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Clearing up Sandy's confusion

Answering residents' questions in the wake of storm that devastated Oceanside, Island Park

By **Alex Costello**

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DONOVAN BERTHOUD/HERALD

Residents came together in Island Park and donated food and clothing to those who needed it. The community is still without power more than a week after the storm.



In the wake of the devastation of Hurricane Sandy, people seemed to be, more than anything, confused and frightened. With so much destruction all around, there was a dearth of information.

Residents were turning to Facebook and to the Herald, and we didn't have many of the answers. So we went to work finding them. The information that follows was the best and most complete that we could gather as of our press time on Tuesday night.

Oceanside and Island Park were hit particularly hard by Sandy, a fact that many of the larger media outlets seem to have missed. It is the Herald's mission to get you the information you need. In the coming weeks, if you have a pressing question you can't find the answer to, email us at oceaneditor@liherald.com, call us at ext. 269 or post on our Facebook wall at www.facebook.com/oceansideislandpark.

Why was this storm so bad?

The flooding from Sandy was caused by a large storm surge, coupled with waves created by the hurricane-force winds.

A storm surge is caused by the winds of a powerful storm. They literally push the ocean forward, causing the water to swell in height. Add to that the fact that the storm peaked at high tide, and that it was a spring tide (when the sun, Earth and Moon are lined up and the high tide is even higher), and it was a recipe for disaster.

"So in addition to the waves breaking, you have this pushing of the ocean itself," said Prof. Malcolm Bowman, who teaches oceanography at Stony Brook University. "And it will go and flow inland. It will go everywhere."

According to Bowman, the storm surge added about seven vertical feet of water to the high tide.

The storm was also particularly bad because of its unusual nature, an odd hybrid between a hurricane and a nor'easter. "[Nor'easters are] usually big and hang around for a couple of days, where a hurricane is usually quick," Bowman said.

Where is the mail?

Some residents said they had not received any mail. Delivery was disrupted in the immediate

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aftermath of the storm.

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"On Long Island, postal emergency teams are in action with all contingency plans, like sending extra trucks to certain areas to get the mail delivered," said Connie Chirichello, a spokeswoman for the USPS. "Damage continues to be assessed on a daily — hourly basis."

Chirichello said that the Island Park post office was reopened on Nov. 3. If residents have any questions about mail, they can call .

Where can I do laundry?

If you can't use the machine of a friend or family member, there are nearby laundromats that are open.

Tub & Tumble Inc., at 1755 Peninsula Blvd. in Hewlett, is open 24 hours a day. The owners say it's best to come at night, when things are a little quieter. The phone number is .

A little closer to home is Bubbles Laundromat, at 310 Sunrise Highway in Rockville Centre. It opens at 7 a.m., and the last wash is at 6 p.m. .

Is the water safe?

With the scare caused by the contaminated water in Long Beach and the malfunction of the Bay Park Sewage Treatment Plant, many residents are concerned about the quality of water in Oceanside and Island Park.

Officials say that the water in both communities is safe to use. However, a conserve-water order is still in effect. That means that residents should not leave faucets running, water their lawns or take long showers. Use water only when it is necessary.

Where are the police?

Some residents in blacked-out areas were concerned that they had not seen many police officers. But the Nassau County Police Department assures us that they are still here, and responding to calls. The NCPD is also being assisted by the National Guard and troopers from the State Police.

There are unmarked cars patrolling some of the hardest-hit areas, keeping an eye out for looters.

If residents have an emergency, they should still call 911. For non-emergency questions, they can call the 4th Precinct at .

What's going to happen to all the boats?

Sandy swept away many boats, some of which were still tied to their docks. They are among the largest and most cumbersome debris that needs to be removed.

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According to Mike Martino, spokesman for the Nassau County Department of Public Works, any boat that is on a county road will be moved to the side to ensure drivers' safety. "Disposal is the responsibility of the owner," Martino said.

I lost everything. Where can I go for help?

The first thing you should do if your house was damaged is file a claim with your insurance company. Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance could be available if your insurance doesn't cover all of the damage. FEMA disaster assistance can cover temporary housing, repairs, replacement and permanent or semi-permanent housing construction. Money is also available for medical and dental expenses, funeral and burial expenses, clothing, household items, tools and equipment required for your job, fuel, cleanup items, damage to vehicles and more. FEMA also has crisis counseling, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, legal service and

special tax considerations.

Before you apply, you need to have some information ready: your Social Security number, a current and pre-disaster address, a telephone number, insurance information, your total annual household income, a routing and account number from your bank (if you want to have disaster assistance funds transferred directly into your bank account) and a description of your losses caused by the disaster.

After you've completed the application for assistance, you'll receive a FEMA application number. Keep it for all future references.

You can apply for FEMA assistance in three ways: logging on to www.disasterassistance.gov, going to m.fema.gov on your smartphone or by calling (800) 621-3362. Those with speech or hearing disabilities can call (800) 462-7585.

There is a FEMA Disaster Recovery Center at Nassau Community College, and another at Island Park Village Hall, open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Specialists from the state, FEMA and the U.S. Small Business Administration are on hand to answer questions and provide information on the types of assistance that are available.

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"The recovery center is a one-stop-shop for eligible survivors where they can meet with both state and federal representatives in order to get help as quickly as possible," said Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano. "I encourage residents who think they may qualify for federal aid or would like additional information on what disaster assistance programs are available to stop by the mobile Disaster Recovery Center."

Residents can also turn to the Red Cross, which can help families reconnect after a disaster. If you're looking for someone with whom you lost contact or want people to know you are all right, visit <http://safeandwell.communityos.org>. Those who were displaced by the storm can register there to let family members know they're OK, and others can search for loved ones who have registered.

I'm OK, but I want to help. What can I do?

A lot. Volunteers are needed virtually everywhere, in places too numerous to list here. People all over the area have been taking donations of food, clothes and money to give to survivors and first responders, many of whom have been working nearly nonstop since the storm hit.

If you have power but a neighbor doesn't, share it with them. If you have elderly or sick neighbors without power, check on them.

If you're able-bodied, you can volunteer with the local Red Cross. Call the Red Cross offices in Mineola at . To volunteer, you must be 16 or older, able to lift and care 50 pounds and be comfortable working with people in stressful situations. You can also make a \$10 donation by texting REDCROSS to 90999. You can also call (800) REDCROSS or visit www.redcross.org to donate.

The Red Cross prefers monetary donations to physical goods, since it's the quickest and easiest way to spread help.

The Island Park Fire Department could also use donations: shampoo and soap for showers, dry socks and food that's easy to cook in bulk.

"We have 50 to 75 guys from other departments here that are assisting us from as far as Canada," said Assistant Chief Anthony D'Esposito. "We're not looking for anything crazy."

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