

# Task force investigates Helene death toll, missing cases

October 17, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Adam Wagner; Staff Writer | Section: News | 299 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Tropical Storm Helene has caused 95 confirmed deaths in North Carolina, Gov. Roy Cooper said at a Tuesday press conference. And almost as many, 92, remain missing.

Buncombe County has had the most Helene-related deaths, with 42. Yancey County has had 11 confirmed deaths; Henderson County has had seven; and Haywood County has had five, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services said Tuesday.

"The vast majority of these are directly related to flooding leading to landslides, blunt force, flooded cars, etc. We are still going through the detailed review of deaths records on other specific causes and elements," DHHS Secretary Kody Kinsley said.

Drowning is the leading cause of death, with 20. That's followed by landslides and blunt force injuries, each of which are confirmed to have killed 11 people, and trauma from wind or tree, which killed six people, according to DHHS.

The state has established a task force that is working with local law enforcement officials to investigate cases of people who are still unaccounted for.

Cooper warned that the number of people missing is likely to fluctuate, with people being both added and removed as more cases are uncovered or resolved.

This story was produced with financial support from the Hartfield Foundation and Green South Foundation, in partnership with Journalism Funding Partners, as part of an independent journalism fellowship program. The N&O maintains full editorial control of the work. If you would like to help support local journalism, please consider signing up for a digital subscription, which you can do here.

Adam Wagner: 919-829-4669, @byadamwagner

Copyright (c) 2024 The News and Observer

## • Citation (aglc Style)

Adam Wagner, Staff Writer, 'Task force investigates Helene death toll, missing cases', *News & Observer, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 1A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46F57F569F728">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46F57F569F728</a>



# NC DMV reopening after Helene, but not yet in Western North Carolina's largest city

October 17, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Richard Stradling; Staff Writer | Section: News | 511 Words Page: 6A OpenURL Link

RALEIGH The N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles driver's license office in Marion will open Wednesday for the first time since Hurricane Helene slammed Western North Carolina with historic wind and rain.

That leaves three DMV driver's license offices still shuttered as a result of the storm. They include Burnsville, Spruce Pine and the region's largest in Asheville.

The DMV does not know when those will reopen.

One license plate agency office, run by a private contractor, is also still closed, in Marshall.

Across Western North Carolina, 25 driver's license offices and 28 license plate agencies were closed on Sept. 27, the day Helene moved through the region.

Many remained closed because of damage or lack of access, power or water, said DMV Commissioner Wayne Goodwin. Getting them back on line has been a priority for the agency and those who provide access and utilities, Goodwin said.

"Everyone's had their shoulder to the wheel," he said in an interview Tuesday. "Driver's licenses are an essential service, and we have approached it as such."

The Asheville driver's license office on Patton Avenue was the only one open in Buncombe County before the storm. A smaller express office on Tunnel Road across town was already closed while the building's roof and HVAC system are replaced.

Like much of the city, the DMV office lacks water, Goodwin said. The agency is looking into some sort of portable water and bathroom system for the office, he said. In the meantime, employees from that office are working in other open offices in the area to increase their capacity.

The offices closest to the county of 275,000 are in Clyde, Hendersonville, Marshall and, starting Wednesday, Marion.

DMV adjusts in other ways

The DMV has asked for the authorization to waive late fees and provide no-cost duplicate licenses and IDs for people who lost theirs in the storm, said spokesman Marty Homan. The agency is waiting for Gov. Roy Cooper to issue an executive order to make that possible, Homan said.

Helene has also disrupted the delivery of driver's licenses and state IDs to people who order them online or visit a DMV office. The agency has developed alternatives for people who don't have mail delivery.

People who ordered their license or ID before Oct. 7 and have not received it by mail within 21 days can visit ncdot.gov/WNCcredentialPickup to find out where it can be picked up.

People who live in one of the 45 ZIP codes listed on that website and who ordered their license after Oct. 7 at a DMV office must return to that office after 21 days to pick up their card if it can't be delivered by mail.

Those who ordered their credential online and can't get it by mail must pick it up after 21 days at the office that corresponds with their ZIP code on the website.

Richard Stradling: 919-829-4739, @RStradling

Copyright (c) 2024 The News and Observer

### • Citation (aglc Style)

Richard Stradling, Staff Writer, 'NC DMV reopening after Helene, but not yet in Western North Carolina's largest city', *News & Observer, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 6A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46F5825F06318>



# Disinformation harms Helene effort, say Cooper, FEMA

October 17, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Adam Wagner; Staff Writer | Section: News | 921 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Disinformation and misinformation are harming the ability of storm-battered communities in Western North Carolina to receive federal aid at the time they need it most, Gov. Roy Cooper and FEMA Administrator Deanna Criswell said this week.

The remarks come after a man was arrested and charged with going armed to the terror of the public after allegedly roaming Rutherford County and saying he was going to harm FEMA workers. Criswell decided to pause door-to-door canvassing efforts in the area, which have since resumed.

"Frankly, it's heartbreaking to see words or acts of hatred toward anyone, let alone federal responders who are here to help people in this critical time. So let me be clear: I take these threats seriously and the safety of these responders is, and will remain, a priority for me and my team," Criswell said.

As of Tuesday morning, FEMA had approved more than 77,000 applications for its Individual Assistance program in the Helene-impacted counties, with survivors receiving more than \$99 million. More than 171,000 people have applied for aid, said Lucas Hitt, a FEMA spokesman.

Cooper pointed to the storm happening about a month before an election as a key reason for the volume of inaccurate and outright false information that has been spread about the storm and response.

"Candidates are using people's misery to sow chaos for their own political objectives, and it's wrong. This is a time where we all need to pull together to help the people of Western North Carolina and it's disappointing when candidates, knowing full well what they're doing, are continuing this kind of disinformation filled with lies," Cooper said Tuesday.

Disinformation is the intentional spread of false or misleading information, while misinformation is false information shared without intent.

Former President Donald Trump, the Republican nominee for president, has singled out Cooper, a Democrat, for criticism. Trump has amplified false claims that Cooper and President Joe Biden have "gone out of their way" to avoid sending aid to Helene-damaged parts of Western North Carolina that are more likely to vote Republican.

Trump has also falsely claimed that FEMA is only giving Helene survivors \$750 in assistance. The \$750 payment is an immediate, urgent payment to help people impacted by the storm meet daily needs like baby formula, food or gasoline. Even after people receive that payment, FEMA said, the agency will continue to consider eligibility for other funds.

Cooper also called out Mark Robinson, North Carolina's lieutenant governor and the Republican nominee in the governor's race. Immediately after Helene, Robinson started to claim that Cooper was failing the people of North Carolina, a claim he has repeated persistently as he's campaigned and helped organize a donation drive.

"He needs to stop it, and there are other people who need to stop this disinformation which is ending up hurting people who've lost everything," Cooper said.

North Carolina's Department of Public Safety has made law enforcement available to coordinate with officials on the ground, including FEMA employees and other volunteers who may be threatened, Cooper said.

People still missing

There are now 95 confirmed deaths from Tropical Storm Helene in North Carolina, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kody Kinsley said Tuesday.

The state has also formed a task force that will work with local law enforcement to review missing persons reports and see how many people are still unaccounted for after the storm. As of Tuesday, 92 people had been reported missing and have not been found, Cooper said.

"I want to caution that this is not a definitive count because the task force is continuing its work. The number will continue to fluctuate as more reports come in and others are resolved," Cooper said.

Cold weather coming

As temperatures have started to dip in Western North Carolina, the state is working to send cold-weather items like heaters, blankets and coats to the region.

In Buncombe County, a weather station at UNC-Asheville's campus recorded a 36-degree Fahrenheit temperature at 8 a.m. Tuesday. That the second time since Helene hit on Sept. 27 that the station has recorded a temperature below 40 degrees.

"We've seen a shift from the type of commodities that were the focus two weeks ago, kind of food and water, and are now moving into more of that cold-weather gear," said N.C. Emergency Management Director Will Ray, adding the state is working to fulfill those requests "as quickly as possible."

The state is working with the National Guard and Department of Transportation to make sure that people who have lost their homes are able to stay warm, Ray said. That also includes finding room in shelters or more stable temporary housing.

There are still 13 shelters open in Western North Carolina housing more than 500 people and 80 pets, Ray said.

About 4,600 people with storm-damaged homes are staying in hotels via FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance program.

"We're trying to get every available option on the table to support those that have been impacted, particularly related to housing," Ray said.

This story was produced with financial support from the Hartfield Foundation and Green South Foundation, in partnership with Journalism Funding Partners, as part of an independent journalism fellowship program. The N&O maintains full editorial control of the work. If you would like to help support local journalism, please consider signing up for a digital subscription, which you can do here.

Adam Wagner: 919-829-4669, @byadamwagner

Copyright (c) 2024 The News and Observer

## • Citation (aglc Style)

Adam Wagner, Staff Writer, 'Disinformation harms Helene effort, say Cooper, FEMA', *News & Observer, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 1A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46F57ED61EF68">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46F57ED61EF68>



# NC man's alleged FEMA threat - a reminder lies ruin democracy

October 17, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Issac Bailey | Section: Editorial/Opinion | 662 Words Page: 9A OpenURL Link

This past weekend isn't the first time a North Carolina man who had apparently been convinced an extreme conspiracy theory was true allegedly picked up a gun to take matters into his own hands.

It's unlikely to be the last time if former President Donald Trump, conspiracy-theorist-in-chief, wins the White House next month - or even if he doesn't. That's the uncomfortable truth we don't grapple with enough.

A 44-year-old man named William Jacob Parsons was arrested Saturday and accused of threatening FEMA workers who are helping western North Carolina recover from Hurricane Helene's wrath.

Police said he was armed with a handgun and an assault rifle, the kind of gun that has been a favorite of mass shooters and the young man who tried to assassinate Trump during a rally in Pennsylvania.

Parsons likely believed the lies Trump and too many of his supporters have been telling since Hurricane Helene hit western North Carolina.

They lied about the federal response, lied about the government blocking help from civilians, lied that people in the affected area would receive only \$750. They lied to struggling residents that federal officials are coming into the area to seize property and "bulldoze bodies under the rubble" rather than assist local and state officials and volunteers.

The lies have led to residents refusing help they desperately need, slowed recovery efforts as well as antisemitic and other threats against federal employees.

Though Parsons was the man with a gun - fears of an armed militia descending on Rutherford County convinced FEMA to temporarily remove personnel - he's indicative of something larger, more sinister and disturbing.

Shortly after the 2016 election between Hillary Clinton and Trump, then-28-year-old Edgar Maddison Welch drove from Salisbury to Washington, D.C. to rescue imaginary children from an imaginary child sex ring rumored to be run by Clinton and other Democrats. The children were supposed to be in the basement of Comet Ping Pong pizzeria. The restaurant has no basement. There were no children. Welch didn't figure that out until after shooting inside Comet.

