

# Lakeside Peril Imminent

## Sandbaggers' wage frantic flood battle



From Staff Reports

Frantic city workers and hundreds of volunteers rushed to shore up the Pemberton Drive dike on the city's near northeast side today before the old earthen dike washed out from the water that had turned it to mush.

This story was written by News-Sentinel staffer Dick Isenhour, with reports from Bill Zlatos, Jerry Graft, Charlene Mires, Kevin Leminger and Associated Press.

As dike repair work proceeded, officials feared a National Weather Service prediction of up to an inch of rainfall in the next 36 hours could compound the problems.

Sandbagging crews, including 700 volunteers, worked through the night piling sandbags atop the 60-year-old dike, hoping the weight from the bags would be enough to stabilize the dike while a new one is built.

At a news conference today, Mayor Winfield Moses said the dike is actually melting, explaining that the spongy material used during its original construction saturates and begins to melt away.

"I cannot overstate the importance of preserving our defenses along Pemberton," Moses said. "If the new dike doesn't hold, water will sweep through the area causing destruction to hundreds of homes. We would have a flash flood, the likes of which the city has never seen."

To date, 8,500 residents have fled the flooded river areas, and officials warn that up to 11,000 more residents may have to evacuate if the Pemberton dike washes away.

If the old dike gives way before crews complete the task ahead of them, water that has built up behind the dike will flood the entire Lakeside area, sending water rushing over a three-mile path as far north as Vance Avenue.

Carl O'Neal, the city's transportation director, said the dike has turned into "toothpaste."

"The dike is so saturated, it is toothpaste," a weary O'Neal said. He added the top of the dike will hold no more sandbags and the new dike will have to taper from the garages and houses to the top.

"If that baby goes, we're done." O'Neal explained the major problem is that the dike's top is about 760 feet above sea level. If the dike

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## Red-eyed but ready to save city

By CHARLENE MIRES and SHARON LITTLE  
Of The News-Sentinel

Flood waters are etching circles under the eyes of Fort Wayne's flood-fighting force.

By the thousands, volunteers are sleeping little, eating at Salvation Army stands in cavernous sandbagging barns, and applying tired muscles to seal seeping dikes.

It has been six days. "You'd be doing us all a favor if you went home to get some sleep," Lew Borman, a supervisor at the Memorial Coliseum sandbag operation, had to tell two eager teen-agers Wednesday night.

"Some people are working too hard and too long," he explained. "They're tired and fatigued."

Fort Wayne has been staying up nights, defending dry ground. Safety workers have been on 12-hour shifts. Students have been begging their parents' permission to stay out all night to help fight the flood.

If they are out of energy, they are running on sheer determination. Most will deny feeling fatigued.

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Workers today refused to give up their efforts to save homes along Pemberton Drive, despite seeping earth and a sandbag barrier that is being built against houses and garages. At one point during the night it was believed the battle was lost, and the volunteers were told to leave the area. Today the hundreds of volunteers — many of them students — who had held the city together Wednesday and during the night were back at the battlefront.

Photo: Mike Hanley/The News-Sentinel

## 'If it weren't for these teen-agers, a lot of Fort Wayne would be underwater'

By PETE FULLAM  
Of The News-Sentinel

In the haze of dawn along Pemberton Drive, tired-looking young men and women slogged through the muddy streets and yards to lines of heavy duty trucks waiting for their sandbag cargoes to be unloaded.

Overnight entire backyards of some of the homes had been transformed into giant, waterlogged sandbag dikes.

"I'll tell you one thing," said Tim Boszor, 39, one of the truck drivers. "Fort Wayne owes these kids one hell of a thank you."

Boszor said he's been hauling sandbags and sandbag crews for the past four days.

"You just don't know unless you've seen it," he said. "If it weren't

for these kids, a lot of Fort Wayne would be underwater."

The young men and women who formed the sandbag lines came in busloads. Many had worked on previous days of the flood emergency, and some on the lines this morning had worked all night.

"I've been here since yesterday," said red-haired Chris Adams, 18, who was standing in the bed of a truck passing sandbags down, his jeans soaked to the knee.

"They fill you full of coffee and sandwiches and soup," he said. "They take care of you. You really get in shape, too. It's better than sitting home getting flooded out."

Adams was one of perhaps 800 volunteers who worked on the Pemberton Drive dike all night long, offi-

cial at the emergency operations center said.

