

Active rescue efforts continue as EMS make way into hardest hit areas

October 1, 2024 | Enterprise, The (Martin County, NC) Author: Moss Brennan The Watauga Democrat | Section: Across Carolina | 301 Words OpenURL Link

Emergency services personnel are still focused on active rescue missions as they continue to push into some of Watauga County's hardest-hit areas.

As of Monday evening, Helene's devastating path through Watauga County has killed two people and left countless others without homes, power, and cell service.

Emergency services personnel are still actively working on rescue missions in the western part of the county. Multiple families were rescued in Zionville and Cove Creek Monday after being cut off due to flood damage, according to Watauga County Emergency Services Emergency Planner Kristi Pukansky.

"We definitely are still in an active rescue situation," Pukansky said. "We aren't even to damage assessment yet."

There is no timeline for how long rescues will take as some places have not been reached yet during house-to-house checks.

"There are still areas that we are cutting and pushing through (to get) to inaccessible areas," Pukansky said. "We really don't know until we get to the last one how long that's going to take."

Pukansky said some areas in Beaver Dam are not passable as crews continue to work to push in and create access points.

"Check on your neighbors, check on the elderly," Watauga County Fire Marshal Shane Garland said. "We're attempting to get through, but the road infrastructure is lost, and that's going to take some time, but just check on each other."

As of Monday early afternoon, 48 community members were being housed at the Holmes Convocation Center, the official Red Cross shelter during this incident. Pukansky said other places have opened up as shelters, but since the Holmes Convocation Center is the official Red Cross one, they only have numbers for that one.

WCES is continually working to push more resources into the county as agreements are implemented.

A curfew remains in place for Watauga County from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. until further notice.

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Asheville family may have lost everything in Helene

October 1, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Jacob Biba; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 507 Words Page: A6 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE, N.C. - Kuroe Gray's first step Friday morning was straight into ankle-deep water.

The high school freshman woke up around 8 a.m. to the sound of her father yelling for her to get dressed because their home was flooding. Kuroe, 14, didn't even have time to grab a pair of shoes before boarding a rescue boat, she told the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA TODAY Network.

By the time she evacuated, water was halfway up the family's front door.

Last week, Western North Carolina saw a "predecessor" rainfall event that brought up to 8 inches in many areas. And then on Thursday and Friday, the hurricane-turned-tropical-storm Helene delivered even more rain to the already swollen French Broad and Swannanoa rivers. The storm also brought high winds that knocked down trees and electrical lines across Buncombe County, leaving more than 100,000 Duke Energy customers without power that morning.

On Friday, the French Broad River in Asheville's River Arts District covered Lyman Street, flooding the greenway and partially submerging surrounding buildings. That morning, area residents stood on the bridge that spans the river, watching debris float away atop the rushing water.

At River Ridge Apartments in East Asheville, where Kuroe lives with her father, David Gray, 58, and next door to her grandmother, Sharon Gray, 83, the Swannanoa River forced the family members from their homes.

Sharon Gray told the Citizen Times the water that flooded her apartment washed away her wheelchair and walker. When the rescue crew moved her, it was so painful she thought she might die.

"I haven't walked for over a year," she said. "So, there I was, walking, actually walking so that I could get to the boat."

Her son, David, said the family lost almost everything. All he could save was the family guinea pig, Brown, his mother's cat, Ellie, and medications.

"This morning, when the water was coming up closer and closer, I was like, this looks worse than I thought," he said.

"And before you know it, I guess they opened up the dam and water started coming in."

In the early morning hours on Friday, Buncombe County ordered a mandatory evacuation from the North Fork Reservoir, where water breached the spillway, to Biltmore Village along the Swannanoa River.

Crews working in the area had conducted more than 40 swift-water rescues, according to county spokesperson Lillian Govus. Additional teams from Illinois, New Jersey and other locations in North Carolina were there to support the effort, she said.