The lies have something uncomfortably in common with the FEMA lies. The "Pizzagate" conspiracy was a fantastical demonization of Trump's political opponents. The FEMA lies are designed to make it more difficult for Vice President Kamala Harris to defeat Trump in three weeks.

Maybe the worst lies are those that have convinced millions of Trump supporters that the 2020 election was stolen. Those lies led to a violent insurrection attempt on our Capitol that left multiple people dead, caused millions in damage and gave a black eye to our democracy that remains.

It's disturbing Trump and his supporters are not only quick to believe the lies and conspiracy theories, but to spread them. It's more disturbing that seemingly nothing can convince them to change course.

Trump chose a man as his partner, Sen. J.D. Vance, who refuses to admit the former president lost four years ago or commit to certifying an election if he becomes vice president.

Imagine if Harris did the same, decided to not certify next month's election if Trump wins. Imagine the chaos. Imagine the ugliness that would result. As bad as things got on Jan. 6, 2021, they would likely be worse if Harris is as irresponsible as Vance has said he'll be.

That's why the lies being told aren't only bad for western North Carolina, though slowing down recovery efforts when so many people need help is ghastly.

A man named Parsons apparently following in the footsteps of a man named Welch because each bought into lies is sobering. Because the lies are also affecting the underpinnings of our democracy that should scare every American, no matter who you want to win in November.

Issac Bailey is a McClatchy Opinion writer in North and South Carolina.

Copyright (c) 2024 The News and Observer

### • Citation (aglc Style)

Issac Bailey, 'NC man's alleged FEMA threat a reminder lies ruin democracy', *News & Observer, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 9A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46F57F0C77CE0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46F57F0C77CE0</a>



# They planned to wed in NC - on Nov. 9. Instead, in Helene's wake, there'll be four funerals.

October 17, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Théoden Janes; Staff Writer | Section: News | 2588 Words

Page: 10A OpenURL Link

In their imaginations, Knox Petrucci and Alison Wisely were at their wedding - dancing.

Perhaps cheek to cheek, to a cherished song of Knox's, like Langhorne Slim's "Changes" or JFDR's "White Sun." Or maybe to a tune Knox had penned for the self-produced folk-rock album he'd been recording. Or, more likely, to a party favorite they could both just let loose to; with laughter cascading out of their mouths; surrounded by Alison's sons Felix (9) and Lucas (7), friends from all over Western North Carolina's Yancey County, and relatives from all over the country.

In their imaginations, this dancing would have followed a show-stopping speech by the precocious Felix, who was planning to kick off his remarks to their 50 or so guests with: "Thank you, everyone, for joining us on this auspicious evening..."

Which would have followed a big Italian feast. Which would have been preceded by Knox - in a brand-new navy-blue suit and an ascot - and Alison - in an embroidered top and white pants - standing in the shadow of Mount Mitchell and professing their undying love for each other.

They had been daydreaming about these moments for more than a year.

And in some ways, it was more than just a wedding. More than just a joyful excuse to assemble the people they treasured most.

It would be a moment of triumph, a climb to the top of their own personal mountains after years of tribulations. For Knox, who in recent years had reestablished a close relationship with his older sister Briana Yarbrough after a long, sorrowful estrangement. For Alison, who in the wake of a painful divorce had formed a healthy co-parenting situation with their devoted father, Lance Wisely.

But on Sept. 27, just over six weeks before they were to be married, Hurricane Helene unleashed a deluge that caused the normally peaceful river in front of their Green Mountain home to become a ferocious - and deadly - ocean.

So ferocious and so deadly, in fact, that nobody can give a full accounting of what that day was like for them because nobody survived to offer one: At roughly noon on that Friday, Knox, Alison, Felix and Lucas were swept away as they sought safety from floodwaters.

The only thing certain now is that the very day Knox and Alison had planned to marry is instead being reserved for four funerals.

He was 41. She was 35.

"It definitely feels like a bad movie," says Knox's sister, Briana, calling from her home in Palo Alto, Calif., sounding both deeply exhausted and deeply shattered. "I don't -" she starts to say, then she stops. Then she sighs. Then she starts, softly, to cry. "It's like I'm not talking about real life right now."

'I just made this beautiful human

my fiancée'

They originally bonded over - of all things - bees.

In 2019, Knox and Alison both found themselves employed at Honey & the Hive, a Weaverville beekeeping supply store that Knox had only applied to work for because he was looking for a job and they were hiring.

They started dating in short order, attracted by shared passions that included animals, and art, and camping, and creativity, and being members of the queer community in an area where it wasn't always easy to be a member of the queer community, among other things. (On top of that, Knox knew something of failed marriages, having been through one in his 20s.)

Before long, they were moving in together.

Their home was idyllic and idiosyncratic: a 1950s-era brick ranch with a fenced yard and a two-story barn, sprawling across a three-acre plot of land upon which also sat an older, larger, decommissioned outbuilding that long ago served as the little town's post office and general store. On the opposite side of their street were some railroad tracks, and on the other side of the tracks was the North Toe River.

As their relationship grew through the pandemic, their careers also seemed to snap into sharper focus.

Knox took to the whole bee thing with authority, becoming the store manager and eventually a teacher of beekeeping courses.

Meanwhile, although Alison likewise had an affinity for the winged insects, she also had a degree from Western Carolina in forensic anthropology - and felt called to pursue a vocation related not just to death, but also (ironically) to grief. So she went after and landed a job as operations manager at Carolina Memorial Sanctuary, a conservation and green cemetery built into the lush, green, rolling hills of Mills River.

By last year, they'd built a well-rounded life that they loved, so much so that on June 11, 2023, Knox slipped onto Alison's ring finger a piece of jewelry he'd blacksmithed himself using a small forge he'd bought.

Briana, the sister he'd been making up for lost time with, was the first person he told.

"I just made this beautiful human my fiancée," Knox wrote in a text to his sister, beneath a selfie of the bespectacled couple showing off the ring.

He knew, of course, that in proposing to Alison he also was proposing to be a stepdad to Felix and Lucas - and he knew, of course, that these weren't just any ordinary boys.

Baby swings, podcasts and misunderstandings

Lucas, 7, liked cows. A lot. He had at least nine stuffed ones, if not 10 or 11, and he would attempt to carry all of them with him. Everywhere. Even to the water park, while his dad Lance Wisely strenuously objected.

Lucas wanted to be pushed in a baby swing that still hung from a tree at Lance's house in Marshall, N.C., not because he liked being considered a baby but because his dad could strap Lucas in to the baby swing. Securely. Meaning his dad could then swing him as high as possible and then add in a good, hard, death-defying spin.

Lucas did gymnastics, had started taking aerial silks classes, could climb 20-foot-tall trees in rain boots, and - oh yeah, was bilingual, thanks to the Spanish immersion program at North Buncombe Elementary School.

Felix, 9, was stupefying his parents by the time he was just 3, when he was already expressing an interest in learning about obscure types of dinosaurs and (ironically) the most severe types of weather events, from tornadoes

to hurricanes.

Felix was incredibly curious, perceptive, and articulate, a future star on the debate team.

Felix could hang with adults in a lot of respects, and proved it by discussing wild creatures, folklore and supernatural topics with his mom Alison - as co-host of a podcast called "Beyond Legends" that they launched together just this past April.

This, his parents would probably admit, is classic Felix: The week of Sept. 16, Felix confronted his dad and asked him if he wanted to marry his partner, Sarah Sheahan of Minneapolis, Minn.; Lance said yes. Felix then called Sarah and asked if she wanted to marry his dad; Sarah said yes. Not long after that, when Lance was on the phone with Alison about figuring out the holidays with the kids, Alison said to Lance, "So, Felix tells me you guys are engaged..."

"That," Lance exclaimed, "is not what we said!"

On the morning of Friday, Sept. 20, Lance dropped the boys off at school in Weaverville. It would be the last time he'd see his sons alive.

A surge of optimism, then worst fears realized

Briana called from the West Coast to check in on Knox late Wednesday evening, a day before Helene was expected to hit.

He'd done some basic stormproofing, he informed her, but he didn't seem worried about it. And she wasn't either. Her brother lived in the mountains, after all. Not on the beach.

Thursday passed with no contact. Friday the line was quiet, too. She still wasn't overly concerned. They had been in fairly frequent touch since reconciling 2-1/2 years earlier, but it's not like they talked every day. It wasn't until some people she knew who had extended family in North Carolina reached out on Saturday to ask if she had heard from Knox.

"No," Briana said. "Why?"

They told her about the storm. She looked at the news. It was the first she was seeing about Helene, and headlines were screaming with words like "brutal" and "devastation."

She immediately texted Knox. She would never get a reply.

From 2,500 miles away, as Briana's panic rapidly intensified, she started trying to exploit social media and the internet to glean whatever information she could that might provide clues to how things were looking back in Green Mountain.

From Minnesota, where he had been visiting Sarah, Lance was doing the same. There had even been talk of the two of them trying to drive back to North Carolina in Sarah's four-wheel-drive vehicle, so they could try to navigate through the wasteland Helene had created to get to Knox and Alison's house themselves. They ultimately were discouraged from doing so, and stayed put.

Monday, Sept. 30, was the day that brought a surge of optimism after more than 48 hours of agony.

At the family's request, someone in Yancey County with a good telephoto zoom lens had gotten as close to the house as they safely could before confronting a severely washed out part of the road, and snapped a picture. It showed the structure still standing, and the door open. The house hadn't been swept away, Lance thought. Maybe they're OK after all. Maybe that open door means they're airing out the house.

But on Tuesday, Oct. 1, the worst of Lance's worst fears was realized, times four.

Sarah had been able to reach a fire department dispatcher, who had talked to a Green Mountain resident, who had reported this: Around noon the previous Friday - as the river turned into a sea that surged high above its banks, across the tracks and the road and into Knox and Alison's front yard - two adults with children were observed along their road getting into a white vehicle. Alison owned a white Mazda CX-5.

The violently swirling flood kept rising. The vehicle began to float. The people scrambled back out of it.

According to the eyewitness, the four were struggling to make their way through the water back to the house when a giant wave lifted all of them up - and rushing water carried them away.

'I'm realizing how much more I wish I knew them'

It's been a blur of immense sadness ever since Lance called Briana and told her she should sit down.

A blur of crying. Of sobbing. Of excruciating phone calls. Of having, Briana says, "to give that message over and over," and of every reaction being "the most painful thing to experience: that deep grief, the wail of people that loved my brother."

Of trying and routinely failing to make sense of the nonsensical.

Yet they've been heartened by an overwhelming outpouring of support from the community. The locals who chased leads for clues to what happened. The rescuers who were eventually able to find all four bodies, which on one hand made it really real but on the other gave them some peace. The more than a thousand people who've donated more than \$65,000 to a GoFundMe in Knox, Alison, Felix and Lucas' memories. The sanctuary where Alison worked offering to cover the costs of their burial and funeral expenses.

