

Chicago Tribune



QUESTIONS? CALL 1-800-TRIBUNE

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2024

BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

Helene's reach might have been shocking, but for two decades, scientists have been working to answer how likely an extreme weather event is now compared with before humans began burning fossil fuels



Dominick Gucciardo walks to his home in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene on Thursday in Pensacola, North Carolina. MIKE STEWART/AP

CLIMATE CHANGE IS 'HERE AND NOW'

Toll from hurricane reaches grim milestone as searchers make way to remote areas in NC

By Jeff Amy, Erik Verduzco and Brittany Peterson
Associated Press

BLACK MOUNTAIN, N.C. — Hurricane Helene's death toll topped 200 Thursday as searchers paddled canoes across swollen rivers and steered horses past mudslides in the rush to reach those stranded or missing by Hurricane Helene's rampage.

Now a week since the storm first roared onto Florida's Gulf Coast, the search continued for people who have yet to be heard from in places where phone service and electricity were knocked out. Pleas for help came from people running low on medicine or in need of fuel for their generators.

How many people are missing or unaccounted for isn't clear. The death toll soared to 215 people Thursday as more victims were found, making Helene the deadliest hurricane to hit the mainland U.S. since Katrina in 2005. Roughly half the victims were in North Carolina, while dozens more were killed in South Carolina and Georgia.

Turn to Helene, Page 4

WORSENING HURRICANES:

While the total number of tropical cyclones, including hurricanes, per year hasn't changed, weather attribution scientists have found that climate change has increased the number of the most intense and destructive tropical storms. This is because of increased atmospheric moisture and more intense rainfall, as well as warming oceans that create more powerful hurricanes that often carry more water.

By Adriana Pérez | Chicago Tribune

Many people were stunned to see the intense flooding and devastation caused by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina communities, located inland and tucked thousands of feet above sea level in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Asheville, North Carolina, has long been considered a "haven" from such disasters. So has the Great Lakes region.

"Unfortunately, extreme weather is always such a timely discussion. We're talking about Helene, but every week it's something different, every day it's something different," said Bernadette Woods Placky, chief meteorologist at the climate science education nonprofit Climate Central. "Weather is the primary way that people experience climate change."

But the topic of climate change continues to be contentious, especially in the run-up to November's presidential election.

During Tuesday's vice presidential debate, Donald Trump's running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, downplayed the role of fossil fuel emissions in climate change, labeling it "weird science" despite overwhelming scientific consensus that these heat-trapping greenhouse gases are indeed the leading cause.

Today, experts are better equipped than ever to draw connections

Turn to Climate, Page 4

Chicago sees steep decline in opioid overdose deaths

By Sam Charles
Chicago Tribune

Chicago and Cook County are on pace to see a drastic decline in opioid-related fatalities in 2024, keeping with a nationwide downturn in fatal drug overdoses since the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public health and law enforcement officials point to a variety of factors that could be responsible. Increased community outreach, addiction treatment efforts and less available fentanyl all likely play a role, they said.

Through Sept. 20, Cook County had recorded 806 opioid-related deaths this year, according to data from the medical examiner's office. Of those, 580 occurred in Chicago. In that same time frame in 2023, the county saw 1,363 opioid-related deaths with 1,022 in Chicago.

The number of opioid-related deaths so far this year is likely higher than medical examiner data suggests — it often takes several weeks for the results of post-mortem toxicological screenings to return —

but there are signs of progress. Year to date, opioid deaths in Chicago are down more than 40%.

"Whereas we have seen opioid overdoses spike over the summer for the past several years, this year we saw that, other than May when we saw that big spike over the city, we have seen, generally, a tapering of that trend in the summer," said Dr. Miao Jenny Hua, medical director of behavioral health at the Chicago Department of Public Health. "Essentially, we flattened the curve in the summer months."

Dr. Hua said EMS responses for nonfatal overdoses are down 23% so far this year, too, but noted that overall opioid fatalities still outpace those recorded before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The city saw a cluster of dozens of overdoses on a single day in May, Dr. Hua said. After an investigation conducted with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it was determined that a new chemical — medetomidine, a sedative used

Turn to Opioids, Page 2

40%

Year to date, opioid deaths in Chicago are down more than 40%. Through Sept. 20, Cook County had recorded 806 opioid-related deaths this year, according to medical examiner's office data.

INSIDE



ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

City opens first two early voting sites

Khamsuke Mua and his wife, Lee, put on "I voted" stickers and have their photo taken by their daughter Kimberly on Thursday after casting ballots on Chicago's first day of early voting. The city opened two sites downtown, where voter registration is also available. Page 4

THE TRADE: How one move changed the trajectory of the Bears. Chicago Sports

REVIEW: "Joker: Folie à Deux" might alienate some fans, and that's OK. A+E

TODAY'S WEATHER



High 72 Low 56

Complete Chicagoland forecast on Page 12

\$4.00 city and suburbs and elsewhere
177th year No. 278 © Chicago Tribune