An 82-person urban search-and-rescue team from the Federal Emergency Management Agency was also assisting with rescue efforts, the city of Asheville said in a news release. The National Guard was also providing support.

Evacuated from River Ridge, the Gray family was at Harrah's Cherokee Center, where the city set up an emergency shelter in the early morning hours.

Jacob Biba is the county watchdog reporter at the Asheville Citizen Times.

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Pest prevention crucial in aftermath of major storms

October 1, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Jim Waymer; Florida Today | Section: News | 505 Words Page: A2 OpenURL Link

A hurricane is bad enough, but who wants uninvited pests after that?

Power goes out. Floodwaters pool up.

And winds bust openings in your home for countless unwanted creepy crawly visitors. Enter the "rafting" fire ants, wily rodents and legions of other urban pests that can add stinging and/or biting insults to whatever injury a storm inflicts.

University of Florida researchers have put out some tips for how home and business owners can reduce the threat of urban pests as the floodwaters clear and we pick up whatever pieces Hurricane Helene leaves behind.

"The summer months of May through November are prime time for both storm activity and pests in Florida," said Johnalyn Gordon, a postdoctoral associate in urban entomology at the University of Florida-Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center, in a release.

Here are Gordon's go-to insights on what to look out for and how to manage pests after Helene or any tropical storm:

Flooding makes breeding grounds for mosquitoes: Several species of mosquitoes in Florida will breed in small containers of very small volumes of standing water: This includes species that spread dengue, chikungunya and Zika viruses. Tip: Before the storm, survey your property for anything that might collect rain (especially spare tires, plant pots and saucers, birdbaths and garbage cans). Dumping water out from such containers can interrupt mosquitoes' life cycle and stop them from breeding.

Flooding makes pests move: Flooding makes insects and vertebrate pests seek higher, drier ground. That means more roaches, spiders and rodents crawl indoors. Red imported fire ants will form floating "rafts." They live in colonies of tens of thousands of ants, nesting in the ground. They form flood "rafts" by interlocking their bodies and floating until they find higher ground. People encounter these ant rafts – and their nasty stings – while cleaning up flooded areas or when rafts come in contact with a structure. Rodents and other vertebrate pests also get displaced by flooding, making it more likely they'll venture indoors.

Moisture control is key: Flood-induced moisture problems in a structure also can cause future pest problems, Gordon said. Termites will readily feed on water-damaged wood. If termites are discovered, reach out to a professional pest control company as soon as possible.

Trash buildup can be a fly magnet: Post-storm trash and spoiled food buildup due to power outages can lure several different fly species, including houseflies, phorid flies and fruit flies. Tip: Put spoiled food and other organic waste in a bag and secure it tightly. Put it in a trash container with a tightly fitting lid until it can be picked up.

Prevention is the key: Post-storm pest prevention and quick action following the storm is key, Gordon said. "It's important that great care is taken if pesticides are applied and that all label directions are followed, particularly as they relate to applications near water or to rain-soaked areas," Gordon said.

• Citation (aglc Style)

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Cumberland County officials: Here's how to help people in Western NC

October 1, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Joseph Pierre, Fayetteville Observer | Section: News | 275 Words OpenURL Link

Cumberland County officials are encouraging residents of the county to help aid those affected by Hurricane Helene in western parts of the state.

Officials said in a news release Tuesday that residents should send donations to accredited organizations rather than sending physical donations or volunteers to affected areas of Western North Carolina.

More than 100 people have died across six states as a result of Hurricane Helene, according to USA Today. The article states hundreds of people have been reported missing, a number that is expected to decline as more telecommunications come back online and emergency workers access remote areas.

Residents can visit the Cumberland County storm update and resources page for updated information on how to contribute to relief efforts. The website will provide updated information on ways to financially donate and volunteer, and will list donation drop-off locations, according to the release.

The release states that roads west of Hickory are closed to all traffic except for emergency services and preapproved shipments with the Business Emergency Operations Center. All accredited organizations and businesses must coordinate with the BEOC before deploying resources or logistics, according to the release.

