

Hurricane Irene opens new inlets on Hatteras Island

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About 2,500 people on Hatteras Island on North Carolina's Outer Banks have been cut off by damage from Hurricane Irene, including five breaches along the only road on the island.

Video and photos show breaches up and down the barrier island, including north of the northernmost village of Rodanthe. That leaves the island inaccessible by the Bonner Bridge that links the island to the mainland. The only other access is by ferry from Ocracoke Island, and officials say a half-mile of N.C. 12 there also washed out.

State emergency officials sent a ferry with supplies to the island Sunday.

When personnel from the Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines at Western Carolina University began actively surveying the N.C. coast following Hurricane Irene, they discovered two new inlets had been formed on island, according to a press release from Western Carolina.

Center director Rob Young completed a surveillance flight of the northern Outer Banks Sunday morning and filed the following brief report of storm impacts:

- 1) In general, the storm did little damage to ocean front property along the northern Outer Banks. Some dune scarping is visible, but storm surge was less than expected. Even so, Hurricane Irene has opened a new inlet just south of the freshwater ponds on Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge on Hatteras Island. There is also a small breach of the island just north of Rodanthe in the Mirlo Beach area.
- 2) The \$30-plus million dollar beach nourishment project at Nags Head survived the storm, although there has been some loss of sand along the beach. The degree of loss is difficult to assess from the air. PSDS Associate Director Andy Coburn flew the beach on August 25, two days before the hurricane. Before images of the Nags Head project are currently available at <https://picasaweb.google.com/psdspix> and after images will be available at psds.shutterfly.com on Monday.
- 3) The primary impact from Hurricane Irene to the North Carolina Outer Banks was from significant soundside flooding impacting many areas of Duck, Kitty Hawk, Collington Village, Roanoke Island, and others. Much of this water has filled natural swales and dips on the backside of the islands, and will be around for some time.