

Sandy: Superstorm Deaths Continue To Rise

Millions of people are still without power and tens of thousands are stranded in their properties due to flooding three days after Superstorm Sandy battered the US East Coast, which killed at least 72 people.

Around 20,000 people have been trapped at home in the New Jersey city of Hoboken, just across the river from New York City, amid accusations that officials were slow to deliver food and water. One man blew up an air mattress and floated to City Hall, demanding to know why supplies had not reached residents - at least a quarter of homes there are flooded and 90% do not have power. National Guard troops have arrived in Hoboken to help evacuate stranded people. In total, about six million homes and businesses remain without power, mostly in New York and New Jersey - while miles of coastline, including Atlantic City, was ripped apart by the storm. As the region struggles to recover, a clean-up operation in that state has begun while New York City has taken the first tentative steps to getting back to some form of normality as it re-opens some unaffected parts of the subway system - which suffered the worst damage in its 108-year history. Two of the region's main airports, John F Kennedy and Newark Liberty, have also opened and officials promised the third, LaGuardia Airport, would be operational today. Broadway shows have resumed and people packed on to buses that returned for the first time to city streets since the storm. Electricity outages continue as far west as Wisconsin in the Midwest and as far south as the Carolinas. The superstorm came ashore over a thousand miles of coastline to engulf 20 states. It is now winding down and its remnants have been felt in the Appalachian mountains. Sandy brought up to 3ft of snow to parts of West Virginia and Maryland and several more inches are possible before it dies out for good later this week. Restoring the usually vibrant New York City to its ordinarily frenetic pace could take days, while rebuilding the hardest-hit communities and the transportation networks could take considerably longer. Power company Consolidated Edison says it could be the weekend before power is restored to Manhattan and Brooklyn, perhaps longer for other New York boroughs and the New York suburbs. There are still only hints of the economic impact of the storm. Forecasting firm IHS Global Insight predicted it would cause \$20bn in damage and \$10bn to \$30bn in lost business. Another firm, AIR Worldwide, estimated losses up to \$15bn. Amtrak said the amount of water in train tunnels under the Hudson and East rivers was unprecedented, but it said it planned to restore some service on Friday to and from New York City. Speaking on Wednesday, US President Barack Obama told New Jersey residents that the government will support them "for the long haul". The region took the brunt of its impact and is among the worst affected areas on the East Coast. Joined by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, Mr Obama - who described the disaster as "heartbreaking for the nation" - inspected the impact from Sandy, flying high over flooded neighbourhoods and sand-strewn streets. He told those affected by the storm: "Our hearts go out to the families who have lost loved ones. Their world has been torn apart ... they are in our thoughts and prayers. "For those like the people I have had a chance to meet on this block, throughout New Jersey and throughout the region whose lives have been upended, my second message is: We are here for you, and we will not forget, we will follow up to make sure that you get all the help that you need until you've rebuilt."