

DNC

Suozi touts
'immigrant experience'
in speech

A6-7

VIDEO AT NEWSDAY.TV



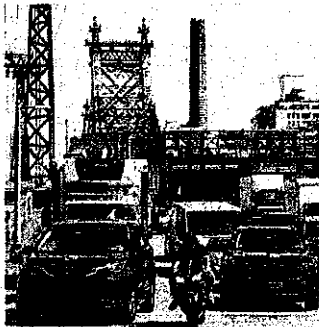
NEWSDAY/THOMAS A. FERARA

Rep. Tom Suozzi on Wednesday at the Democratic National Convention.

Congestion Pricing

Gov promises new plan by year's end

A5



ED QUINN

Traffic at the 59th Street Bridge in Manhattan on Wednesday.

SUFFOLK FLOODING

ASSESSING THE DAMAGE

Home and business owners, nonprofits face difficult cleanups

PLUS:
What to know about insurance coverage

A2-4, 12-13 | VIDEO AT NEWSDAY.TV



BECK ROSEN/STEN

Damage is seen Wednesday on the lower level of the Smithtown Library following Sunday night's storm.

ONLY IN NEWSDAY

PLAYER SAFETY CONCERNS EMERGE AFTER COACH SEX ABUSE CASES

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SCOPE OF STORM'S

Suffolk sends out teams to evaluate extent of damage

Suffolk took stock Wednesday of the destruction left by Sunday's extreme rainfall, as the reality of the sudden and extensive damage to homes, roads, businesses and even libraries in the northern part of the county became all too clear.

County officials dispatched four teams from Rocky Point to Kings Park to knock on doors and assess damage, Suffolk County Fire, Rescue and Emergency Services Commissioner Rudy Sunderman said.

As of Wednesday, 1,700 residents had made a property damage report through the county's online portals, he said. So far, 21 homes were determined to have major damage, 143 had minor damage and 30 were classified as affected.

The storm, which brought up to 94 inches of rain, took out roads, drained ponds, flooded

WHAT TO KNOW

- Suffolk County dispatched four teams to assess damage from the extreme rainfall Sunday night into Monday.
- Officials urged residents to report damage as the county evaluates the storm's financial impact and seeks federal aid.
- Some 21 homes in northern Suffolk sustained major damage from the storm.

the Smithtown Library, washed out sections of houses and shopping centers, closed beaches, and stunned residents and business owners who now must cope with the aftermath.

The county wants homeowners to continue reporting dam-

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT FLOOD INSURANCE

This story was written and reported by John Asbury, Vera Chinese, Bart Jones, Maureen Mullarkey, Tory N. Parrish and Jole Tyrrell.

age through the portal on suffolkcountyny.gov. Tallying the destruction will help the county possibly become eligible for state and federal assistance.

Sunderman urged property owners to take photos, create a detailed list of damaged structures and items, and keep records of all correspondence with insurance companies.

"We are going to need to know the value of what you lost," he said.

The financial threshold for damage that qualifies Suffolk County for aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency is \$37 million. Gov. Kathy Hochul said a monetary assessment is underway.

In a letter to FEMA's administrator on Tuesday, U.S. Sens. Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, both Democrats from New York, urged the

Smithtown Library

BY MAUREEN MULLARKEY
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Cleanup crews in white hazmat suits collected debris and damaged materials from the Smithtown Library's basement, tossing them into two large dumpsters on Wednesday morning.

Sunday night's storm did catastrophic damage to the basement, where floodwaters had poured in from above, breaking down walls, offices and an elevator shaft. They also caused untold damage to a prized historical collection dating to the 17th century and destroyed more than 21,000 AV materials.

Water had risen at least 10 feet high, almost reaching if not touching the basement's ceiling, library director Robert Lusak said.

The most heartbreaking damage was to the library's Long Island History room, which Lusak called its "crown jewel,"

where librarians stored hundreds of historical materials such as maps and books dating to the 1600s.

The room housed the Richard Hockman Handley Collection, composed of rare books, documents, manuscripts and atlases related to Long Island's history.

Perhaps the most priceless item in their possession was the patent of Richard Smith, the namesake and one of the primary patentees of Smithtown, the library said.

On Wednesday afternoon, an archivist said much of the collection can be saved.

Safeguards failed

The Smithtown building sits at the lowest point of state Route 25A, but the historical documents were thought to be safe, stored in a locked room with a weather-protectant door designed to prevent water from breaching the room. The de-

sign also was to prevent humidity and heat from damaging the books' pages.

But the flooding was so intense that the water broke through the room's walls of Sheetrock while the door stayed intact.

"If it was in the daytime, and it happened when patrons and staff would be down in this level, it'd be killed instantly," Lusak said.

