

Lucy the Elephant suffers \$45,000 tail injury

By MARTIN DeANGELIS Staff Writer, 609-272-7237 | Posted: Wednesday, October 14, 2009 |
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Lucy the Elephant had her tail broken and damage done to her backside when strong winds on Sept. 11 caused a tent to smash into her rear.

Photo by: Edward Lea

MARGATE - The world's biggest elephant has a lulu of a boo-boo.

So Lucy the Elephant is sporting an extra-large bandage these days on her tail, which broke when a party-type tent that had been installed on the grounds flew up and hit Lucy's backside on the windiest day of last month.

Lucy also busted her butt - literally - in the accident. The historic landmark's chief keeper, Rich Helfant, said 86 of Lucy's posterior panels broke the day the tent flew up and whacked the elephant.

That was Sept. 11, when a storm slammed the area with sustained winds of 39 mph and gusts as high as 51 - and those readings were 10 miles inland from Lucy's Margate beachfront home, at Atlantic City International Airport in Egg Harbor Township.

But Helfant, Lucy's executive director, said Wednesday that nobody realized how serious the damage was until the 128-year-old elephant's historic architect came down from Haddon Heights late last week for a detailed examination.

After Margaret Westfield's visit, Helfant and his fellow humans with the Save Lucy Committee could feel the elephant's pain, and then some. By the architect's estimate, the repairs should run about \$45,000 - and even worse, Helfant adds, the only insurance the committee could get for Lucy carries a \$25,000 deductible for wind damage.

The 65-foot-high Lucy, built in 1881 as a tourist attraction by a real-estate developer, obviously needs a tall tail - it's about 14 feet long, Helfant says, and 3 feet in diameter at its widest point.

The elephant has had her physical ailments over the years - the Save Lucy Committee was formed to rescue the tin-skinned landmark when it was rotting badly in the salt air off the beach. But apparently, this latest incident is a first in Lucy's long history.

"She's had her tusks broken before," Helfant says, "but never her tail."

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