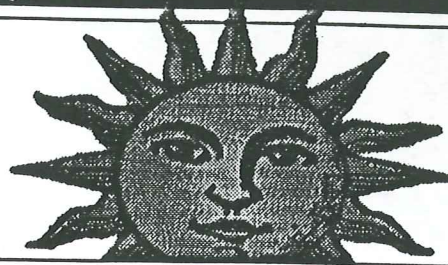


# AT THE SHORE

Your source for weekend events ■ *INSIDE*



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# A LINE IN THE SAND

## A.C.'s beach 'geotubes' hold up to destructive waves

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After a night's high waves and high tide, Rhode Island Avenue was dry as a bone Tuesday thanks to a new line of defense — those big, ugly bags of sand that now anchor the city's dunes.

ATLANTIC CITY — Early Tuesday morning, the 104 residents of the Oceanside Convalescent Center enjoyed a peaceful, undisturbed night's rest.

And while usually that's a pretty normal occurrence, Tuesday morning there were forces hard at work to see that it didn't happen.

Just a few yards from the center's front door, the Atlantic Ocean, driven by northeasterly winds and slashing currents, was eating away at the beach on Rhode Island Avenue.

When that happens, the street always floods. And when it floods bad enough, the center's patients have to be awakened from their beds and moved to dry ground.

Tuesday, Rhode Island Avenue was dry as a bone. Dry because of a new line of defense — those big, ugly bags of sand that now anchor the city's dunes.

This spring the city installed two miles of the massive 12-foot-wide bags, called geotubes, filled them with tons of sand and then covered them over

with more sand.

When the damage from Monday night's high tide was assessed, the bags lay on the beach half-naked and exposed, but not a drop of water had hit the street.

"They are still here," said City Engineer Michael Toy, surveying the damage at Rhode Island and the Boardwalk.

"In the past, whatever we had put here would have been swept under the Boardwalk in just that one storm, sand, dune grass, everything. But they didn't budge. I think this is the first time we can remember that this area didn't flood," Toy said.

And while the center has been lucky and not faced a serious flood in at least a year, the thought of never having to be evacuated again sounds good.

"We're all hoping this is the solution," said Dianne Heyman, administrator of the center.

"We're very happy we got through it. Watching them put the bags in was a big event around here and we all hoped it would work. It is very

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## Dunes: Geotubes hold up to fierce waves

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inconvenient to have to evacuate," she said.

"Last night there was no water in the parking lot," Heyman said. "And this street floods when all it does is rain."

City officials inspected the tubes Tuesday, and it was evident that the ocean had done all

it could to move the bags, but to no avail.

Rhode Island Avenue is a break point for high waves and the bags were completely uncovered to the ocean, which at low tide was only about 10 feet away.

A few hundred yards in either direction, the dunes had been untouched and still covered with dune grass plantings, but Robert Levy, city beach patrol chief, said beach erosion has been severe along the entire beach over the last few days.

Flooding was also reported in Venice Park, Chelsea Heights and parts of the Inlet, Levy said.

However, the tubes at other severe-erosion areas — near Texas Avenue and Martin Luther King Boulevard — had also held up

well and no flooding was reported, officials said.

"The tubes are really the first phase of putting together an engineered beach," Toy said.

"Eventually the bags will settle down into the sand and you'll get that curved look of the dunes. The next step is to design what the beach will be and then work toward replenishment where it is needed," he said.

Andrew Mair, city business administrator, said the city could be eligible for federal beach-replenishment funds and is preparing applications for a replenishment program.

Sand would be taken from a shoal that forms near Absecon Inlet and pumped to problem areas.

Sand to recover the exposed tubes will be taken from under the city's Boardwalk, which also better protects the Boardwalk allowing waves, should they breach the dunes, to pass under the boards, officials said.

The last time the city had a dredging program was in 1984, Levy said.

While the city continues to move forward to meet Federal Emergency Management Administration guidelines for an engineered beach, it does know that one aspect, the dunes, are staying put.

What we have done is drawn a line in the sand," Mair said. "There will be no more erosion past that line."