

A drive to conserve gas



LAYNE BAILEY - STAFF PHOTO

Bill and Becky Kirkpatrick of Rock Hill load a gas can into their trunk after filling up his and her cars Wednesday at a station on Celanese Road off Interstate 77.

As Katrina cuts fuel supply, state urges staying off roads

BY ANDREW SHAIN
Consumer Writer

The Charlotte region's gasoline shortage could worsen this weekend, officials along the fuel supply line said Wednesday.

City and state leaders strongly urged drivers to conserve gas as Labor Day weekend approaches.

Gas supplies in Charlotte drastically dwindled three days after Hurricane Katrina knocked out power to two major pipelines from the Gulf of Mexico that provide virtually all of the region's fuel.

"If we continue to have normal demand, many stations will have to bag their pumps," said Alan Erquitt, head of the Petro Express convenience store chain's

wholesale division. "If (suppliers) are not already empty, they will be soon."

The impact of the shortages was apparent late Wednesday as motorists lined up 10 cars deep at some gas stations to fill their tanks and as governments made plans to keep vital services running. The travel group AAA Carolinas even suggested people avoid driving unless absolutely necessary this week.

The pipelines were scheduled to partially reopen by this morning, although it was unclear how quickly that could ease the shortage.

The pipelines, which sat idle since Monday, will send about a quarter to a

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GAS SHORTAGE GUIDE

2A | AAA Carolinas tells drivers to call off their Labor Day plans; how regional governments plan to save gas; and your guide to riding the bus.

Fueling a Frenzy

1D | As fears of gas shortages spread like wildfire, pumps run dry, gas cans fly off shelves and stunned drivers watch as prices soar to new highs.

Bush Acts Amid Crisis

5A | In the aftermath of Katrina, the Bush administration moved to release oil from emergency reserves and temporarily eased pollution standards on gasoline and diesel fuel.

ON WWW.CHARLOTTE.COM

Continuous updates from the Gulf Coast

SEE CONSERVE | 5A

EVERYBODY OUT



MATT ROURKE - COX NEWS SERVICE PHOTO

Refugees from Hurricane Katrina wait for evacuation Wednesday at the intersection of Interstate 10 and North Causeway Boulevard in Metairie, La. Soldiers hold back people waiting to get on buses.

13-YEAR-OLD RESCUES RELATIVES FROM RAGING WATERS

'Didn't want to see my family drown'

BY AUDRA D.S. BURCH
Knight Ridder

BILOXI, Miss. — In the harrowing moments before Katrina crashed into this coastal city, a dozen family members, friends and neighbors piled into the only bedroom of a wooden house.

Then they waited, and some drifted asleep. Suddenly, the water rushed in.

It came fast, penetrating every wall and window.

The babies began screaming, the adults panicked and, in that moment, 13-year-old Phillip Bullard began saving lives. Four adults and nine children, including himself.

Phillip swam and cradled the youngest. He floated the oldest all through the house, out a broken window and into a boat floating down what was once Holley Street. He coaxed his twin sister to turn loose the side of the house, which she clung to in terror.

He took the hands of his mother and grandmother and guided them through the house, on a path made from sodden furniture. They were willing to die, unable to swim and too frightened to leave their home.

"I just didn't want to see my family drown," said Phillip, a seventh-grader who spent

SEE RESCUE | 12A



BRYAN MONROE - KNIGHT RIDDER/TRIBUNE

Phillip Bullard, 13, sits with his sister Yoshico Posey at a shelter in Biloxi, Miss., on Wednesday.

Mayor orders evacuation

He says 'most likely, thousands' are dead in New Orleans alone

BY DAVID OVALLE,
PHIL LONG
AND MARTIN MERZER
Knight Ridder

NEW ORLEANS — A major American city all but disintegrated Wednesday, and the expected number of deaths from Hurricane Katrina mushroomed into the thousands.

The governor ordered New Orleans evacuated beginning today, with 350 buses shuttling at

least 25,000 people — no homes, no jobs, no possessions — from the Superdome and elsewhere in the city to Houston's Astrodome.

Bodies floated down streets. Defeated survivors waded waist-deep and ghostlike through floods. Packs of looters rampaged through the ruins and armed themselves with stolen weapons, and gunfire echoed through the city.

And the mayor confirmed what many knew in their hearts but could not bring themselves to say.

"Minimum, hundreds. Most likely, thousands," Mayor Ray Nagin said when asked how many perished — just in New Or-

SEE KATRINA | 6A

Looting worsens

6A | New Orleans mayor orders police to fight looting that has turned increasingly hostile.

'We need water'

7A | Parents wander streets in Biloxi begging for water for their babies, as officials grow frustrated with relief delays.

A Charlottean's journey

9A | On his way to help family in Mississippi, Tom Eppes sees signs of devastation: from uprooted trees to huge gasoline lines.

World | 4A

Rumors set off deadly stampede in Baghdad

The scale of the tragedy overwhelmed even this city wearily accustomed to death. More than 800 Shiite Muslim pilgrims died Wednesday in a stampede on a Tigris River bridge in Baghdad, Iraq, after panic swept the crowd, amid rumors that a suicide bomber was in their midst.



HADI MIZBAN - ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTO

An Iraqi man grieves after identifying the body of his brother, one of the pilgrims who died in a stampede Wednesday.

Sports | 1C

Panthers host Steelers, 8 p.m.



Among things to watch: How Carolina running back Stephen Davis plays in his first game since knee surgery.

SUNNY, WARM: High: 89. Low: 63. Mostly sunny this afternoon. Clear and milder overnight. Full forecast, 6B

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