Officials ask those requesting supply logistics or movement to email BEOC@ncdps.gov with the subject line: Logistics Support. The following information should be listed in the email:

- * A description of what you are moving.
- * A reason for needing special access.
- * A planned date and origin of movement.
- * A movement destination.
- * An anticipated arrival time at the "border to Western North Carolina" and location.

Those interested in donating can also visit the Disaster Relief Fund page.

Public safety reporter Joseph Pierre can be reached at jpierre@gannett.com.

Related: Fayetteville first responders headed to Western North Carolina

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Joseph Pierre, Fayetteville Observer, 'Cumberland County officials: Here's how to help people in Western NC', *Fayetteville Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 1 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF1AB227834BA0>



Flooding, widespread power outages during Helene

October 1, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Diane Turbyfill; Gaston Gazette | Section: News | 305 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Gaston County saw flooding during Hurricane Helene, and much of the county was without power, but the damage was not nearly as widespread as the catastrophe Western North Carolina is facing, according to Gaston County Emergency Management.

On Monday morning, just over 8% of the county was still without electrical power, down from the 60-70% of the county that lost power during the storm, Deputy Director of Emergency Management Lance Foulk said.

At noon Monday, there were still eight roads that were closed.

"That means it could be down to one lane, or it could be impassable," Foulk said.

The most severe flooding took place in Mount Holly, where the Catawba River rose until it flooded entire neighborhoods, leaving people homeless.

Cramerton also saw more minor flooding, Foulk said.

Much of the energy in Gaston County is focused on providing aid in Western North Carolina.

The Gastonia Fire Department is sending a truck and a crew of people to the Asheville area, Gastonia Fire Chief Phil Welch said. The crew is part of a state deployment of firefighters across the state to that region, Welch said.

"It was expected. We've had deployments for most of the major hurricanes that we've had," Welch said.

The Gastonia Police Department is sending 15 volunteer officers to help with public safety in Western North Carolina.

The group is expected to be gone five to seven days, and they will help local police departments with security in that region.

"We're going to assist law enforcement in that area with whatever they need. It could be security at a bank. It could be security at gas stations," Gastonia Police spokesman Bill McGinty said.

Belmont Police Department, Gaston County Sheriff's Office, and the Mount Holly Police Department also sent officers to help, Foulk said.

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Wayne Jetport set up as Helene donation site

October 1, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Sam Dietrich| Section: Local | 442 Words OpenURL Link

The United Way of Wayne County has partnered with Wayne County and Fairwinds Aviation to collect, send and distribute donations to people in need in western North Carolina in the wake of Hurricane Helene.

The United Way is accepting donations that can be dropped off at the Wayne Executive Jetport, 240 Aviation Road in Pikeville, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day through Thursday, said Sherry Archibald, United Way of Wayne County executive director.

"Every contribution, no matter how small, makes a meaningful difference in the lives of our fellow North Carolinians." she said. "We all want to make a contribution."

The items will be flown by volunteer pilots from Wayne County to locations that remain inaccessible by road in some of the hardest hit areas as part of Operation Airdrop, Archibald said.

There is a need for a variety of essential supplies including sports drinks in powdered packets, hydration packs, baby wipes, diapers for children and adults and baby formula.

Items like bug spray, sunscreen, plastic utensils, manual can openers, trash bags (either 13-gallon or contractor size), and nonperishable food are also needed.

Other items needed are cleaning supplies, plastic sheeting or tarps, toiletries, toothbrushes, toothpaste, sanitation items, dog and cat food, hand sanitizer, sanitizer wipes, feminine hygiene products, heavy-duty work gloves and unopened socks of all sizes.

Monetary donations can also be made to the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund, which directly supports nonprofit organizations meeting the immediate needs of storm victims, with food, water, cleaning supplies and other emergency necessities.

