

## HOMEOWNERS DISTRAUGHT

# Oak Island dune demolished

By **CECE von KOLNITZ**

Staff Writer

OAK ISLAND – Linda Harris was in a Hardee's restaurant in Marion, S.C., when she found out her house on the oceanfront in this hurricane-battered town was completely destroyed.

She saw a picture of it on the cover of *USA Today*.

"It's heartbreaking," Ms. Harris said later Friday, as she peeked into her crushed 100-year-old home on East Beach Drive. "Can you imagine? This was a two-story house."

Ms. Harris, of Bishopville, S.C., rented the home to vacationers and spent time there herself. She hoped to save some chandeliers, a wicker sofa and a table. She said she knows she won't be able to rebuild her house, and she doesn't know if she'll buy any more oceanfront property.

"I enjoyed it down here, I really did. It didn't have the kind of traffic and tourism you see on South Carolina beaches," she said. "We may be looking for a new place down here. I'm not sure."

Hurricane Floyd damaged or destroyed hundreds of houses and flattened the town's frontal dune. Most of the houses were rental properties. It could be several days

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## Oak

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before many oceanfront property owners know whether they'll be able to rebuild at all. State regulations require a minimum 60-foot setback from the vegetation line for homes on the oceanfront in normal situations, with an increase in that measurement depending on the town's beach erosion rate. If a house is more than 50 percent damaged and does not meet setback rules based on erosion rates, it cannot be rebuilt.

On Oak Island, the vegetation line, along with the town's dune, was swept away by the hurricane.

On Friday, town officials were waiting to hear from representatives from the North Carolina Division of Coastal Management, which enforces the Coastal Area Management Act, and Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"CAMA's going to have to come back and state where that (vegetation) line is," co-Mayor Joan Altman said.

Any information from Coastal Management or FEMA will be posted on the town's Web site, said Don Egert, town planner.

The site is [www.oakislandnc.com](http://www.oakislandnc.com). Ms. Altman estimates \$100 million in damage. Property owners can also get information about their homes from town hall, which will be open

from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. today and Sunday. Or they can e-mail town officials at .

The 15-foot storm surge also destroyed businesses on the island. At the Ocean Crest Pier Friday morning, part owner Walt Lorgan said he and his partners were looking at what could be a \$1.5-\$2 million loss. The pier's restaurant will be torn down after waves ripped out one wall. Only a small section of the pier remained. The \$4.5 million business employed 30 people.

"We need to save as much as we possibly can," Mr. Lorgan said Friday. "My life savings are here."

The Long Beach Pier, hailed as the longest pier in the state, was nearly destroyed. Mr. Lorgan said losing the

pier is a big loss for fishermen.

"For a lot of them, this is the most leisure they have," he said. "We know we're a blue-collar island. The people who can't afford to fly to Hawaii or go to the Caribbean come here. Now they've lost it."

Angela Godfrey, a property owner from Winston-Salem, said she will fight hard to keep her damaged oceanfront house. The surge knocked out her bottom floor.

Despite the threat of devastating storms, it's worth it to live on Oak Island, she said.

"It's risky, but the people are so nice," she said. "Everyone knows everyone else. And the beach was so beautiful before."