"I'm glad to see them," said Joyce Jackson as three busloads of volunteers passed her evacuated father's home at 1026 N. Anthony Blvd., where she was loading furniture into a trailer. "They've really saved this area."

And it had been a critical battle.

One side of the dike, 130 homes had been evacuated on each side of a five-block stretch of Pemberton Drive and Kensington Boulevard between Lake Avenue and the Maumee River.

On the other side of the dike, a sea of floodwaters covered acres of a large athletic field from Lakeside Middle School to the now-indiscernible riverbank.

Late Wednesday evening, emergency officials didn't think the dike was going to hold.

"The whole dike just slipped," said Jeff Grogg, one of the city workers directing the sandbag lines.

"My main concern was the dike was giving out at the bottom," said District Fire Chief John Fitch; who was in charge of operations last night. Fitch said he was afraid the dike might burst while the volunteers were in the area, so he ordered them to withdraw to North Anthony Boulevard two blocks to the west.

In the confusion that followed, truckloads of volunteers and sandbags moved into the area — while at the same time, police were ordering

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## Assessors working fast to estimate flood damage

By CHARLIE GREEN  
Of The News-Sentinel

Dressed in a three-piece suit, Joseph Lauck left Indianapolis Wednesday morning for what he thought would be a routine meeting in Fort Wayne.

Little did the 57-year-old know that a few hours later he would be hanging on to the side of a front-end loader rumbling past submerged cars on his way to the local wastewater treatment plant.

"Nobody told me anything about going out in a flood," said Lauck, a sanitary engineer with the state Board of Health.

As it turned out, Lauck was one of about two dozen federal, state and local employees drafted into service Wednesday to comb through Fort Wayne, assessing the damages from the flood of '82.

Divided into different teams, the government workers surveyed roads, bridges, parks, businesses and public utilities to estimate how much it will cost to get things back to normal after the waters have receded.

Their findings will help determine whether President Reagan declares Fort Wayne a federal disaster area, making businesses, homeowners and the city eligible for federal aid.

On "Team 2," there were Lauck — who found a pair of overalls to cover his suit — and Bill Rossow, a 38-year-old engineer from the Army Corps of Engineers Detroit of-



Photo: Carl Hartup/The News-Sentinel

The muddy water of the Maumee River completely surrounds the sewage treatment plant and its holding pools located on a now-sub-

merged Dwenger Avenue. Sandbag dikes and constantly running pumps have kept the facility functioning.

ice. They were trying to figure out how the city's wastewater facilities were holding up under the pounding of the Maumee River.

For two hours Wednesday afternoon, they drove past flooded sewage lagoons and settlement

ponds; when they couldn't drive any farther, they hitched a ride on a front-end loader to take a look at the wastewater treatment plant along Dwenger Avenue.

There they met Stu Becker, the industrial waste superintendent,

who was crossing his fingers that the flooding wouldn't get much worse.

In a quick tour of the basement of one of the buildings, Becker and Lauck dodged steady streams of water falling from the ceiling as they sloshed along a narrow aisle. Water

oozed out of cracks in one of the walls.

"Everytime I come in here I pray that wall doesn't break," said Becker, referring to the only barrier between the men and the tons of water outside.

Meanwhile, Rossow was in a nearby office jotting down numbers from engineering drawings of the plant, trying to determine how many feet of clay dikes criss-crossed the lagoons and settlement ponds along the Maumee.

Later that night, Rossow and Lauck would confer in a seventh floor room of the City-County Building to estimate the damage along with other teams of inspectors.

When the figures from all the teams are released — probably Friday — the numbers will doubtless be quoted widely to convey the toll the flooding has taken.

But a few hours with one of the teams Wednesday showed that the figures are only rough guesses at best — estimates that may bear little resemblance to what the actual dollar amounts turn out to be.

Looking over the Maumee River at barely-visible sewage dikes, Lauck and Rossow could only imagine what was — or wasn't — beneath the water as they attempted to estimate damage to the clay walls.

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### Reading Guide

#### Purdue optimistic

Purdue is hoping to reserve a berth in the NIT finals with a win over Texas A&M Friday night at Mackey Arena.

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#### Today's Chuckle

The futility of riches has been pointed out very plainly in two places — the Bible and the income tax return.