To donate, visit nc.gov/donate. Donations can be sent by mail to N.C. Disaster Relief Fund, 20312 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, N.C., 27699-0312.

Donations can also be made online at https://nc211.org/uwhelpsnc-helene-recovery-fund/. All contributions go directly to disaster relief efforts, Archibald said.

Archibald said people should use the sources provided by Gov. Roy Cooper's office that direct to the N.C. Disaster Relief Fund, saying they are the "most reliable" places to make donations.

Wayne Community College, at 3000 Wayne Memorial Drive, is also collecting items this week until 5:30 p.m. on Thursday. Requested items include cases and gallons of water, flashlights, AA and AAA batteries, paper plates, cups, plastic utensils, non-perishable foods, diapers, baby wipes, toiletries, blankets and children's toys. The items can be dropped off in the Student Lounge in the WCC Wayne Learning Center. The items will be taken to Fairwinds Aviation for distribution.

Other businesses in Goldsboro, including U.S. Cargo Systems, at 500-A Gateway Drive, and Goldsboro Family YMCA, at 1105 Parkway Drive, are also collecting donations to aid in the recovery efforts this week, Archibald said.

"Some of them are making donations as well," she said. "It's really helpful to share the whole message to the entire

county."

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Main

October 1, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Section: Main | 483 Words

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Q: After seeing pictures and videos from western North Carolina of the damage from Hurricane Helene, how can people help? - C.C.

Answer: After last week's catastrophic damage from Hurricane/Tropical Storm Helene, the state of North Carolina has set up a way for people to donate to help in recovery efforts.

Reports say that in the Southeast more than 100 people have been killed. In Buncombe County, at least 30 people have been killed and officials say that number is likely to increase.

According to an AP story Monday, food, water, and supplies were being airlifted to the area around Asheville.

Gov. Roy Cooper asked people not to travel to or within western North Carolina to keep roads open for emergency vehicles.

Interstate 40 from Statesville to the Tennessee state line is closed, as are all roads in western North Carolina, according to the N.C. Department of Transportation.

"Our top priority is everyone's safety and well-being," said state Transportation Secretary Joey Hopkins.

"People should still consider roads in western North Carolina to be closed and avoid travel unless it is absolutely necessary. Priority must be given to all the emergency responders, utility and transportation crews, and others who are working hard to help with what will be a lengthy response and recovery effort," said NCDOT in a press release.

"Federal Emergency Management Agency officials said Monday that hundreds of roads were closed across western North Carolina and that shelters across the area were housing more than 1,000 people," the AP story said.

There are more than 50 search teams throughout the area looking for stranded people.

To help the region and the people who live there, state officials set up the N.C. Disaster Relief Fund to help those affected by the hurricane/tropical storm recover from the damage.

To donate to the N.C. Disaster Relief Fund, visit nc.gov/donate.

Donations can also be mailed to:

NC Disaster Relief Fund, 20312 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-0312.

Or you can mail a check to NC Disaster Relief Fund, c/o United Way of NC, 1130 Kildaire Farm Road, Suite 100, Cary NC 27511.

All the donations will go to disaster relief. The funds will be used by nonprofit groups helping meet the immediate needs of those affected by the storm. Those needs include food, water, cleaning supplies and other supplies.

When disasters strike the scammers aren't far behind

Sandra Hairston, the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of North Carolina, had these tips for avoiding donation fraud:

•If you get an email, instant message, text, or other type of unsolicited message seeking donations for disaster relief, check out the charities using a recognized charity information website such as charitynavigator.org, www.give.org or charitywatch.org.

Not all online charity solicitations are legitimate.

- •Don't click on any links in the message.
- •Use checks, credit or debit cards for the donation, avoid cash donations. Don't make donations out to a specific person.
- Charities don't request donations using electronic fund or wire transfers.