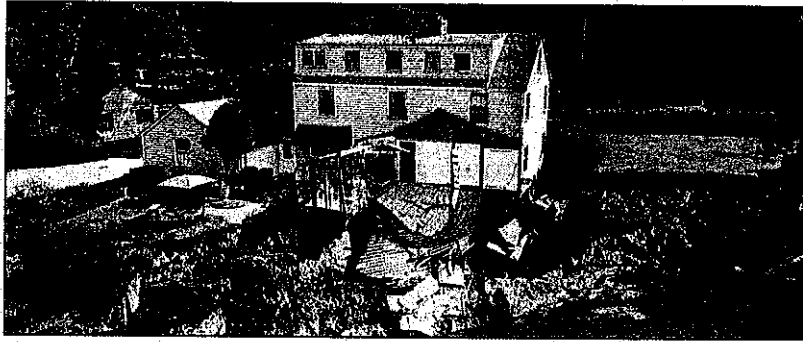
Staff had begun to digitize the historical documents, but there is a chance some items may not be salvaged.

After assessing the damage, Adam Lyszczarz, archival specialist with Prism Specialties, said the majority of historical items may not be the same but will be saved.

"There may be water lines," he said. "But we will be able to salvage the collection for the most part."

Smith's deed, for example, may be lighter to read than before.

DESTRUCTION BECOMING CLEAR



The rear of this home on Stony Brook's Main Street was washed away after the Mill Pond dam broke.

agency to provide rapid assistance. Schumer's office also said officials are talking to the U.S. Army Corps about flood-related repairs.

The scope of the damage became more apparent Wednesday as cleanup crews tackled hard-hit areas.

Business owners were at their closed shops in the Bonwit Village Shopping Center in Commack picking up the pieces.

Eleven tenants' units sustained severe damage after a storm basin behind the shopping center overflowed, causing water to rise to 4 feet inside the Vanderbilt Motor Parkway building from Monday night into early Tuesday morning, said Anastasia Tsunis, who co-owns the shopping center with her family.

"Your heart bleeds. . . . It's just devastating, you know, for

the mom-and-pop businesses," Tsunis said through tears as her voice cracked.

The New York State Department of Transportation said Tuesday that the storm basin belonged to Suffolk, but the county insisted Wednesday that the storm basin, located south of the Northern State Parkway, belonged to the state.

In a statement, the NYSDOT said later Wednesday it was in-

vestigating the flooding and "determining if the NYSDOT recharge basin is functioning as designed and an analysis of the drainage watershed area contributing to the recharge basin."

The Bonwit Village tenants don't have flood insurance because the 19,000-square-foot shopping center isn't in a flood zone, which has caused panic over the potential costs to repair their stores, Tsunis said.

The stores' owners are hoping to qualify for state or federal grants to rebuild.

One of the tenants, Dortoni Bakery Co., will have to rebuild its store and replace all the equipment, including the display cases, said Daniele Messina, who co-owns the business with his family.

"It's just everything. Everything was affected. . . . The equipment is broken," said Messina, who said it will cost at least \$200,000 to rebuild the bakery and replace the equipment.

Founded in 1976, Dortoni Bakery has five locations, but only the Commack shop, which

opened five years ago, was damaged by the storm, he said.

Also in the shopping center is Christopher Street Salon, a more-than-40-year-old shop that underwent a \$200,000 renovation in early 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, said Marina Shalamov, who bought the shop eight years ago.

Now, the hair salon is a damp mess that will have to be gutted, since everything from the six computers to the furniture is ruined, she said. Even the wood-paneled floors popped out under the weight of the water, she said.

"I never saw something like that. It's unbelievable. I cannot sleep over two nights," she said.

In Rocky Point, dumpsters filled with broken furniture, ruined Christmas decorations, damaged family photos and more were outside the homes of Hagerman Landing Road on Wednesday.

Residents there ripped Sheetrock off waterlogged walls and waited for tow compa-

See **DAMAGE** on A4

suffers catastrophic flood damage

Over the next few days, the items will be securely packaged into a refrigerated tractor trailer and taken to Prism Specialties' operations in Michigan. The materials will then be frozen with an industrial freeze dryer, sanitized and hand-cleaned.

Standard restoration for damaged items is typically six to eight weeks, Lyszczarz said, but the timeline could be longer because the materials are old and require special treatment.

Entering through the roof

The damage was discovered Monday morning when staff members arrived for work and couldn't use their ID badges because the building's electricity was out.

With the help of the Smithtown Fire Department, Lusak entered the building from the roof's hatch leading into the children's area.

The water had flooded down

the library's east stairwell, which led to the basement. It rose at least 12 feet in the stairwell before it broke through the window with immense pressure.

"I keep thinking of that scene from 'Titanic,' when all of the furniture is floating and people are swimming," said assistant library director Eileen Caulfield. The power of the rushing water collapsed Caulfield's office walls and the elevator shaft.

The lower level looked like a scene out of an apocalyptic movie Wednesday morning.

An AV desk from one side of the room had been repositioned to the opposite side, still with its computer monitor and phone system intact.

Bookshelves and CD stacks stood empty, while books, sand-covered DVDs and assorted debris were strewn across the muddy floor. A vending machine had toppled onto its side.



Floodwaters in Smithtown Library's basement devastated its historic collection. ▶ Video: [newsday.tv](https://www.newsday.com)

"It's catastrophic," Lusak said.

The library closed indefinitely on Monday. It will take

weeks to reopen its first floor as new electrical panels need to be installed, Lusak said. Library items should be returned

to the Smithtown Library's three other locations, in Nesconset, Commack and Kings Park.