The friends and neighbors who have found and cared for their cattle dog, Reishi, and their cat, Mowgli, and who remain on the lookout for Moonpie, their still-missing hound.

And the beekeeper-buddy of theirs, Melissa Mejia of Burnsville, who hiked through the mud to the house with her husband, Marc, and salvaged - in addition to a handful of mementos the family will want - the boys' lizard, Sheila, alive.

Melissa has been back to the house multiple times since, with multiple people, because Knox's and Alison's families haven't been able to get to Western North Carolina, but also because it's an arduous process to sift through all the damage. Basically, it's like a bomb went off inside. "Like someone picked up the house, and filled it with water, and shook it around, and then everything settled - but then they added a bunch of mud to it," says Charlie Oak Blakely, one of the couple's best friends, who's been joining Melissa on the salvage missions.

"Everybody who goes in their house," Melissa adds, "gets stuck in the mud. There's always, for everybody, been a moment where you can't turn around. It's like quicksand. You're stuck, and then you're losing your balance, and it's like a moment of despair. But ..."

She pauses, then finishes the thought:

"... It feels wrong to be upset inside of their house. Because they were so kind and loving and joyful and positive."

Hanging onto the happiest feelings they can

In a weird way, in Lance's imagination, it almost seems as if the boys, Alison, and Knox are still there - in or around that house - together.

Lance still hasn't returned to North Carolina from Minnesota, and so in his imagination, "it feels, in some ways, like my children are just with their mother. Which, in a grim sense is true. But not in the sense that like, Oh, I'm gonna get them back next week. Which, sometimes, it still feels that way."

He's as shattered as any father can be. He'd give anything to push Lucas on the baby swing one more time, or to shake his head and smile in disbelief at something Felix did or said that made the boy seem twice his age.

But he also already is trying to imagine a future in which he's as happy as he was when they were alive.

"I mean, what can you do? Right?" Lance says. "I've known some parents who have lost their children, and ... a lot of them turn into shells of people - like, they're just hollowed out by it - and I don't want to do that. ...

"It's heartbreaking that they won't be here for me to share those things with anymore, to experience the joy of their silliness and their childlike perspective. They were such amazing, magical, ridiculous, curious, energetic, joyful children. And I want to keep the vitality that I was showing my children - you know, showing them how to just drink from life.

"I still want to do that."

In Knox's sister Briana's imagination, meanwhile, she and her 14-year-old daughter, Dahlia, are transported back to the week this past summer when they visited Green Mountain and Knox, Alison, Felix and Lucas.

They're catching fireflies around a bonfire. They're standing in front of that old post office and general store on Knox and Alison's property and listening to Knox talk about how he'd like to turn the building into an art center. They're out playing with the boys next to the river. Felix is trying to find watersnakes. Lucas is splashing in the ankle-deep water.

The river is being kind, being gentle, being a friend.

Briana can also envision an alternate current reality in which Knox and Alison are still alive, and they're bringing the kids along as they get up to their elbows in the various grassroots hurricane relief efforts all over Western North Carolina.

Finally, for a few fleeting moments here and there - in her imagination - it's November 9th, and Briana is attending not a somber private funeral but the joyful wedding that her brother and her would-be-sister-in-law had planned for that day. And when she can imagine that, she imagines this:

Knox and Alison, dancing.

Théoden Janes: 704-358-5897, @theodenjanes

Copyright (c) 2024 The News and Observer

## • Citation (aglc Style)

Théoden Janes, Staff Writer, 'They planned to wed in NC on Nov. 9. Instead, in Helene's wake, there'll be four funerals.', *News & Observer, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 10A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46F5817B79C08>



# Early voting has begun in NC. Here's your guide to casting - a ballot before Election Day

October 17, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Evan Moore; Staff Writer | Section: News | 553 Words Page: 2A OpenURL Link

Early voting is officially underway in North Carolina, where millions of voters are expected to cast their ballots before the general election on Tuesday, Nov. 5.

In 2016, 62% of North Carolina voters cast early ballots, N.C. State Board of Elections (NCSBE) Executive Director Karen Brinson Bell said during a press event Tuesday. In 2020, that number jumped to 65%.

There are more than 400 early voting sites open across the state.

Here's your guide to casting a ballot during the early voting period in North Carolina.

Where can you go to vote early in NC?

You can use the NCSBE early voting search tool at vt.ncsbe.gov/EVSite to find an early voting site near you.

Just select your county you live in (or the one you're registered to vote in) from the drop-down menu for a list of early voting sites in your area and their hours of operation.

Early voting gives you more flexibility on when and where you you can vote. During the early voting period, voters can visit any early voting site in their county. While on Election Day, voters must visit their assigned polling place.

How to view your sample ballot in NC

If you're a registered voter, you can view your sample ballot by entering your information into the NCSBE voter search tool at vt.ncsbe.gov/RegLkup.

Once you've entered your information, click "Your Sample Ballot."

Do I need to bring anything when I vote early in NC?

Yes, you'll need to bring a photo ID starting this election to vote in North Carolina.

However, you can still vote without showing an ID by filling out an ID Exception Form.

On the form, voters can choose from the following permitted exceptions:

The voter has a "reasonable impediment" to showing photo ID. This means that something is preventing the voter from showing ID.

The voter has a religious objection to being photographed.

The voter was a victim of a natural disaster within 100 days before Election Day that resulted in a disaster declaration by the President or the Governor of North Carolina. (This is true for 25 North Carolina counties. See below for more information.)

Tips for filling out your ballot in NC

Here's what to know about filling out your ballot, according to NCSBE: With the marking device provided or a black ball point pen, completely fill in the oval to the left of each candidate or selection of your choice as shown. Where authorized, you may write in a candidate by filling in the oval and writing the name on the write-in line. If you tear your ballot and/or mark it incorrectly, return it to an election official and request a replacement. Can I drop my absentee ballot off at an early voting site in NC? Yes. You can deliver your absentee ballots to an election official at an early voting site while the site is open. Ballots will be kept securely and delivered to the county board of elections for processing. What to know about early voting in Western NC If you're registered to vote in one of the 25 counties in Western North Carolina affected by Hurricane Helene, you can drop off your ballot at any early voting site or county board of elections office in the state, or at the state board of elections in Raleigh. Those counties, according to FEMA, are: Alexander Alleghany Ashe Avery Buncombe Burke Caldwell Catawba Clay Cleveland Gaston Haywood Henderson Jackson Lincoln

Macon

Madison
McDowell
Mitchell
Polk
Rutherford
Transylvania
Watauga
Wilkes
Yancey
When does early voting end in NC?
Early voting in North Carolina ends on Saturday, Nov. 2 at 3 p.m.
Evan Moore: @evaninclt Copyright (c) 2024 The News and Observer

# • Citation (aglc Style)

Evan Moore, Staff Writer, 'Early voting has begun in NC. Here's your guide to casting a ballot before Election Day', *News & Observer, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 2A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46F58124BEA08>



# In NC, Tim Walz and Bill Clinton praise Kamala Harris, contrast her with Trump

October 17, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan, News & Observer | Section: election | 856 Words OpenURL Link

Vice presidential candidate Tim Walz and former President Bill Clinton traveled to Durham Thursday on the first day of early voting in North Carolina. And Clinton will be back in the Triangle on Sunday for what the campaign calls a block party in Raleigh.

Clinton said at a rally at the Community Family Life & Recreation Center at Lyon Park that former Republican President Donald Trump has "become kind of a crazy conspiracy theorist."

He contrasted vice president and Democratic nominee Kamala Harris with Trump, saying that another Trump administration is "four more years of chaos."

"Which candidate will take us forward, and which will take us back?" Clinton asked the crowd.

Walz touted his middle-class background, talked about himself and Harris both being gun owners, and said Trump "can't pass a background check."

101724-TIM-WALZ-KLM-03.jpgFormer President Bill Clinton and Democratic vice presidential candidate Tim Walz share a laugh during a rally at the Community Family Life & Recreation Center at Lyon Park on Thursday, Oct. 17, 2024. in Durham. N.C.

Walz said Republicans in Congress won't stand up to Trump, urging supporters to go vote. "Who would have ever thought we'd see Bernie Sanders, Dick Cheney and Taylor Swift" all endorsing Harris, he asked, to laughter from the crowd.

He told the crowd that "the economy works best when it's fair and focuses on the middle class."

Walz, Clinton and N.C. Central University student Devin Freeman took the stage together shortly after 4 p.m. Freeman rallied the crowd, saying that Harris and Walz have a "vision for the future, one where we're all able to achieve our version of the American dream."

Clinton praised Harris for choosing Walz as her running mate as her first major action as a candidate. Clinton also made light of his own advanced age, noting that he's only two months younger than Trump.

Clinton and Trump are both 78.

Walz visits Durham

101724-TIM-WALZ-KLM-04.JPGDemocratic vice presidential candidate and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz speaks during a rally at the Community Family Life & Recreation Center at Lyon Park on Thursday, Oct. 17, 2024, in Durham, N.C.

Earlier in the day, Walz recorded interviews with radio stations in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Walz' plane landed shortly after 2:30 p.m. Thursday at Raleigh-Durham International Airport, where he was greeted by a group that included state Sen. Mike Woodard of Durham and two county Democratic Party chairs, Steve Rawson of Durham County and Cassie Rice of Orange County.

Walz then stopped at a campaign field office downtown on East Chapel Hill Street, where he thanked volunteers

packing supplies for Hurricane Helene relief. The Minnesota governor told the group that a disaster like Helene brings out the best in people.

101724-TIM-WALZ-KLM-07.JPGDemocratic vice presidential candidate and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz thanks volunteers for packing supplies for Hurricane Helene relief during a visit to a campaign field office on Thursday, Oct. 17, 2024, in Durham, N.C.

The Lyon Park center is in Durham's West End. The rally was being held in the gym, with a crowd of hundreds of supporters, including local officials like Durham County Commissioner Wendy Jacobs, state Rep. Julie von Haefen and Durham City Council member Javiera Caballero. On the street outside the center, a protester held a handmade sign that said "Ceasefire Now."

At a Winston-Salem stop later Thursday, Walz was to be joined by musical artist and activist Common, according to the campaign. Walz' airplane departed RDU around 6:30 p.m.

This marks Walz' third campaign visit to North Carolina as Harris' running mate, with the first two in Asheville and Raleigh.

The latest Quinnipiac University Poll, released Wednesday, shows Harris with just a 2-point lead over Republican nominee and Trump among likely North Carolina voters. The slim margin makes the race "too close to call," according to pollsters.

**Upcoming Clinton events** 

101724-TIM-WALZ-KLM-06.JPGFormer President Bill Clinton listens as Democratic vice presidential candidate Tim Walz speaks during a rally at the Community Family Life & Recreation Center at Lyon Park on Thursday, Oct. 17, 2024, in Durham, N.C.

