westbrook and Branford. “The situation is dire,” Mr. Malloy said.

At least 3,651 people checked into New York City’s emergency shelters by 6 p.m. on Monday, fewer than the 10,000 who did the same during Tropical Storm Irene last year. The number was about 5% of the capacity of 70,000 in 76 city shelters.

The decision to evacuate their homes was an agonizing one. Some who stayed behind said they were worried about the storm but had concerns about public shelters.

Some were regretting the decision. On Rockaway Peninsula in Queens, Kristin Franchok, who stayed in her home with her husband and three children despite an evacuation order, said Monday night their basement was flooded with eight feet of water and their power was out.

“Definitely a mistake to stay,” said Ms. Franchok.

The storm resulted in frenzied scenes across the city Monday night.

Some in the Brooklyn section of Dumbo left the waterfront neighborhood Monday evening after an electrical fire broke out along Washington Street. Police cordoned off a building under renovation as smoke drifted up from an area believed to have caught fire from an electrical explosion, said Paul Morris, 40 years old. Residents fought to erect sandbag walls to prevent the East River from breaching the first level of apartment buildings there.

“Water was at least three blocks deep into Dumbo,” said Mr. Morris.

Others marveled at the storm’s spectacle. “Tenth Ave-

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The storm flooded Manhattan streets Monday night, including Avenue C, above, at East Eighth Street.

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—Heather Haddon, Jennifer Maloney, Joseph De Avila, Jessi Rucker, Laura Nahmias, Eric Holthaus, Pervaiz Shallwani, Dennis K. Berman and Anjali Athavaley contributed to this article.
Salt Water Puts Subway ‘In Jeopardy’

BY TED MANN

The storm that has wreaked havoc along the East Coast struck a historic blow to New York City’s most vulnerable—and vital—points: the subway system.

A storm surge driven by the remains of Hurricane Sandy sent seawater pouring into at least six underwater tunnels of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s subway system Monday night, seriously threatening the goal to quickly restore vital mass-transit service in the city.

Before Hurricane Sandy made landfall Monday, the MTA worked to seal off openings that would allow corrosive salt water to sweep into the system and incapacitate trains into the coming weekend.

After the flooding, its extent not yet fully measured, the threat of an extended shutdown loomed over a system that carries 5.2 million passengers a day and is essential to the city’s economy.

The subway system is “in jeopardy,” MTA Chairman Joseph Lhota said Monday. “Our subway system and salt water do not mix.”

Salt can eat at motors, metal fasteners and the electronic parts, some many decades old, that keep the system running. Salt water, and the deposits it leaves behind, degrades the relays that run the signal system, preventing train collisions.

Salt water also conducts electricity, which can exacerbate damage to signals if the system isn’t powered down before a flood.

The MTA closed down its entire regional network of rails and buses on Sunday evening and expected it will remain dark at least until Wednesday morning.

Agency officials couldn’t say how quickly the subway could be brought back into operation, but Mr. Lhota said in an interview that the flooding above ground appeared “serious.”

Late Monday night, an MTA spokesman confirmed that floodwater had breached the subway system flooding all five tunnels between lower Manhattan and Brooklyn, as well as the Steinway Tube between Midtown and Queens. Rail yards also flooded, and the A train bridge in the North Channel in Jamaica Bay was underwater after the surge.

The speed of recovery would depend on whether floodwaters damaged any of the rest of the 14 subway tunnels under the Harlem and East Rivers, where the system is most exposed to catastrophic flooding.

A spokesman for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey confirmed late Monday that the Hoboken, Exchange Place and Newport stations on the PATH rail system had also flooded. It was not clear if floodwaters had reached the PATH tracks.

Klaus Jacob, a research scientist at Columbia University’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, wrote in a report last year that it could take as long as 29 days to pump out a full inundation of the tunnels.

The system already copes with a tremendous amount of groundwater and runoff, especially at stations at the tip of Manhattan, where the water table has risen in recent years. Even on a dry day, the MTA’s 300 pumping rooms remove an estimated 13 million gallons of water from the tunnel network, just to keep the system dry enough to run.

Pumping water out of flooded tunnels would take anywhere from 14 hours to four days, MTA officials said.