Email: AskSAM@wsjournal.comWrite: Ask SAM, 418 N. Marshall St., #100, Winston-Salem, NC 27101 Copyright (c) 2024 Greensboro News & Record

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WEEK 7 RANKINGS

October 1, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Author: BRYANT ROCHE Staff Reporter | Section: Life | 710 Words

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Dominant showings by top teams confirm previous rankings.

With Hurricane Helene impacting schedules, rankings are based on results through Sunday and do not account for Monday games.

1. East Forsyth (5-0, 2-0)

In Thursday's rainy conditions, the Eagles proved they could produce differently offensively when needed. They scored a season-high seven rushing touchdowns and scored touchdowns on their first seven possessions in a dominant 55-0 win over Davie County, which had scored 76 points over its last two games. East limited Davie to a season-low 104 passing yards and were the first defense to not allow a rushing touchdown to the War Eagles this season. Davie's top weapon Ethan Driver entered with an average of 154.8 receiving yards per game but was held to a miniscule 15 yards on three catches. Previous: No. 1. Next: at Mount Tabor.

2. Grimsley (5-0, 2-0)

The Whirlies had a muffed punt on Northwest Guilford's first possession, but after getting a stop, seized the momentum from there as they reached a 27-0 lead (four touchdowns) on just five offensive plays in the 47-7 victory. Northwest entered averaging 25.8 points and 8.3 points allowed per game heading in. The Whirlies pass defense held Vikings top target Rakem Hammock to just two receptions for 43 yards and forced their pass offense into a season-high three interceptions. Previous: No. 2. Next: at Western Guilford.

3. Dudley (5-0, 2-0)

Of the three top teams, the Panthers have had the easiest schedule but they've also been the most dominant. So far, they have outscored opponents 256-7, with four straight shutouts since allowing seven points to Page in week one. The offense is completing 82.6% of its passes with 13.1 yards per attempt while rushing for 10.1 yards per carry. The defense already has 102 TFLs and 37 sacks, even with all five games being mercy-rule margins. Previous: No. 3. Next: at Smith.

4. Mount Tabor (3-1, 1-0)

The Spartans are scheduled to face rival Reynolds on Monday after press time. As of this writing, since losing 34-12 to Grimsley in week one, the defense has only allowed 23 points, despite not recording any interceptions in those games. Previous: No. 4. Next: vs. East Forsyth.

5. Reidsville (5-0, 1-0)

The Rams were idle this past week, but before that, the NCHSAA 2A school defeated four teams in higher classifications, prior to a 37-0 win over North Forsyth in their Mid-State 2A Conference opener. Early-season results indicate county rival McMichael should be a tune-up game ahead of what could be a conference championship game on Oct. 11 against West Stokes. Previous: No. 5. Next: at McMichael.

6. West Forsyth (3-2, 1-1)

West's weaknesses of penalties and missed scoring opportunities in the red zone against Mount Tabor carried over against Parkland. However, in the 22-19 victory, the Titans did capitalize on a low Parkland punt snap and overcame a penalty with a 16-yard touchdown run that gave them a 22-13 lead midway through the fourth quarter. Previous: No. 6. Next: at Glenn.

7. Northern Guilford (5-0, 2-0)

The weather was bad when they played Thursday night, but even so, it feels difficult to raise them higher in the rankings as they narrowly defeated Southeast Guilford, 6-0, which lost 49-0 to Dudley and 49-7 to Grimsley. However, Kobe Guardado made the field goals when it mattered and the defense made stops. Previous: No. 7. Next: at Ragsdale.

8. Northwest Guilford (4-1, 1-1)

Grimsley and maybe even the weather exposed Northwest Guilford on Thursday. Overall, they and Grimsley are who we thought they were. Am I letting them off the hook? Previous: No. 8. Next: vs. Page.

9. High Point Christian (5-0, 1-0)

Didn't play their originally scheduled game against Harrells Christian, so they got an unexpected by eweek ahead of South Wake. Previous: No. 9. Next: vs. South Wake.