Also set to be in Durham on Thursday, but not part of the campaign event, was Hillary Clinton for a long-scheduled event at the Durham Performing Arts Center. Author John Grisham was scheduled to talk with Clinton on stage about a wide range of topics. Clinton was the Democratic nominee for president in 2016 and former secretary of state and U.S. senator from New York.

In Bill Clinton's rally speech, he defended his wife over Trump's focus on her emails during the 2016 presidential campaign. At one point during his speech, someone in the crowd yelled out, "We love Hillary!"

Bill Clinton will move on to a Harris-Walz campaign bus tour of Eastern North Carolina, with stops on Friday and Saturday in Wilmington, Fayetteville, Wilson and Greenville. On Sunday, he'll be at a get-out-the-vote event in Rocky Mount with Nash County Democrats, then come to Raleigh.

The Raleigh event on Sunday, with no location or time announced yet, will be a block party with local Democratic leaders.

On Monday, Trump will hold a campaign event in Greenville.

101724-TIM-WALZ-KLM-05.JPGFormer President Bill Clinton speaks during a rally at the Community Family Life & Recreation Center at Lyon Park on Thursday, Oct. 17, 2024, in Durham, N.C.

Under The Dome embed (2022)

New Under the Dome newsletter subscriber embed (graybox)

Copyright 2024 The News and Observer

# • Citation (aglc Style)

Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan, News & Observer, 'In NC, Tim Walz and Bill Clinton praise Kamala Harris, contrast her with Trump', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C8AE765840E878>



# Photos: Meet the finalists for The News & Observer's 'cutest dog in the Triangle' contest

October 17, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Chyna Blackmon, News & Observer | Section: local | 985 Words OpenURL Link

The News & Observer's cutest dog contest has officially come to a close.

Out 81 nomations for adorable pups around Wake, Durham, Orange, Chatham or Johnston counties, one has been crowned the top dog in the Triangle area.

After over 18,000 votes from N&O readers, Boogie, a 3.5-year-old rescue dog from Durham, won the contest and bragging rights of being named the winner.

Who's the Triangle's top dog? Meet the 'foster fail' crowned the cutest pup in our contest

Though there could only be one winner, we still wanted to spotlight the other fetching furry friends who were finalists in the competition.

Here is a full list of the 20 pups who made it to our final round of voting for our cutest dog contest.

Finalists in our cutest dog in the Triangle contest

Boogie (3.5), our contest winner, is an American shepherd and poodle mix from Durham. The "incredibly cuddly" dog is a big fan of seeing his own reflection in the mirror.

boogie n&o cutest dog contestBoogie, a 3.5 year old pup from Durham voted the cutest dog in the Triangle area.

Gulliver (3.5), our runner up, is a chiweenie from Raleigh. He loves sniff-safari excursions and olfactory educational experiences.

IMG\_0731 - Christopher David.jpegGulliver was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Goose (4 months) is a miniature bernedoodle from Raleigh. His favorite hobbies are meeting new people and dogs, and eating things that aren't food.

IMG\_3553 - Tim Hunter.jpegGoose was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Lucy (9) is a pug from Raleigh. She is a three-time cancer survivor who loves loves barking at the trash truck, eating strawberries, taking naps, and watching the Carolina Hurricanes play hockey on TV.

LucyNecci - Casey Necci.jpgLucy was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Pepper (1.5) is a pug from Raleigh who loves to play fetch more than anything.

IMG\_20240804\_131211042\_HDR - Martine Bullard.jpgPepper was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Evanston (3) is a schnoodle from Morrisville. He was named after his owners' college town.

IMG\_1682 - Jodie Valade.jpegEvanston was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Tahoe (6) is a terrier from Chapel Hill who loves to sunbathe.

IMG\_0257 - Michael Giarla.jpegTahoe was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Wallace (6 months) is a golden retriever from Raleigh who loves to run after tennis balls but not retrieve them.

IMG\_3535 - Haley Meyer.jpegWallace was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Uki (5) is a husky, pit bull and boxer mix from Raleigh who loves going on long walks and meeting people.

IMG\_1580 - JoAnn Hotta.jpegUki was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Olive (6) is a miniature beagle. She was rescued from a breeding operation after being forced to deliver several litters. Her human says her hobby is "making a variety of interesting odors."

olive - Edward Burmila.jpgOlive was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Marple (4) is a foxhound mix from Chapel Hill. Her owner says: "Living with Marple is like living with a grad student. She is always on alert, trying to stay on top of what is happening, who is doing what and nervous when things change."

Marple - Cathy Brigham.jpgMarple was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Ted (15) is a mutt from Durham. He loves eating peanut butter, and he always licks his paws after eating it.

IMG\_1445 - Graham Smokoski.jpegTed was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Sara (13) is a beagle, boxer and lab mix. She was a rescue from the Wake County SPCA.

IMG\_2234.JPEGSara was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Pogue (4) is a cocker spaniel from Cary. Pogue loves hiding biscuits.

IMG\_0214 - mary macey.jpegPogue was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Coco (11) is a golden retriever from Raleigh. Her human says "she loves to sneak into the back creek when we're not watching."

14650314730\_151a6abc8d\_o - W. Randall Stroud.jpgCoco was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Lacey (1.5) is a miniature schnauzer from Apex. She likes to play fetch with a tennis ball and loves belly rubs.

20240131\_140306 - Sandy Thomas.jpgLacey was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Gio Versace (6 months) is a papillion from Cary who likes watching WRAL.

IMG\_1341 - Alyssa Poole.pngGio Versace was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Bodhi (14 months) is a Welsh terrier from Cary. His favorite hobby is playing with his older brother, Loki.

IMG\_0337 - Hope Homesley.jpegBodhi was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Tyrion (7) is a pekingese from Raleigh who likes watching football and napping.

IMG\_8536 - S Mangano.jpegTyrion was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Benji (1) is a miniature dachshund from Cary. His human says "he is a tiny, cuddly, people lover but has a bark triple his size!"

IMG\_7843 - Shania D.jpegBenji was named a finalist in The News & Observer's "cutest dog in the Triangle" contest in fall 2024.

Who's the Triangle's top dog? Meet the 'foster fail' crowned the cutest pup in our contest

Pet adoptions 'urgently needed' at Wake SPCA for displaced NC animals after Helene

Copyright 2024 The News and Observer

## • Citation (aglc Style)

Chyna Blackmon, News & Observer, 'Photos: Meet the finalists for The News & Observer's 'cutest dog in the Triangle' contest', News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C8AE76128B7F60>



# Under the Dome: Tim Walz visits Durham, Winston-Salem as early voting kicks off

October 17, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Emily Vespa, correspondent, News & Observer | Section: politics government | 766 Words OpenURL Link

Good morning and welcome to the Under the Dome newsletter. I'm Emily Vespa.

Democratic vice presidential nominee Tim Walz is in North Carolina today for two campaign events.

He'll first join Bill Clinton in Durham to kick off the former president's four-day Eastern North Carolina bus tour for Vice President Kamala Harris, aimed at reaching rural voters. Later, Walz will head to Winston-Salem for a rally. This is the Minnesota governor's third visit to the Tar Heel State since he became Harris' running mate.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will also be in Durham today as part of a tour to promote her newest book.

## EARLY VOTING STARTS TODAY, WHAT TO KNOW

Early voting in North Carolina starts today and runs through Saturday, Nov. 2 at 3 p.m. Here's what to know, from our service journalism team.

During early voting, you can visit any early voting site in your county. To find a site near you and its hours of operation, visit vt.ncsbe.gov/EVSite.

If you're a registered voter, see who will be on your ballot using the state Board of Elections voter search tool. Visit vt.ncsbe.gov/RegLkup, enter your information and then click "Your Sample Ballot."

Voters are required to show a photo ID, such as a driver's license or passport, to cast a ballot. You can still vote without an ID, but you'll need to fill out an ID exception form.

## CITIZENS-ONLY BALLOT MEASURE WON'T BLOCK SOME CITIZENS FROM VOTING

Misinformation about a citizen-only voting amendment on North Carolina ballots this election has erupted into a battle over semantics.

Some opponents of the amendment have said it will strip voting rights from naturalized citizens, which is not true. U.S. citizens, regardless of how they gained citizenship, are eligible to vote. The proposed constitutional amendment would not change that.

Instead, the ballot measure would change the state constitution's language, which currently says that "every" person born in the U.S. or naturalized can vote, to say that "only" a U.S. citizen can vote. Advocates say it's an effort to clarify that noncitizens can't vote, which is already illegal and exceedingly rare in state and federal elections.

Still, the amendment's opponents fear the ballot measure, which passed with bipartisan support in the state legislature, could hamper voter turnout for naturalized citizens, who make up 44% of all immigrants in North Carolina, according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

"Creating this vague language on the backs of this disinformation about noncitizens voting in elections really could confuse new Americans who are just learning about participating in the electoral process," said Jimmy Patel-Nguyen, communications director for North Carolina Asian Americans Together. "The concern is that it could really have a chilling effect on the turnout in this election and beyond."

Andy Jackson, director of the conservative Civitas Center for Public Integrity, said the current language doesn't mention a different group of eligible voters: natural-born citizens who are born overseas.

"There's a bright line there between a citizen and not a citizen," Jackson said of the proposed amendment. "It says strictly that only citizens can vote. It doesn't matter how you become a citizen, just that you're a citizen."

#### WHAT ELSE WE'RE WORKING ON

Gov. Roy Cooper signed an executive order Wednesday to increase the maximum weekly unemployment payment to \$600 for North Carolinians impacted by Hurricane Helene. Read more from Avi Bajpai.

#### WHAT ELSE WE'RE READING

Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance stopped in Wilmington on Wednesday for a campaign rally. The Wilmington StarNews has the details. Ahead of Vance's visit, Wilmington City Council member Salette Andrews urged voters to "turn the page on Donald Trump and MAGA Republicans," saying a second Trump term would be "disastrous," the Wilmington StarNews reported.

#### CAMPAIGN WATCH

Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson will join Hal Weatherman, Republican nominee for lieutenant governor, for a campaign event in Western North Carolina on Friday.

#### **VOTER GUIDE**

In the latest candidate questionnaires from our 2024 NC Voter Guide, see what candidates for U.S. House District 9 have to say about the issues, and learn more about their biographies.

Two candidates answered our questions:

**Democrat Nigel Bristow** 

Unaffiliated candidate Shelane Etchison

Today's newsletter was by Emily Vespa. Check your inbox tomorrow for more #ncpol.

You can sign up to receive the Under the Dome newsletter at newsobserver.com/newsletters. Want your friends to get our email, too? Forward them this newsletter so they can sign up. We want to know what you would like to see in the Under the Dome newsletter. Do you like highlights from the legislature? Political analysis? Do you have a question you'd like The News & Observer team to answer? Tell us here. You can also email us at dome@newsobserver.com

Don't forget to follow our tweets and listen to our Under the Dome podcast for more developments.