And that task would be followed by even more painstaking work—evaluating damage, then cleaning and repairing or replacing the electrical signal arrays that line every inch of the subway tracks, and which are essential to running the system’s trains.

“You can’t order a part from Westinghouse or General Electric that is 100 years old,” Mr. Jacob said. MTA workers will have to clean and test flooded equipment, “then you cross your fingers and hope that it works,” he said.

The last time tunnels flooded was Dec. 11, 1992, during a nor’easter that knocked out subway service briefly.

Some of those three tunnels were restored to service immediately, but the MTA’s Canarsie line—which carries the L train from Manhattan to Brooklyn—was out of service for days.

In an interview, Mr. Lhota suggested that the subway could again reopen in phases, depending on the level of damage, with some areas outside Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn returning sooner.

A Port Authority official said the agency, which operates the airports, was watching with greatest concern to see what a possible storm surge at LaGuardia or Kennedy airports might do to underground electrical systems for the airports’ landing lights. The agency is also concerned about damage from debris being washed onto the tarmac.

The Port Authority closed its four city-area airports Monday night because of flooding.
were of the most concern, including Greenwich, Stamford, Bridgeport and Norwalk. Another 10 towns could also see significant damage, including New Haven, Westbrook and Branford. “The situation is dire,” Mr. Malloy said.

At least 3,651 people checked into New York City’s emergency shelters by 6 p.m. on Monday, fewer than the 10,000 who did the same during Tropical Storm Irene last year. The number was about 5% of the capacity of 70,000 in 76 city shelters.

The decision to evacuate their homes was an agonizing one. Some who stayed behind said they were worried about the storm but had concerns about public shelters.

Some were regretting the decision. On Rockaway Peninsula in Queens, Kristin Franchok, who stayed in her home with her husband and three children despite an evacuation order, said Monday night their basement was flooded with eight feet of water and their power was out.

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The storm resulted in frenzied scenes across the city Monday night.

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“Water was at least three blocks deep into Dumbo,” said Mr. Morris.

Others marveled at the storm’s spectacle. “Tenth Avenue is a river,” said Ron Downey, 50, the CEO of a digital media startup.

—Heather Haddon, Jennifer Maloney, Joseph De Avila, Jessi Rucker, Laura Nahmias, Eric Holthaus, Pervalz Shalwani, Dennis K. Berman and Anjali Athavaley contributed to this article.
Flooded Atlantic City Feels the Early Brunt

BY SOPHIA HOLLANDER

Atlantic City once served as a beacon for New Jersey, attracting millions of tourists every year to gamble and stroll along its boardwalk. On Monday, the city which has struggled to maintain its allure in recent years, became a different kind of pioneer, providing an early glimpse of Hurricane Sandy's deadly power.

"This is the worst-case scenario for us," said Tom Foley, Atlantic City's director of emergency management. "In 28 years, I've never seen weather this bad."

By the morning, waves had engulfed the city's beach, breaking off 60-foot section of the city's boardwalk, which had been under construction, and sending timbers hurtling through newly formed canals. Water streamed over cars and past doorsteps; about 85% of the city was submerged at high tide, officials said. As water seeped into homes, people started "panicking," Mr. Foley said.

The heavy damage was another blow for a city that has struggled in recent years, relying on shrinking gambling industry for a sizable portion of its revenue. Casinos shut down Sunday. Officials called for mandatory evacuation of the entire county, closed the casinos, and summoned the National Guard to assist with rescue efforts in Atlantic City.

Still, about 3,000 of the city's 40,000 residents people stayed. Mr. Foley said. One woman had a heart attack as she tried to evacuate, Gov. Chris Christie said. Her name wasn't released and local officials said the death couldn't immediately be classified as storm-related.

"I don't have anywhere to go," said Amber Henderson, a 23-year-old Atlantic City resident who chose to wait out the storm with her husband and two children on the sixth floor, she said.

Ms. Henderson waded out through the flooded streets, snapping photos for her Instagram feed. She is about 5-feet-8 inches tall, and the water rose past her knees, nearly reaching her waist, she said.

The night before, she watched as "the streets were lit up because the power lines were just exploding," she said.

