

Superstorm Sandy devastates east coast

Written by Chris Lee

Tuesday, 06 November 2012 16:58 -

Hurricanes aren't something folks in the Midwest have to deal with. That is unless of course one is traveling at the same time a massive storm hits the United States.

That was the reality facing Denise Smith and daughter Janna as they were looking to head home from the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Ind. early last week.

Janna had just been presented with her National FFA Degree and she and her mom were looking forward to flying back home.

In an effort to save some money on plane tickets, the Smiths experienced a layover in Washington, D.C. at Dulles International Airport. What they didn't know is that they were going to be late getting back to Holyoke. In fact, they were three days late.

Denise and Janna were supposed to fly out Sunday, Oct. 28 but they didn't get home until late Wednesday, Oct. 31. As it turns out, the airline was having trouble getting a crew for their Sunday flight.

Luckily, Denise's brother, Richard Kafka, lives in D.C. so they were able to stay with him as they waited to get a flight back west.

It turned out to be a welcomed vacation of sorts as they spent some quality time with each other. As they hunkered down, the area they were in received some rain and winds. Their lights flickered a bunch but the power never went out.

Lincoln Hayes, a native of Holyoke, currently lives in New York on the west side on 116th Street in South Harlem. He said they are situated on a hill and didn't experience any flooding, just some rain and high winds. He said at one point, his fiancée, Rachel, said the wind sounded like a strong roar or howl.

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Hayes said they were fortunate and didn't lose power, just some flickering. The biggest inconvenience was they both were scheduled to be in a play Monday, Oct. 29 but it had to be rescheduled.

Hayes and his fiancée had been planning a trip to Orlando, Fla. to visit Disney World with some friends. Their flight was scheduled to take off last Thursday but it was canceled due to the storm and the fact that the airport runways were pretty much flooded.

They in turn rented a car and proceeded to drive south to Florida. They crossed the Lincoln Tunnel into east Jersey and Hayes remembers looking back at the Manhattan skyline and it being dark. "It was spooky," he noted.

Driving south along Interstate 95, Hayes remembers looking out at the industrial shipping area and realizing he was only seeing things because of the full moon. There was no power to light anything up.

Along the way, they began seeing lines of cars in right lanes leading to exits. They later found out those vehicles were in lines waiting for gasoline. Luckily, their vehicle was good to go and they made it far enough south before needing to stop for fuel.

Hayes and his fiancée have been keeping up with Facebook and noted a lot of their friends have been affected by the storm. Some lost power, others apartments. More friends live in New Jersey and Hayes said they are dealing with complete loss in areas.

The 2003 Holyoke High School graduate said he knows of friends that have been turned away from volunteer stations because there were just too many people wanting to volunteer. "There is just an outpouring of support, aide and volunteerism," Hayes said.

Hayes and his fiancée are scheduled to fly back to New York Thursday and they hope they won't be delayed this time. As of Tuesday morning, Nov. 6 there was a nor'easter that was scheduled to bring more rain, wind and brutal cold to the already battered areas of New Jersey and New York.

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An article on CNN stated, “The National Weather Service warns of high winds, coastal flooding and beach erosion, adding that localized flooding from heavy rain and wet snow could potentially bring power outages and dangerous travel.”

The newest storm could make it even more difficult and demoralizing for those still without power.

According to CNN, New Jersey still had 780,000 outages and New York 540,000 as of Monday.



Gentry Lock took this photo from her 12th floor office window Friday, Nov. 2. Her building was still without power last Friday. Police officers can be seen on the streets below directing traffic. The tall building in the distance is the Tower 1, aka The Freedom Tower, of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan.

Another Holyoke native, Gentry Lock, lives in Astoria in Queens across from the East River. She, like Hayes, is located higher up and didn't lose power or experience flooding.

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Her office, however, is located in lower Manhattan and lost power due to the storm. Lock said she wasn't able to work all of last week—something she was kind of happy about.

She said it was taking people five hours to make it into the city due to the city's disabled subway system and crowded buses and cabs.

Lock is a landscape architect and is currently the project manager for a project site at Coney Island. She was afraid to find out what damage had been caused, but found out it wasn't nearly as bad as she thought it would be. She noted some topsoil was installed prior to the storm and that will need to be tested. She also noted the parachute jump at Coney Island was submerged in salt water, but much to her surprise there wasn't that much damage.

Her project trailer was overturned due to the wind but she said she didn't have anything too important inside.

In all, she said what could have turned out to be a two-month delay will most likely only be a two-week delay.

In preparation for the storm, Lock said she purchased items in case she would lose power. She took all the precautions of filling the bathtub with water in case she would lose water.

Lock was able to fully return to work Monday, Nov. 5 as her building's power was restored last Friday. She actually made it down to the office last Friday and up to her 12th floor office. She took a photo out of her window looking south down 6th Avenue towards lower Manhattan. Down on the streets, police officers were directing traffic.

On her way to the office, she noticed how eerily quiet it was. Since the trains weren't running, things were a lot quieter.

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She had to walk from 34th Street to her office on 23rd because the train wouldn't go any further south. While walking, it was apparent where the dividing line was of places with power opposed to those without power.

Lock is a 2001 HHS graduate and has lived in New York since May of 2008.

Sandy affected at least 24 states from Florida to Maine and west to Michigan and Wisconsin. The most severely damaged areas were New Jersey and New York. The storm moved ashore near Atlantic City, N.J. early on Oct. 29.

The unprecedented 13-foot surge from the storm hit New York City Oct. 29 and flooded streets, tunnels and subway lines.

Millions upon millions of people were reported to have lost power as Sandy hit and in the subsequent days following.

Initial estimates had damages in the United States alone reaching around \$50 billion. An estimate of 113 people were killed as a result of the storm, with that number likely to grow.

The storm closed stock trading in the U.S. for two days. It was the first time the New York Stock Exchange was closed for two consecutive days due to weather since 1888 when a blizzard struck the city.

"We knew that this was going to be a very dangerous storm, and the storm has met our expectations," New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg is reported to have said. "This is a once-in-a-long-time storm."

The storm put a halt on the presidential campaign trails as both President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney canceled campaign functions just a week before the election.

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It was reported Monday, Nov. 5 that New Jersey residents displaced by Superstorm Sandy would be allowed to vote in Tuesday's election via email or fax. It was the first time civilians in the state had been allowed to vote remotely.

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