Copyright 2024 The News and Observer

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Emily Vespa, correspondent, News & Observer, 'Under the Dome: Tim Walz visits Durham, Winston-Salem as early voting kicks off', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C8AE745FF584C0>



# Helene-related weekly unemployment claims surge

October 17, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: RICHARD CRAVER WinstonSalem Journal | Section: News | 696 Words OpenURL Link

North Carolina experienced the first phase of an expected Hurricane Helene-related surge in new weekly state unemployment claims the first week of October.

The U.S. Labor Department reported a total of 11,474 new claims were filed for the week that ended Oct. 5. That's up from 2,941 in the previous report, or by 290%.

The Labor report doesn't provide a regional breakdown by state, but it's highly likely the bulk of the new claims are from North Carolinians whose employment was directly or indirectly affected by Helene-related damage.

The new filings are likely to push the number of North Carolinians receiving state unemployment benefits to more than 30,000. There were 18,333 North Carolinians receiving benefits for the week that ended Sept. 28.

North Carolina was fifth in the nation in the number of new unemployment claim filings, up significantly from the 15th to 18th range since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared over in March 2023.

Other states with severe Helene-related damage also experienced an uptick in new claims.

Florida's new claims jumped 69.4% to 9,377, while Georgia's was up by 17.4% to 4,675, South Carolina's by 83% to 2,504 and Tennessee's by 72.5% to 4,367.

State of emergency programs

Residents in four northwest N.C. counties — Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes — have been declared eligible for federal disaster unemployment assistance benefits.

The eligibility is a byproduct of the Biden administration's declaration of a state of emergency in N.C. from the devastating rainfall and flooding caused by the remnants of Helene.

The disaster unemployment assistance covers individuals who are unemployed as a direct result of Helene. Business owners and self-employed individuals affected by the storm also may qualify for benefits.

Benefits have been made retroactive to Sept. 29 and may last for up to 26 weeks.

There are 23 other counties, along with the Cherokee Indians of N.C., that have been approved: Alexander, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swaim, Transylvania and Yancey.

Eligible individuals have until Dec. 2 to file an application for disaster unemployment assistance at des.nc.gov or the DUA Hotline at 919-629-3857. Individuals must first apply for state unemployment benefits. For those determined to be ineligible for or have exhausted regular state benefits, they may be eligible to make a federal disaster unemployment assistance claim.

Eligibility is determined weekly, and individuals must continue to be out of work as a direct result of the disaster each week to get unemployment benefits.

Those eligible include: "

- No longer have the job that provided their primary source of income; "
- Are unable to reach their place of unemployment; "
- Cannot work because of an injury caused by the storm; "
- Were unable to begin employment or self-employment due to the storm; and "
- Have become the major supplier of household income due to a storm-related death of the previous major supplier of household income.

Documentation required includes: name and address of all employers you worked with within the last 24 months; county of residence; county of employment; mailing address and ZIP code; valid telephone number; Social Security number or Alien Registration number; proof of employment and income if you're self-employed, a farmer or a commercial fisher.

All required documentation must be submitted within 21 days from the day the application is filed.

DES said it will work with people who cannot provide all documentation to ensure that their unemployment benefits are not delayed.

U.S. Labor also announced the approval of up to \$10 million in initial emergency grant funding to North Carolina to support disaster-relief jobs and training services in the 25 counties.

The National Dislocated Worker Grant — supported by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 — allows the N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions to provide people with temporary disaster-relief jobs for cleanup and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to address immediate, basic needs for those displaced by Helene.

The funding also enables the state to provide training and services to individuals in the affected communities.

The N.C.Commerce Department's Employment and Training Administration oversees National Dislocated Worker Grants, which expand the service capacity of dislocated worker programs at the state and local levels by providing funding assistance in response to large, unexpected economic events that lead to significant job losses.

@ Copyright 2024, The News Herald, Morganton, NC

## • Citation (aglc Style)

RICHARD CRAVER WinstonSalem Journal, 'Helene-related weekly unemployment claims surge', *News Herald, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45946A998ED00">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45946A998ED00</a>



# Morganton's grilled cheese competition rescheduled for November after Hurricane Helene delay

October 17, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Sharon McBrayer| Section: Events | 523 Words OpenURL Link

Give Cheese a Chance, an annual fundraiser for Meeting Place Mission, has been rescheduled to Nov. 17 after the event was postposed after the remnants of Hurricane Helene hit Burke County.

The event brings teams together to compete to make grilled cheese sandwiches, which are judged by event attendees.

The date change is aimed to avoid financial burdens on competitors and allow for city cleanup from Hurricane Helene, said Suzy Fitzgerald, board member of Meeting Place Mission. The fundraiser, which will take place on the Historic Burke County Courthouse square, was originally scheduled for Oct. 6, about a week after the storm impacted the area.

"We really just felt like Oct. 6 was just way too soon to try to do that (the event)," Fitzgerald said.

Meeting Place Mission works to end homelessness in Burke County and it operates two emergency homeless shelters, one for men and one for women and children.

Fitzgerald said the nonprofit contacted all of the competitors for the event to check what date would be best to reschedule.

"So we really tried to work with them," Fitzgerald said. "Because, I mean, they put all the work and the labor into it. It's their cheesy goodness that makes the whole event worthwhile."

Fitzgerald said all of the tickets that have already been sold will still be valid and there are still tickets available for \$25. There are also spaces available for competitors.

This year, a ticket will allow attendees to try every single grilled cheese sandwich and get three judging tickets to pick three favorites. The winning top three competitors will receive a trophy and a gift certificate from Fonta Flora Brewery, Fitzgerald said.

For the first time, family tickets are available online at www.meetingplacemission.org or on the Meeting Place Mission Facebook page. A family ticket is for two adults and two children, Fitzgerald said.

Paper tickets for the event can be purchased from board members or Toner's Irish Pub.

Halloween party in Morganton

Later this month, the Meeting Place Mission's annual Halloween party fundraiser will be held on Oct. 26 at CoMMA in Morganton.

Those attending can dress up for the holiday, or not, dance the night away to a DJ and enjoy some food. Those who dress up will have a chance to enter a costume contest, Fitzgerald said.

Tickets are \$30 and can be purchased on the nonprofit's website. Some VIP tickets are still available, she said.

"A ticket gets you a really good time," Fitzgerald said. "Some people dress up and some people don't, but

everybody has a really good time. It's a lot of fun."

Fitzgerald said the fundraisers come at an important time because she believes there will be more pressure on organizations like the Meeting Place Mission due to the damage left by Hurricane Helene.

"You know, and they're going to be displaced for a little while," Fitzgerald said. "I don't think we have too many quick fixes for people who lost housing and things like that."

Fitzgerald suspects the number of people the organization serves will increase.

"We serve people who are either at imminent risk of homelessness or who are homeless," Fitzgerald said. "The reasoning behind why people are homeless doesn't determine whether or not we help them."

© Copyright 2024, The News Herald, Morganton, NC

## • Citation (aglc Style)

Sharon McBrayer, 'Morganton's grilled cheese competition rescheduled for November after Hurricane Helene delay', *News Herald, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C459462AE63938>



## MILLIONS TO REPAIR

October 17, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: CHRISSY MURPHY cmurphy@morganton.com| Section: Millions To Repair| 723 Words OpenURL Link

#### **HELENE AFTERMATH**

As Hurricane Helene approached, Morganton parks and recreation officials moved equipment like mowers and golf carts to higher ground at Catawba Meadows Park.

Andrew Tallent, assistant director of Morganton's parks and recreation department, said staff expected flooding similar to Hurricane Frances in 2004. Flood water was about 2 feet deep in the field house near the ball fields in 2004.

Flood waters ended up being more than 7 feet deep after Hurricane Helene swept through as a tropical storm. The flooding filled the concessions stand with water and ruined the room where brand new baseball and softball equipment was stored. Mowers, golf carts, Gator utility vehicles and maintenance machines were flooded and now won't start. The ball fields were left covered in silt.

Bleachers were thrown on top of dugouts. Fencing around the fields was mangled by the water and debris. Sinkholes swallowed some of the ground around the fields.

Morganton Parks and Recreation Director Bryan Fish said the smell was rancid when staff first made it into the flooded park. He said the combination of the contaminants in the water plus the wet food from the concessions stand sent a putrid odor throughout the building.

Catawba Meadows wasn't the only park that took a hit.

On the Catawba River Greenway, sand covers the path in some parts. An ice machine was carried from the Town Tavern area all the way to the greenway at Catawba Meadows, where it still sat nearly two weeks after the storm.

Trees fell on different parts of the greenway. Bridges and boardwalks over or near the river have been damaged.

Pieces of the greenway boardwalk behind the River Village shopping center were torn apart and mangled, moved by the flooding and current.

The water was so high and powerful at the Catawba River Soccer Complex, next to the greenway and behind the Ingles grocery, that the soccer goals were lifted over the fencing, which was also battered.

"I was devastated, probably a little emotional," Fish said. "But the times we're in right now? Yes, the ball fields are not in great shape and are going to need some work, but there's people who have lost homes and possibly family members to the storm. So in comparison, it's not as bad as some other people may have it."

Fish estimated repairs for Catawba Meadows could cost millions of dollars. City Manager Sally Sandy said the city's insurance, including flood insurance, plus FEMA funding would help, but it will take time before the city knows exactly how much repairs will cost.

For now, the city is in the cleanup phase. Fish said city staff have been suiting up in gloves, masks and boots to clean out the buildings hit hard by flooding.

"It's been a full team effort," Fish said.

It could be months before Catawba Meadows can be reopened.

The city has reopened the following parks:

- "Freedom Park (Independence Boulevard) "
- Martha's Park (Collett Street)
- " Martin Luther King Jr. Park (Alphabet Lane off Bouchelle Street)
- ", Skate park (King Street near Collett Street) ",
- Carbon City Park (Carbon City Road near Morganton Department of Public Safety Station No. 2)

Until the other parks can be fully assessed for safety, the city asked people to stay out of the parks and off the greenway. Sandy said the storm damage could be dangerous.

"We know how important our facilities are for people, so we're going to do our best to make this as short a time as possible. But it is going to take some time, and we ask for people's patience. ... We don't need to add more tragedy to this event," Sandy said.

She said once the damaged parks and the greenway have been evaluated, the city will look at reopening each park in phases. There may be opportunities to volunteer to help with cleaning up the parks sometime in the future, Sandy said.

Seeing the dedication of city employees and community members has been a light in a dark place throughout the storm, Sandy said.

"I could not be prouder of the city of Morganton employees and their response to this disaster, or more grateful to all of the outside help and our community's offers of help," Sandy said. "In the face of the devastation, those are the sides of this that let you know how much good is still out there."

