He was closing parks, playgrounds and beaches, and property owners were ordered to secure construction sites.

NEW YORK (AP) -- Richard Chan prowled around his cold, dark Staten Island home with knives and a sword to protect it from thieves, standing his ground as another East Coast storm threatened and police went through neighborhoods with loudspeakers warning people to get out.

"I still have some valuables. I just can't leave it," he said Tuesday. "I just don't want to lose my stuff to some dirtbag."

While city officials strongly encouraged storm-ravaged communities to seek higher ground before Wednesday's nor'easter, Chan was among a group who adamantly refused to leave, choosing to stick close to the belongings they have left.

Since the superstorm made landfall more than a week ago, killing 40 people in the city, more than 100 in 10 states and leaving millions without power, police said overall crime has actually gone down, not up. There are few reports of looting storm-damaged homes.

But Alex Ocasio wasn't convinced. The nursing home worker planned to ride out the latest storm in his first-floor Rockaway apartment - even after seeing cars float by his front door during Sandy.

As the water receded, men dressed in dark clothes broke down the door and were surprised to find him and other residents inside. "They tried to say they were rescue workers, then took off," he said.

He put up a handmade sign - "Have gun. Will shoot U" - outside his apartment and started using a bed frame to barricade the door. He has gas, so he keeps on the oven and boils water to stay warm at night. "It gets a little humid, but it's not bad," he said. "I'm staying. Nothing can be worse than what happened last week."

In the Rockaways, one of the worst-hit areas, nightfall brings with it fears of looting, burglaries - even armed robberies. The idyllic seaside boardwalk was in ruins, streets were covered with sand and cars scattered like trash.

"You can't go there after dark anymore," said 57-year-old construction worker William Gavin, pointing to a battered, lower-income section of his beachfront community. "It's a good way to get a gun pulled on you."

Earlier this week, a retired police officer fired warning shots at someone trying to break into her home in the middle of the night, said Sean Kavanagh.

"I don't blame her," said Kavanagh, also a retired officer. "I would have done the same."

Kavanagh says he's staying home, in part to protect it. "I leave and anything can happen," he said. "It's open season."

Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly said it wasn't wise to stay put.

"I think your life is more important than property," he said.

Kelly said police have arrested 123 people citywide since the storm blew in last week, 54 burglary arrests and 41 others stemming from gas line disputes. Police said the majority were in areas suffering from the storm.

"You would think, under the circumstances, you would see much more," Kelly said. "We haven't seen that."

Burglaries were up 6 percent citywide compared to the same period last year, but overall crime was down 27 percent, police said.

More than 1 million people remained without power on Tuesday, and forecasters said the nor'easter headed to the region on Wednesday could still bring 50 mph winds gusts to New York and New Jersey, an inch of rain and a storm surge of 3 feet.

"I know it's been a long, long eight days," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

The storm fallout didn't deter voters in the most battered areas, with heavy turnout in New York and New Jersey. Cuomo had given displaced New Yorkers the right to vote at any polling place in the state.

With the temperatures dropping into the 30s overnight, people in dark, unheated homes were urged to go to overnight shelters or daytime warming centers. Mayor Michael Bloomberg said he would ask - but not force - people to leave some low-lying shore areas hit by Sandy ahead of Wednesday's storm.

Later Tuesday evening, the mayor ordered three nursing homes and an adult care facility evacuated from the Rockaways because of fears the weather might knock out electricity already being provided by generators. About 620 residents were being moved.

Bloomberg said in a normal autumn, the storm wouldn't be a big deal and wouldn't warrant evacuations.

But "out of precaution and because of the changing physical circumstances, we are going to go to some small areas and ask those people to go to higher ground," the mayor said.

He was closing parks, playgrounds and beaches, and property owners were ordered to secure construction sites.

Willamae Cooper, 63, rode out Sandy in her apartment in the beachfront Dayton Towers complex in the Rockaways. By Tuesday, Cooper had seen enough. She decided to leave for her daughter's house on Staten Island, rather than have a front row seat to another storm.

"After that first one, God knows what could happen," she said.