10. Oak Grove (4-1, 0-0)

The Grizzlies begin conference play after having an idle week. Their results have largely demonstrated a strong defense, with opponents only scoring 33 combined points on them. Meanwhile, only West has shut down their normally good ground game and their passing attack has an effective 69% completion rate. Previous: No. 10. Next: at Asheboro.

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Main

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NC Flooding

Winston-Salem and Greensboro law enforcement officers and first responders have been mobilized to assist with rescue and public safety efforts in parts of western North Carolina flooded by the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

During Monday's Dogwood awards ceremony that honored several Triad public-safety officials, departments and educators, Attorney General Josh Stein shared the deployment efforts and the potential for Winston-Salem and Statesville to play key supply chain distribution channels.

Firefighters from both cities already are assisting in the region, along with 36 Greensboro Police Department personnel. Winston-Salem Police Department personnel is being deployed this weekend.

Stein said among the local efforts includes the Guilford County 911 response system providing assistance to the region.

"They are lending support to their overburdened and over-demanded colleagues, keeping people safe in a treacherous time," Stein said. "The loss of life and property have been devastating, and it will be a long while before we'll be able to understand its full extent. We know (the damage) will be without precedent in western North Carolina.

"There are desperate people in the region, and we need to move to get to them the supplies they need for their daily living and to recovery."

Stein, the 2024 Democratic nominee for governor, said whoever is the next governor will be challenged to help secure the state and federal funds necessary to rebuild western N.C. for several years.

"We're going to have to step up as a state in a meaningful way, and get the federal government to step up," Stein said. "We'll need to administer those dollars as efficiently as we possibly can, so that folks can get back on with their lives."

Stein said it's too early to determine whether western N.C. will experience a population exodus - at least temporarily - similar to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

While acknowledging the Triad could gain population from such an exodus, "our hope is that everyone who wants to stay in western North Carolina post-recovery can do so."

Dogwood awards

The annual Dogwood awards are presented by the state attorney general "to honor North Carolinians who are dedicated to keeping people safe, healthy and happy in communities across our state."

"Today's recipients epitomize the Dogwood awards," Stein said. "They devote their time and talents to help keep the Triad and North Carolina safer, stronger, happier and healthier. They shape and guide our children's education. They provide treatment to people who are struggling, and they deliver justice to North Carolinians." The Winston-Salem Police Department and Police Chief William Penn were honored for their efforts in completing the testing of 900 older untested sexual assault kits.

"The Winston-Salem Police Department has worked tirelessly on behalf of victims and survivors of sexual assault," Stein said.

Stein said the department's efforts "helped the state officially end the backlog of sexual assault kits in April."

"Law enforcement is sending a clear message in North Carolina: we will never give up on cold cases."

Greensboro Police Chief John Thompson was honored for his efforts in recruiting and retaining "public-spirited law enforcement officers," Stein said.

The B.E.A.R (Behavioral Evaluation and Response) team of Winston-Salem Fire Department was recognized for its trained crisis counselors' efforts with people experiencing drug addiction and mental health crises.

The Reidsville Police Department was honored for its efforts in making "a huge fentanyl bust to help get this dangerous drug off our streets and protect their community," Stein said.

"The fentanyl crisis continues to devastate North Carolina, but officers at the Reidsville Police Department are attacking the issue head-on."

Also honored were: Will Marrs, a career and technical education teacher at Davie County High School; Donna Bledsoe, principal of Cedar Ridge Elementary School in Lowgap; and retired N.C. Rep. John Faircloth, R-Guilford, for his legislative efforts involving law enforcement.

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Triad pilots ferry aid

October 1, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Author: SUSIE C. SPEAR Staff Reporter | Section: Main | 814 Words

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To help in the pilots' relief effort:

*In Greensboro, drop off donations at Signature Aviation, Inc. at 1060 PTI Drive in Greensboro, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily this week.

*In Statesville, drop off supplies at Statesville Regional Airport at 238 Airport Road, from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. daily this week.