Chrissy Murphy is a staff writer and can be reached at cmurphy@morganton.com or at 828-432-8941.

© Copyright 2024, The News Herald, Morganton, NC

## • Citation (aglc Style)

CHRISSY MURPHY cmurphy@morganton.com, 'MILLIONS TO REPAIR', *News Herald, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4594636DD45D8">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4594636DD45D8</a>



# Repairing roads, water, sewer top priorities

October 17, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: RICHARD CRAVER WinstonSalem Journal | Section: News | 1108 Words OpenURL Link

Paying for repairing roads, highways and water and sewer infrastructure are the top priorities for the bulk of the \$273 million "rainyday" funds approved Oct. 10 for Hurricane Helene relief efforts in western North Carolina.

Gov. Roy Cooper signed into law House Bill 149, titled "Disaster Recovery Act of 2024," which represents the first round of disaster relief funding. The state House and Senate voted unanimously for HB149.

Those priorities represent the realities of helping affected western N.C.communities to return to normal life, according to legislators and Cooper administration officials.

The rainy-day fund exceeded \$4.75 billion before Helene. Legislators have established a limit on how much rainy-day funds can be spent at any one time.

"Recovery for western North Carolina will require unprecedented help from state and federal sources, and this legislation is a strong first step," Cooper said in a statement.

"Hurricane Helene caused catastrophic damage, but also showed the resiliency of North Carolina's people and its communities, and we must continue the bipartisan work to help them build back strong."

About \$250 million is going to state agencies and local governments toward relief and recovery operations in the 25 affected counties that include Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes.

Essentially, funds appropriated to the N.C. Emergency Management agency will serve as upfront cash flows that are expected to be reimbursed at up to 100% from the federal government, primarily the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

About \$100 million in state funding already has been designated toward disaster relief efforts, including N.C. Department of Transportation efforts toward repairing or new construction of private roads and bridges.

Cooper said that "significant progress is already being made to reopen roads, restore electricity and repair water and communications systems."

Most of the energy and communications repairs are being done by private companies, such as Duke Energy, Pike Electric and mobile and internet providers.

"This initial investment is helpful in satisfying federal matching funds requirements and cash flow to help ensure maximum impact," Cooper said.

"In coming weeks and months, damage assessments will continue and the governor will work with state and federal appropriators to identify the significant funding that will be required to rebuild communities devastated by this storm."

Next legislative session

A second one-day session focused on disaster relief efforts is scheduled for Oct. 24.

State Emergency Management officials are expected to provide before that session the results of an accelerated

preliminary damage-and needs assessment so legislators can determine the next amount to withdraw from the rainy-day fund.

The typical damage-and needs assessment takes between six to eight weeks to conduct and present to the legislature, A more thorough assessment likely will be presented to the legislature after the Nov. 5 general election.

However, the availability of drones and other technological advancements has helped to speed up the assessments.

The assessment is designed in part to determine what damages FEMA will pay for and what disaster relief expenses the state will have to pick up. State officials, both with the Cooper administration and the administration of the next governor, will negotiate with FEMA officials on those expenses.

Funding also will be dedicated to "unmet basic needs" for affected communities, such as providing shelter and warmth as the cooler nights of fall arrive.

"There is not a specific earmark of any of these dollars for a specific program," said Senate leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham.

When asked about why the legislature is not providing more from the rainyday fund, Berger said, "This is not all of it, not by a long shot."

"We don't want to get too far ahead of the federal government on that because we don't want to supplant those federal dollars with state dollars if we're not required to."

House speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, said legislators know "this is just a drop in the bucket to what's going to be the total cost."

"We're well over \$10 billion, and it's going to be higher than that. This will (be) multiple years that this (recovery) process has to be dealt with at the state level and the federal level."

## Non-financial details

A legislative staff analysis of HB149 shows how legislators are providing guidance to board of elections in the 25 affected counties for handling the upcoming Nov. 5 general election.

Most of the affected counties are conservative leaning outside Buncombe, Mecklenburg and Watauga.

About \$5 million will be provided to county boards of elections for voter outreach and communication efforts.

Absentee ballots for voters in the 25 counties can be returned to any county board of elections, early voting sites or precincts, as well as establishing a hotline for displaced voters from the 25 counties.

Berger said there will be "additional flexibilities for appointing election judges and poll workers, including from outside a particular county," such as state employees without taking leave from their jobs.

HB149 contains language providing direction for how school systems in the 25 affected counties can adjust their 2024-25 calendars.

HB149 allows public schools to excuse days missed for schools that closed during September and October related to Hurricane Helene damages.

Other elements include: "

• Expands the amount of authorized remove instruction time for schools in the 25 affected counties for the

remainder of the school year. "

- Treats employees and contractors of public school units as having worked on days deemed completed and provide funding to replaced lost compensation of school nutrition employees. "
- Requires the state Department of Public Instruction to report on calendar flexibility and compensation provided. "
- Waives requirements for students enrolled in educator preparation program to complete clinical internships over a certain amount of time if they were scheduled to complete the internships in December. "
- Extends the deadline for bonuses to be paid out to qualifying principals in affected counties.

Berger said HB149 will suspend into at least March 1 the post-COVID-19 pandemic law that requires the Council of State to renew every 30 days a governor's executive orders on declared emergencies.

The bill will waive temporarily driver's license renewals in those counties, along with certain environmental regulations, such as burning, road construction and wastewater, to accelerate the recovery process.

There will be small business loans made in conjunction with Golden Leaf Foundation that will be reimbursed through FEMA.

"There are thousands of businesses in this region that have been severely damaged or destroyed," said Sen. Warren Daniel, R-Burke.

"They're struggling to figure out whether they will ever be able to rebuild and reopen. Local residents and the state economy depend heavily on the businesses in western North Carolina, especially small businesses.

"It's the General Assembly's duty to provide them help during their darkest hour and we are intent on doing just that."

The law also includes the Potential Tropical Cyclone #8 Fund for Brunswick and New Hanover counties, as well as language to fund the relief needs for the Nash County tornado that caused damage in Rocky Mount.

 ${\small \circledR}$  Copyright 2024, The News Herald, Morganton, NC

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

RICHARD CRAVER WinstonSalem Journal, 'Repairing roads, water, sewer top priorities', *News Herald, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C459468D39FC80">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C459468D39FC80</a>



# County OKs \$13M for EMS, shelter

October 17, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: SHARON MCBRAYER smcbrayer@morganton.com| Section: News| 565 Words OpenURL Link

Burke County commissioners on Tuesday night approved contracts for the county's new EMS headquarters and animal shelter.

The Burke County Board of Commissioners approved a bid of \$13.5 million by Beam Construction Company Inc. for the construction of both facilities. Beam Construction Company was the lowest responsible bidder, according to county officials. The cost of the EMS headquarters is \$6.1 million and the cost of the shelter is \$7.3 million, according to the county.

The contract includes three alternate bids for emergency radio responder (\$130,000), FireLite fire alarm (\$0) and stone flooring (\$28,000) for both buildings, according to the bid.

Burke County Manager Brian Epley said the money for the buildings is coming from a onetime allocation of federal grant dollars. He said no local property tax or sales tax dollars will be used to pay for the facilities. He said the facilities will not require more operational costs or additional staff.

The county purchased 4.25 acres at 102 Drexel Road in early 2023 for the EMS headquarters. The money came from the state for the EMS base, Epley said.

Epley said EMS base No. 1, which the new headquarters will replace, is on the UNC Health Blue Ridge Hospital property and the lease expired in 2023. He said the hospital has been working with the county, knowing it is building a new base.

He said bringing training and administration, as well as being an EMS deployment base, under one roof will be beneficial and productive for the county and EMS. He said the location of the new base correlates well with the calls for service volume and population density of the Morganton area.

The county already owned land for the animal shelter, which is adjacent to the 911 center on Kirksey Road in Morganton.

Epley said the current animal shelter only has 16 dog kennels and not enough space for cats.

He added that it is a lot of work for staff to keep the building in adequate shape for inspections and to meet all of requirements of the N.C. Department of Agriculture.

"So we're really looking forward to being able to off er the community a little better place to do business," Epley said. "And we think both of these will be longterm solutions to these critical departments."

A groundbreaking on the two facilities was canceled due to Hurricane Helene but has been rescheduled for 3 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 8, at 636 Kirksey Drive, Morganton, which is the site of the new animal shelter.

Operation Green Light

The board also approved a resolution from Veterans Services in support of Operation Green Light from Nov. 4-11 in support of military veterans.

Residents and businesses are asked to change at least one light bulb to a green bulb to show support for veterans.

Veterans Day is Nov. 11.

# Forever heroes

Commissioners recognized and applauded county employees, including emergency services and responders, 911 telecommunications, as well as volunteers who worked throughout Hurricane Helene and its aftermath.

Burke County Attorney J.R. Simpson told commissioners about his up-close and personal experience with a swift-water rescue team during Helene. He said rescuers were able to rescue his 94-year-old disabled mother, get her in a boat, keep her calm the entire way and deliver her to her family, who was waiting for her on dry land.

"They're forever heroes to the Simpson family," he said.

The board approved Burke County receiving and allocating \$3 million in total from FEMA and the state for Helene recovery costs.

© Copyright 2024, The News Herald, Morganton, NC

### • Citation (aglc Style)

SHARON MCBRAYER smcbrayer@morganton.com, 'County OKs \$13M for EMS, shelter', *News Herald, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C459471CE191E8">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C459471CE191E8</a>



# Lies, liars and lying are threatening our democracy

October 17, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 724 Words OpenURL Link

At a recent campaign rally in Michigan, former president Donald Trump claimed that "Kamala has spent all her FEMA money, billions of dollars, on housing for illegal migrants."

Could it possibly be true?

This is the sort of question Duke University's Bill Adair and a team of student reporters have been asking themselves for 17 years as they've fact-checked politicians and other public figures for the PolitiFact website that Adair created in 2007. The answer, of course, is no.

As William Shakespeare might have said, it is a lie "told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

The truth is that the Federal Emergency Management Agency has two distinct funds. One is to help cities temporarily house migrants. An entirely separate \$20 billion fund was created by Congress for disaster relief. This one is running low because of the number and scope of disasters this year, but the two funds are not interchangeable, nor is either being used for purposes other than those intended.

During and after Hurricanes Milton and Helene, FEMA has been present and working to help victims, largely to the acclaim of state and local leaders.

At a news conference to address Helene's damage to parts of the state, South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, a Republican, said federal assistance had "been superb." He mentioned that President Joe Biden, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell had each called to off er support.

This is what one would expect from federal officials during a crisis, and it wouldn't require highlighting but for Trump's intentional lies.