More than 24,000 of Atlantic County's 66,000 residents had lost power by Monday afternoon, said Linda Gilmore, the county's public-information director. Still, Ms. Henderson, who grew up in Ocean City and said she still had weak power in her apartment, said she planned to stay put. "I'm a little bit of a survivor," she said.

Others chose to evacuate, many despite significant reluctance. "I really didn't want to come here, but considering the alternative it's better to save our lives than not," said Brian Rosenberg, who lives in Ventnor City with his wife Jennifer and evacuated to Buena (N.J.) Regional Middle School. "I was not looking forward to swimming in the apartment."

About 100 cots lined the school's hallways. "It's not the Waldorf, but it's not a mattress on the floor either," said John Webb, a 52-year-old Atlantic City resident.

Atlantic City still relies heavily on tourism. A Rutgers University study from May 2010 found the seaside destination drew 34.4 million visitors who spent an estimated $7.5 billion in 2008. Casino resorts were a major draw, with 80% of visitors reporting that gambling was the primary purpose of their trip.

But in recent years, the industry has struggled as it has lost ground to a host of regional competitors. By the morning, water had risen in the streets surrounding the new $2.4-billion Revel Casino, which opened this spring amid hopes that it could reignite the industry.

But revenues continue to decline overall most months since nine of the city's 12 casinos reported losses. Gambling revenue across the city is down 4.8% for the year.

On Monday, many of the casinos were boarded up, empty save for a few security personnel and top executives.

"There's a lot at stake," said Cory Morowitz, an Atlantic City casino consultant. "We should be able to come back from this. Hopefully the damage is contained and we move on."

Robert Griffin, CEO of Trump Entertainment Resorts Inc., and some other employees stayed behind to watch over the properties. Mr. Griffin said he was waiting out the storm inside the Taj Mahal.

Tom Gilbert, the district commander for the Atlantic City Tourist District, said that the waterfront casinos had started to sustain some damage to outside structures like awnings from the storm.

"We are starting to see some damage with the heavy winds," Mr. Gilbert said.

During a news conference Monday evening, Mr. Christie repeatedly attacked Atlantic City Mayor Lorenzo Langford for allowing people to stay in city shelters, including a school block away from the boardwalk. "He was sending out a message that was counter to my message," Mr. Christie said. "I'm in a telephone interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper Monday night, said now wasn't the time to get into a verbal joust with the governor but said Mr. Christie was ill-advised and misinformed.

Mr. Langford didn't return calls for comment.

Mr. Christie also criticized Atlantic City officials for failing to prepare better for the storm and evacuate people more quickly. Local officials weren't available to respond.

But the problem wasn't limited to Atlantic City. Residents stayed put across the barrier islands.

In nearby Brigantine, 50% of residents refused to evacuate and 25% didn't in Seaside Heights, state officials said. "It's just stupid," said Mr. Christie during a news conference at the state police Regional Operations Intelligence Center in Ewing.

"I'm very concerned about the people who refused to adhere to my mandatory evacuation order and said they were going to ride it out. They are now in harm's way. I don't know if we can get them out or not given the conditions," Mr. Christie said.

The New Jersey State Police had received requests for swift boats to assist in rescues in some of the barrier islands, said Lt. Stephen Jones, a spokesman. State police helicopters were
Flooding on U.S. Route 30, one of three major approaches to Atlantic City, on Monday. The city was hit by high waters as Hurricane Sandy neared.

making rescues more difficult, Mr. Jones said.

In Cape May, many said they would assess the situation throughout the day.

Emma Gowan, 72 years old, said she'd lived in Cape May for 60 years. With a full supply of candles and a freezer full of fish, Ms. Gowan said she predicted the storm would turn away from the historic town.

The worst storm she has experienced was Hurricane Agnes in 1972. “I remember that,” she said. “We were wading around the town and the electric was going, ‘Zzzit! Zzzit!”

Jonathan Sachar, 49, a movie producer and former real-estate developer, had to tend to the dozen sheep on his parents’ 15-acre farm and lead them to higher ground.

“It’s something I need to check on,” he said. “They’ve weathered the storms before.”