Triad area pilots are full throttle, joining pilots from across he state to create a makeshift air force for ferrying aid to the N.C. mountains and bordering Tennessee counties devastated by Hurricane Helene.

In Greensboro, 14 pilots, mostly owners of single-engine aircraft, were taxiing in at Signature Flight Services at Piedmont Triad International Airport on Monday to load up with water, non-perishable food and other vital supplies.

With interstates and major roads leading to the devastated area closed, the only practical way to deliver essentials to tens of thousands is by air, at least for now, according to emergency management officials.

Flight instructor Chad Courtney said, "I'm getting calls by the hour from people wanting to help," he said. "I just heard from pilots coming in from Rockingham County and someone coming in from Roanoke."

Courtney, 38, of Greensboro, said his goal is to dispatch the planes, loaded with water, diapers, baby formula, water filtration systems, and more to at least six mountain locations.

They include: Spruce Pine, Andrews, Sylva and Asheville, all in N.C., as well as Mountain City, and Elizabethton, both in bordering Tenn.

The pilots, many of whom have taken time off from full-time jobs to deliver relief, are also tasked with doing some "old school" navigating and forecasting in post-storm conditions, Courtney said.

Many mountain airports are without power and the ability to relay weather information to pilots as usual. And mountain flying requires a good knowledge of cloud cover, especially clouds that may be low-lying, pilots explained.

"We're relying on sites like aviationweather.com" and calculating weather through graphic forecast analysis, a more analog method, said Courtney, who got his wings in 2012.

Bottled water has presented a challenge to pilots of small craft because of its weightiness. Water is also selling out at many major outlets, so Courtney recommends donations of Sawyer, Lifestraw and Geopress water-filtration systems, tools that can insure potable water for folks for weeks.

His fellow aviators' willingness to help has been impressive, Courtney said.

"It tells me we are a really strong community of aviators who really care. It's a chance for us to see that our skills are not just for fun or career, but that they can really have an impact, "Courtney said.

"It's been a real blessing for us to have this opportunity, the experience of helping other people.

Scott Stanley is one of the pilots in this extraordinary fleet, a band of pilots who make trip after trip, touching down just long enough to offload.

Stanley has flown two runs so far - one to Rutherfordton and another to Macon County, south of Asheville.

Flying on Monday presented challenges from low-lying, vision-obscuring clouds in the mountains, said Stanley, a retired High Point firefighter.

"Hundreds of flights are happening. There are so many people wanting to help," said Stanley, 46, who cranks up a Beechcraft Bonanza.

On Monday, he was heartened to see "it did seem a lot of water was finally receding."

In Statesville, Erica Zangwill, president of the Carolina Aviators Network, a 5,300-member group of North Carolina and South Carolina aviators, watched a long ribbon of cars queue up with donations to offload.

Those thousands of pounds of goods will be loaded on to some 60 planes her members have prepared to fly all over Western North Carolina, said Zangwill, a pilot since 2019.

"We have a number of folks driving in and flying in from Greensboro and all over the Triad," said Zangwill, headquartered at Statesville Regional Airport, collecting donations.

Her groups' pilots are managing to slip into heavily damaged areas where real runways are not available by using "stol" tires, designed to land and take off on very short, back-country airstrips.

"Helicopters are having the best luck getting into the areas that are most devastated by the hurricane," she said.

Supplies most needed by her volunteers include: diapers, chainsaw chains, 2 stroke oil, bar oil, 1¼ gallon empty gas tanks, baby formula, water, hydration packs in powder form, sports drinks, and non-perishable foods.

"It has been so humbling and eye-opening to see the community come together like it has," Zangwill said.

"It has been incredibly stressful and chaotic, but I'm looking at a long line of people delivering these donations and you can just tell they are simultaneously exhausted, but also so full of a sense of pride for helping."

For Kevin Baker, executive director of PTI, efforts by area pilots are inspiring. Baker said Monday he is coordinating with airports across the state to render assistance to the mostly-crippled Asheville Regional Airport.