As a rule, I'm not one to use the words "lie," "lying" or "liar." Their power to destroy someone's reputation is too great for comfort. But Trump has forced many of us, including Adair, to abandon the soft-pedaling etiquette of euphemism and to say what is factual. Lying, for Trump, is so reflexive that he needn't bestir his fourth-grade vocabulary to seize headlines and malign those he finds inconvenient to his purposes.

Will things ever change? Not soon, says Adair. Unfortunately, lying pays dividends in today's universe of partisan television, radio and social media, and for a complicit political base manipulated by sophisticated and sometimes immoral consultants. Fact-checking lies has had to become an industry, but it can't possibly keep up. What's needed is more fact-checking, which means more money and more staff, and for Americans to demand that the lying stop.

Over the years, Adair and his revolving teams of students have created a methodology and a "Truth-O-Meter" for assessing the accuracy of a given statement. Rankings from "true" to "false" to "pants on fire!" are assigned based on findings, which are explained and sourced on the website.

Adair is quick to note that political lying began long before Trump. President Richard Nixon lied about the Watergate burglary out of self-preservation. President Bill Clinton lied about "sex with that woman, Monica Lewinsky," because he was in very hot water.

In a sense, Trump is the inevitable benefactor of a culture of lies that has become normalized through passive

acceptance of lying as the nature of politics.

Adair explains in his new book, "Beyond the Big Lie," that politicians every day try to score points with key constituencies: voters, party leaders, influencers and media figures. "A decision to lie is a simple math equation: I am likely to score enough points with this lie that it will outweigh any consequences it might have from voters/donors/the media."

Adair states that Republicans lie more than Democrats do, according to a statistical analysis detailed in the book. He spends several pages explaining how "facts" are selected for scrutiny, but it basically comes down to whether something just doesn't sound right. For example: Does it sound right that Harris "stole" FEMA money to house illegal migrants rather than help hurricane victims?

Actually, no — which is why PolitiFact gave Trump a "pants on fire!" rating for telling this easily disprovable lie.

Voters concerned about truth and the consequences of lying might want to check with PolitiFact at least as often as they check the polls. They'll learn that Trump, contrary to what he recently told Hugh Hewitt, has never been to Gaza. And that Harris' claim that unemployment is at a historic low for all groups of people was rated only "half true." It's good to know the truth, even if you don't like it.

Parker writes for The Washington Post.

© Copyright 2024, The News Herald, Morganton, NC

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Lies, liars and lying are threatening our democracy', *News Herald, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4594697726548">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4594697726548</a>



# Climate change costs more than gas, sweaty T-shirt

October 17, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 680 Words OpenURL Link

I was mowing my lawn in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, as Hurricane Milton's outer bands and the tornadoes it brought with it began to lash Florida last week. Though the lawnmowing was trivial compared to the lashing, a slight inconvenience alongside a pending catastrophe, I couldn't help linking the two because of climate change.

In all my years as a homeowner, I don't remember mowing my lawn this consistently this late in the season. I took out the lawnmower, edger and clippers a couple of weeks ago as well. The hedges had regrown to heights they usually reach at the end of spring.

All it cost me was a few dollars of gas money and a sweaty T-shirt. No biggie. But a change in the climate, even a modest one, could be costly to places such as Myrtle Beach. Despite the draw of Broadway at the Beach, the SkyWheel and Ripley's Believe it or Not!, weather remains the top reason some 20 million people flock here every year. Sitting on the beach taking in the beauty of the Atlantic becomes less palatable without mild, stable weather.

The good news is that the fight to persuade people we are undergoing change is over. NASA says there is "no question that increased greenhouse gas levels warm Earth in response," even if scientists may not be able to say definitively that my lawn is changing or Milton's historic strength was directly caused by climate change because climate is more than just individual weather events.

Nearly 80% of South Carolinians now believe climate change is real, according to Winthrop University polling. That's higher than the national average of about 72%.

The bad news is that fewer of us are in agreement about its causes and what should be done, or if climate change is an urgent matter at all. While 55% of North Carolina residents believe recent extreme weather events are related to climate change, only 47% believe it's an emergency, according to High Point University polling. That's even while knowing rural areas are most vulnerable, which Hurricane Helene has unfortunately just illustrated in devastating ways.

In Florida, the gap is starker. While 90% of Floridians believe climate change is real, less than half would be willing to pay \$10 a month to strengthen that state's infrastructure to weather hazards.

In Congress, when Democrats talk about climate change or "green" projects, many Republicans criticize them. Only 13 House GOP members voted for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which represents the country's biggest investment in the climate change fight. More needs to be done, but President Joe Biden signed it into law just a couple of years after President Donald Trump spent his time in office rolling back such eff orts.

It's akin to knowing an out-of-control freight train is screaming down the track. Instead of working to either try and stop it or get people out of the way, we're stuck arguing if it's really an emergency worth the sacrifice of short-term political wins or a few extra dollars to equip those who can mitigate the damage with the tools they need.

The truth is we've been forking over extra dollars anyway. Some of it has been in the form of having to mow the lawn and cut the hedges a few extra times, the kind of thing that feels small but will add up over time. We've even accepted the occasional house on the North Carolina coast falling into the Atlantic because of rising seas as a curiosity rather than calamity.

In other ways, it is easier to see that the freight train that is climate change has already arrived. In recent years, a variety of storms and other natural disasters around the nation have caused damage that is approaching nearly

 $$100 ext{ billion annually} - ext{the highest it's ever been.}$ 

While we can't say with absolute certainty that the damage from Helene and Milton is a direct cause of climate change, we'd be fools to believe it isn't, and bigger fools to let partisanship stop us from committing to doing something serious and sustained about it.

Bailey writes for The Charlotte Observer: charlotteobserver.com.

© Copyright 2024, The News Herald, Morganton, NC

# • Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Climate change costs more than gas, sweaty T-shirt', *News Herald, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4594679909280">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4594679909280</a>



# Hickory's Riverwalk bridge closed indefinitely

October 17, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: FROM STAFF REPORTS | Section: News | 122 Words OpenURL Link

Hickory's Riverwalk bridge is closed until further notice due to damage caused by Hurricane Helene, according to a press release from the city of Hickory.

The bridge trailhead and parking lot at 1580 Old Lenoir Road NW will also remain closed, the press release said.

The Riverwalk section that goes over the water is closed due to damage caused Sept. 27 by the remnants of the hurricane, the press release said. A section of handrailing was damaged by debris and must be replaced, the city said. "At this time, the reopening date is unknown," the press release said.

Other parts of the Riverwalk trail, including sections that are elevated over land and the paved greenway within Rotary-Geitner Park, are open, the press release said.

© Copyright 2024, The News Herald, Morganton, NC

## • Citation (aglc Style)

FROM STAFF REPORTS, 'Hickory's Riverwalk bridge closed indefinitely', *News Herald, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4594668179878">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4594668179878</a>



## WILDCATS RETURN

October 17, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: JUSTIN EPLEY Sports editor | Section: Wildcats Return | 735 Words OpenURL Link

## H.S. FOOTBALL | WEEK 9 PREVIEW

VALDESE — After a month off due to Hurricane Helene, which devastated many of the mountain communities that belong to the Western Highlands 1A/2A Conference, the Draughn football team finally will hit the field again this weekend.

The Wildcats will host Mitchell at 2 p.m. on Saturday in Valdese for DHS' homecoming.

Draughn (3-2, 1-0 WHC) have had the 1A powerhouse's number the last couple seasons, including a 57-42 shootout win on the road in Bakersville last fall that helped the Wildcats secure second place in the WHC. DHS defeated Mitchell twice in 2022, winning 56-21 in the regular season and 35-10 in the second round of the NCHSAA 1A state playoffs, both in Valdese, as the Wildcats won the WHC title, the first in program history, and advanced to the 1A Western Regional finals.

Those three wins give Draughn a 3-1 alltime lead in the series following a 62-14 loss at Mitchell in 2021, the teams' first year together in the WHC. This year's Wildcats are led by senior quarterback Sterling Radabaugh, who has taken over as the fulltime starter with a full complement of targets in Kayden Lytle, Cayden Roscoe, Jacob Mull and Connor Houston. Marshall Brinkley is the team's top running back.

The Mountaineers (4-1, 1-0 WHC) are led by senior quarterback Caleb Cook, who has completed 59 of 85 passes for 890 yards and nine touchdowns with three interceptions. His favorite targets are junior DeShawn Orr (16-269-4) and fellow seniors Fernando Flores (18-235-1), Chris Wences (5-89-1) and Jace Blanton (4-83-1). Mitchell also is effective on the ground, led by junior running back Kaj Pittman (44-342-5), sophomore Owen Riddle (20-179-2), senior Cole Young (23169-1) and the dual-threat Cook (49-155-2).

Mitchell's only loss this season came in the season-opener versus NCISAA member Charlotte Latin, 28-14 at home.

Prediction: Mitchell.

South Caldwell (2-4, 0-1) at Freedom (3-3, 0-1)

Both the Patriots and the Spartans are in search of their first Northwestern 3A/4A Conference win as they meet up on Friday night at Morganton's Patton High School.

FHS fell 30-20 in its league opening home game to Alexander Central at Patton last week while South Caldwell lost a bitter rivalry game to Hibriten, 21-20 in double-overtime on the road in Lenoir.

Freedom leads the series, which dates back to 1977, by a 30-6 all-time margin, including a 37-30 thriller in Sawmills last season. A 37-21 victory in Morganton in 2022 means the Patriots are going for their third straight win over the Spartans following a 20-14 road loss in the fall of 2021.

Junior quarterback Kaden Davis has been effective through the air and on the ground for Freedom this season. His top receivers are Kobe Johnson, Tiras Walker, Justice Dominguez and Kaleb Pearson. FHS has used a committee at running back, including Jaiden Belin, Jaiveon Belin, Cam Brown and Andrew Leonard.

The South Caldwell offense is guided by junior Corbin McGhinnis, who has completed 31 of 58 passes for 502 yards

and two touchdowns with two interceptions. His leading receivers are seniors Carter Bly (7-103-0) and Connor Setzer (14-100-0) and juniors J.P. Smith (5-95-1) and Bryce Johnston (3-83-1). Leading the ground game are Landon Borders (69-307-6), Khian Oates (40-249-2), Kaden Loritts (31-213-2) and Bryson Genwright (33-116-3). Luke Church (8-98), McGhinnis (29-78) and Patton transfer Burke Wilson (17-46) also have one rushing TD apiece.

Prediction: Freedom.

Lincolnton (3-4, 3-1) at East Burke (1-4, 0-2)

The Cavaliers will seek their first Catawba Valley 2A Conference win of the season, following losses to Maiden and Bunker Hill, when they host the Wolves on Friday in Icard.

EBHS is 0-3 against Lincolnton all-time, with all three meetings coming since the teams joined the CVAC together ahead of the fall 2021 season. The Wolves won 35-20 in Lincolnton that season, 21-17 in Icard in 2022 and 42-14 at home last fall.