Steve McCullough, a commercial fisherman, walked his five-month-old puppy on the boardwalk in the morning. “This is going to be a good one,” he said. “Probably up in the top five I’ve seen come by here.”

Mr. McCullough said he felt safe in his second-floor home with a generator, food and water. He left during Hurricane Gloria in 1985, but when he came back and only found a few downed branches, he felt it wasn’t worth evacuating.

“I’m going to ride it out and see what happens,” he said. “I’m just going to hunker down and hope for the best.”

—Lisa Fleisher, Heather Haddon, Sharon Adario, Alexandra Berzon contributed to this article.
Waiting for the Storm to Pass

JASON GAY

Well, I don’t know. I’m not going to lie to you, or dress it up in some Big Fat Meaning, or call for perspective. It seems a little strained and ridiculous. I don’t know what a sports columnist is supposed to offer here, on a hurricane day like this, trapped in the apartment, listening to the wind and the rain accelerate, like you probably are. As I write this, the worst is still to come to New York City. I hope you are safe, wherever you are. I hope you made it out of Trader Joe’s with enough sesame honey almonds to survive deep into 2029. I hope you’ve backed up the backup iPad, and it’s filled to capacity with a landfill of deliciously trashy television. I hope your power doesn’t go out for long. I hope your street doesn’t flood. But mostly I hope you stay safe.

I don’t even know if we’re allowed to be lighthearted about this. Twitter felt like a joke-a-thon for the 72 hours of buildup, and it was pretty amusing, but now it’s dangerous out, plainly scary, full of unknowns. People are almost certain to get hurt—numerous people have already been killed in this storm’s long path—and lives here in New York will be disrupted, perhaps worse. Seems a little glib to make a wisecrack, doesn’t it? Seems a little trifling to write about sports, even. The San Francisco Giants won a World Series Sunday night in Detroit. The Giants beat the Cowboys. The Jets did Jets-like things against the Dolphins and lost. It all seems 18,000 years ago. I’m not worried about the Jets. I’m worried about the roof.

Down the hall in the living...
room, my wife and her friend Lena are watching a movie. It's called "Searching for a Friend at the End of the World."

Apparently it's an apocalyptic comedy-drama. I don't know if they chose it because they're feeling apocalyptic, or because they just didn't want to watch that slick Wall Street thriller with Richard Gere again. Lena's apartment is right on the line of Zone A, the evacuation zone. She's not sure when she'll go back home. She's not in a rush.

In the morning we took a walk, like a lot of people did. Days like this can make New York resemble a small town—a hurried, distracted city slows down and becomes more aware of its surroundings.

Conversations on the street last longer; strangers look out for each other. We walked down to the Brooklyn Bridge waterfront, where the water had risen, on the verge of splashing onto the pavement. Turning around, we walked up Union Street and down to the pungent Gowanus Canal. It too, was swelling at the sides. Returning home, we turned on the TV and were immediately told that we were foolish and should have been staying inside. That's always the strange contradiction of TV storm coverage: being told to stay inside by people standing on the beach.

It's too soon to see where this all goes. The hard end of the hurricane is still hours away. The storm surge warnings are ominous. There was just a loud clatter on the street. Cars have been few. On the news there are alarming reports of a dangling crane on 57th Street. Schools are closed tomorrow; so is Wall Street. The George Washington Bridge is closing at 7 p.m. Flying soon? Dream on.

Not sure when this gets back to normal. Tuesday afternoon? Wednesday? Not sure when we can get back to the Jets jokes and the Giants praise and speculation of how the Yankees could lose 0-4 to a Detroit team that went down 0-4 to San Francisco. What are they arguing about on ESPN today? On the radio, Mike Francesa is talking about Sanchez and Tebow. He's doing the show from his home in Long Island. He's amazing. Nothing stops Francesa. Now he's taking a call from Scott from East Meadow. Scott thinks Tebow is a big distraction.

Halloween is Wednesday. On Thursday, just a few blocks from the Gowanus Canal, the Nets will host the Knicks in the first big-league professional sporting event in Brooklyn since 1957. I hope the game happens. I hope the Nets are competitive. I hope it's a huge night for New York City. But that all feels like a long time from now. Mostly I hope you are safe.