

SANDY: U.S. NATIONAL PARKS HIT BY DAMAGE



Superstorm Sandy affected more than just the densely populated cities along the East Coast of the U.S. Inland, too, national parks were badly damaged by a combination of storm surge, high winds, snow and rain. The National Park Service, part of the Department of the Interior, said that, 69 parks had to be completely or partially closed to visitors as a result of storm damage.

Over 100 employees of the service had been deployed to areas which had borne the brunt of the storm, especially New York City's harbor parks and the northern part of New Jersey. **The park service reported that Ellis Island's mechanical and electrical systems had been flooded**, and a news release further stated that high voltage equipment on Liberty Island was feared entirely lost. A fuel tank had also been dislodged.

There was serious flooding in Battery Park, Manhattan, as well as other parts of New York Harbor's National Parks. Two to three feet of water filled buildings on Governors Island, where a dock had been lost, while Fire Island's roads were largely impassable. Heavy damage was also reported from the Gateway National Recreation Area, including Breezy Point and Sandy Hook.

Large numbers of trees were down at Morristown National Historical Park in New Jersey, where George Washington held his winter encampment in 1779. In Pennsylvania, Valley Forge National Historical Park had lost power, with debris widely spread and trees uprooted. According to park officials, however, **historic structures had not been seriously damaged**. All parks in the National Capital Region were closed, with officials warning that flooding risk would persist for some time, due to water levels rising in streams and rivers.

Most land on the island of Assateague, on the Virginia/Maryland coast, remained under water. Parking lots were filled with sand and campsites damaged. Virginia's Shenandoah National Park, famous for Skyline Drive, had been closed and would remain so until further notice. Meanwhile, in West Virginia, as much as two feet of snow in the New River Gorge area had caused power outages.

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