EB has done most of its damage on the ground this fall, led by ball-carriers Zayne Newman, Darren Hammons and Caden Buff. Quarterback Carter Bennett has distributed the ball to targets Barger Shook and Cannon Morrison.

The Wolves have a fairly-balanced but young attack, led by senior running back Treylen Bost (120-845-6), sophomore quarterback Rashad Lynch (54-2201), freshman Richard Lynch (25135-2) and sophomore Jalaythan Mayfield (20-122-2). Rashad Lynch has completed 49 of 80 passes for 647 yards and eight touchdowns with seven interceptions, hitting receivers junior Trashad Lineberger (11-221-2), Richard Lynch (22-204-3), Antonio Wilson (10-135-0), Bost (7-104-1) and Karson Cloninger (7-69-2).

Prediction: Lincolnton.

Justin Epley can be reached at jepley@morganton.com or sports@morganton.com.

© Copyright 2024, The News Herald, Morganton, NC

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

JUSTIN EPLEY Sports editor, 'WILDCATS RETURN', *News Herald, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45948C35E6958">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45948C35E6958</a>



## What we've witnessed

October 17, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: BRENT TOMBERLIN Columnist| Section: Archives | 847 Words OpenURL Link

As Hurricane Helene made its way up from the gulf the last week in September, I stepped outside early Friday, September 27, to meet her. The rain had already been coming down through the night, and my memory of her is the amount of wind blowing through the treetops before daybreak. She was already announcing herself in a big way. A few hours later the power went out and the rain and wind picked up. Those hours were, and remain, horrendous for many people for a lot of reasons.

Devastation comes to us in waves. Sometimes, it is physical. Sometimes, it is mental. Sometimes, it is all of that wrapped up in a horrible ball thrown unmercifully.

Yet, as during the recent pandemic, people found survival in resilience. Neighbor helps neighbor with chainsaws and generators. Private planes began ferrying supplies to flooded areas. Nurses traveled by pack mule into developed areas turned into war zones by high winds and water. Men and women worked a full shift and then donated supplies to relief centers. Churches and schools held donation drives and cooked meals. People who were without power thought not to complain as much about it because they knew there were other priorities ahead of them. Service and selflessness are on display almost everywhere. These are the great things about the country we live in and the people who make it special.

Helene brought some early memories of Hugo many years ago. People remembered the wind, the power outages, and temporary school closures. Helene also brought back the mental weight individuals endured during the Covid pandemic as people felt isolated. Some neighborhoods were dark for a few days which played on the mental health of individuals. Yet, people found their resiliency again. People have done what they always do: find places to help and pitch in.

A couple high school swim coaches in Caldwell County hopped in a vehicle and drove west to help in any way they could. Families got out their board games in a darkened house, turned on a candle or lamp, and fellowshipped together. People, even if they were angry, showed kindness first. Social media posts tried to tell the story of the devastation, shared urgent notes about missing people, included hotline information, and created opportunities to help.

Too, in the midst of dealing with the effects of an horrific storm, both vice presidential candidates conducted themselves respectfully and soberly during the only debate they will have before the election. Civility was definitely on display which encouraged a lot of people. Of course, there were the cynics who said they did not attack each other enough. Well, maybe we don't need that just now.

Helene, through the storm and in her wake, has the possibility to change a lot of things about how we live: perhaps from how we navigate roads to the way some people educate themselves and work in the near future. Yet, it cannot touch the American spirit. What is on display as this column is being written is the fantastic ability of human beings in America to help one another and to show unity.

When I dropped off supplies recently at a collection area, workers from a medical office arrived to help with the sorting and packing of materials from water to baby formula. There was no question the moment was going to be a team effort. There are too many team efforts to mention as we speak. Praise God for the work they are doing.

Americans run to the roar — no question about it. There are things to do now and there will be things to do in the future to sustain this immediate work and to help in areas which will be revealed as this recovery continues. Think about finding a place to step in and help.

Early on in this recovery, we have seen the amazing influence of private groups and organizations providing incredible help. Local, state, and federal government agencies are also bravely assisting towns and people wiped out.

Already, we are seeing that roads can be rebuilt, traffic can be rerouted, debris can be cleared, and hope in the midst of severe loss can be provided and sustained.

When rescue workers are searching for the living, rescuing animals, or recovering the dead — things which will happen in the days and weeks ahead, their effort will be a process based on their training and their will. When a family living in a shelter receives the supplies and the care they need, such will depend on Providence and the rest of us and what we can do.

There are times when people do not know when, where, and how to help. It can be easy to feel hopeful, but helpless. In these cases, we all must stay connected and work to share information.

There are things we can do, and we are up to the tasks at hand.

It is one of those miracles of humanity that, amidst the worst things which can possibly happen, the best things about people are on display. Adversity definitely reveals character.

This is our home. We will rebuild. Western North Carolina STRONG.

Copyright 2024, The News-Topic, All Rights Reserved.

### • Citation (aglc Style)

BRENT TOMBERLIN Columnist, 'What we've witnessed', *News-Topic, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45E50CC6510B0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45E50CC6510B0</a>



# USDA offers resources, adds flexibilities to disaster assistance programs

October 17, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 1204 Words OpenURL Link

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, which devastated communities, homes, farms and businesses across parts of the Southeast, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has deployed staff to assist with response and recovery efforts. USDA is also putting in place contingency plans and program flexibilities to ensure farmers, and foresters and communities are able to get the support they need. USDA is sharing information today to help impacted people learn about resources that may be available to them, according to a press release from the United States Department of Agriculture.

On Thursday, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Farm Service Agency Administrator Zach Ducheneaux traveled to Florida and Georgia with President Biden to assess damage and meet with farmers and residents in the wake of the storm. In remarks, Secretary Vilsack highlighted that USDA is taking measures like extending program signup opportunities and using waivers and emergency procedures to expedite recovery efforts on America's working lands. The department has also deployed 190 staff, including many from the U.S. Forest Service, to assist with response efforts, including removal of debris from roads, according to the press release.

"At USDA, our thoughts and prayers go out to all the families and farmers who have been impacted by this storm," said agriculture secretary Tom Vilsack. "Our job is to try to keep farms viable and operational, to help rural communities remain resilient, and at the end of the day to get as much help as quickly as possible to as many people as possible."

Here are steps USDA wants farmers to know about to ensure they can access the tools and resources that USDA offers, according to the press release.

#### How to Contact USDA

USDA has offices in virtually every county. However, some remain obstructed or without power due to the storm. Other USDA offices in affected states are stepping up to help triage and take producers' calls. The Farm Service Agency Call Center, available at 877-508-8364, can help direct producers to available staff. More program information is also farmers.gov.

Leaders with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Risk Management Agency (RMA) will hold a virtual briefing on Monday, Oct. 7 at 11 a.m. EDT for agricultural producers and stakeholders to share information on disaster assistance programs for agricultural operations. Visit farmers.gov/hurricane for details on how to join, according to the press release.

Through the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, USDA also partners with several organizations to offer mental health resources. Anyone in need of extra support in light of stressful circumstances is encouraged to contact the Southern Ag Exchange Network Farmer Support Hotline at 888-381-7243, which is available 24/7, according to the press release.

# **Expediting Crop Insurance Payments**

USDA estimates there are more than 38,000 crop insurance policies, covering more than 4.8 million acres, in place in the affected areas. USDA has instructed crop insurance companies to expedite loss adjustments that are necessary to make payments, and we expect payments to be made within 30 days. If you have Federal crop insurance, contact your crop insurance agent as soon as crop or livestock losses are apparent, according to the press release.

## Documenting and Reporting Losses

USDA reminds producers to document damages and losses, including gathering farm records, herd inventory, receipts and pictures of damages or losses. USDA advises livestock producers to document livestock numbers by taking time and date-stamped video or pictures of injury or loss, to the extent possible. USDA asks producers to report crop, livestock and farm infrastructure losses to FSA at your local USDA Service Center. Producers can call the FSA Hotline for assistance if their local Service Center is currently closed, according to the press release.

#### Flexibilities for Disaster Assistance Programs

In addition to RMA's Federal crop insurance flexibilities, FSA has added flexibilities to several programs. A full list of FSA disaster assistance programs is available on the Hurricane webpage on farmers.gov. To help expedite assistance through the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP), FSA has taken the following measures:

Extended ECP and EFRP signup that begins Oct. 15, 2024, and runs through June 1, 2025, in states affected by Hurricane Helene.

Executed Emergency Response (ER-850) authorization of emergency National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) circumstances to expedite FSA approval of practices involving surface debris removal, fence restoration and nonground disturbing activities.

Waiver of onsite inspection requirement for non-engineering practices for ECP and EFRP.

Waiver of requirement for producers to obtain prior approval to conduct surface debris removal, fence repair and hazard tree removal to support critical disaster recovery efforts. Producers should contact FSA for any questions on allowable activities. Additionally, the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides benefits to livestock owners and contract growers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by eligible loss conditions including eligible adverse weather. FSA has issued guidance to FSA County Committees and local staff to exercise maximum flexibility in determining acceptable loss documentation and to ensure LIP applications are acted on timely. Through the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP), FSA provides assistance to owners of livestock, and producers of honeybees and farm-raised fish for feed and death losses due to an eligible natural disaster event. FSA is providing assistance to help cover above normal costs to transport livestock to feed and/or transport feed/forage to livestock in hurricane-impacted states, and assistance to help cover above normal costs to haul water to livestock in hurricane-impacted states. The Tree Assistance Program (TAP) provides financial cost-share assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or, where applicable, rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines lost by natural disasters. FSA has extended assistance to trees, bushes and vines that have not died but are no longer capable of production (not economically viable). This assistance program complements the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) or federal crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases.

Under NAP, FSA has waived the 72-hour notification requirement on hand harvested crops, extended deadline to file a Notice of Loss, and provided flexibility for FSA staff to perform loss adjustment activities and/or waive field inspections in cases where the cause of loss can be verified through other means. For producers with Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL), FSA is providing additional time for producers to deliver commodities to a buyer to repay MALs with sale proceeds and postponing MAL foreclosure letters applicable to losses or damages due to hurricanes for up to 90 calendar days. A full list of FSA disaster assistance programs is available on the Hurricane webpage on farmers.gov.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) also offers recovery options for producers through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and for communities through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP). Learn more on the NRCS Disaster Recovery webpage.

#### **Nutrition Assistance**

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, at states' request, has already issued flexibilities and waivers at the for its many nutrition programs in Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, in order to help emergency meal providers reach more people quickly. USDA is ready to issue additional flexibilities upon request. More information on those recovery and assistance efforts can be found on the FNS Disaster Assistance webpage, according to the press release.

Copyright 2024, The News-Topic, All Rights Reserved.

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

STAFF REPORTS, 'USDA offers resources, adds flexibilities to disaster assistance programs', *News-Topic, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C494E80809CCE0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C494E80809CCE0</a>