"I just got off the phone with 25 other airport directors - talking about what we can do to help Asheville. It's been bad, but the cavalry is coming."

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Where to donate, volunteer if you wish to help NC in Hurricane Helene aftermath

October 1, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Julia Coin; Staff Writer | Section: News | 677 Words

Page: 4A OpenURL Link

In Western North Carolina, many are dead, missing and cut off from the outside world - and help - in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

The Category 4 hurricane made landfall in northern Florida and was still a raging tropical storm when it passed over the Carolinas. The storm flooded North Carolina towns, wiped neighborhoods away and killed at least 11 across the state.

President Joe Biden Saturday approved Gov. Roy Cooper's request for FEMA help in 25 counties, and federal aid flocked to Asheville and Charlotte Sunday. Crews set up base camps, waiting for some of the 280 closed roads to reopen, as Red Cross planes and helicopters searched for people stranded in the towns near the Appalachian Mountains, said American Red Cross Vice President of Disaster Response Jennifer Pipa Sunday.

Floods severed towns from nearby roads, and emergency services struggled to reach those suffering without using aircraft.

How to help people affected by Helene

If your organization would like to be added to this list, please email news@charlotteobserver.com with the subject line "How to Help NC."

"Cash is best," according to FEMA's website. It's the most effective, flexible way to aid organizations. FEMA recommends donating to verified organizations directing money to on-the-ground groups that know what communities need. A list of organizations can be found on the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster website. Those same organizations accept volunteers, too.

FEMA cautions people to not self deploy to affected areas - especially any still-flooded areas.

Hurricane Helene GoFundMe

GoFundMe, a crowdfunding platform that allows individuals to create their own fundraisers, launched a Hurricane Helene Relief page with verified fundraisers Friday. As of Sunday, it had nearly 400 fundraisers on the verified landing page.

In Charlotte, a tree struck down during Helene fell onto a Hoskins home and killed a man inside. That man, according to a GoFundMe page set up by his nephew, was Anthony "Tony" Taylor. His wife and four children survived, but he did not.

Neighbors said half the tree fell onto another home months before. It should have been cut down already, they said.

"For some time, we had been trying to get the tree removed, but since it wasn't on our property, there was little we could do," wrote Taylor's nephew, Stephen Taylor, in the post.

Also in Charlotte, a group of pilots is asking for money to help air-drop supplies to those in communities surrounded now by water instead of roads.

"We believe that small aircraft can deploy resources faster because we don't need to wait for roads to be cleared. We'll use funds to purchase supplies like nonperishable foods, hygiene items, and baby supplies," wrote Benjamin Spells.

In Swannanoa, host to some of the state's worst flood scenes, a couple and their children - ages 2 and 7 - took refuge in their attic as orange floodwaters moved sludge and debris through their neighborhood. The Zara Family last frantically called family at 11 a.m. Friday, after hours without contact. A neighbor with a kayak rescued them and their home was destroyed.

Jessica Allred, the wife's sister, is asking for funds to help The Zara Family. Hundreds of more families with harrowing stories are listed on GoFundMe.

American Red Cross of North Carolina

The Red Cross sent 745 responders across North Carolina and facilitated more than 500 storm rescues. People can volunteer with the American Red Cross or donate blood to help treat those injured in the storm.

Text Helene to 90999 make a donation, or visit the organization's website here.

United Way

United Way, a nonprofit that runs a 2-1-1 hotline connecting people to relief resources, accepts donations for short-term and continued relief efforts. United Way's Helene recovery fund aims to help "meet the critical needs of those impacted" as residents and officials navigate life-threatening conditions.

Local chapters are listed on the organization's website.

Americares

Americares, a global health-focused nonprofit, set up a donation page to address medical needs in areas affected by Helene.

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Biden says over 100 dead, - 600 people unaccounted for in Hurricane Helene devastation

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Author: Michael Wilner; Staff Writer | Section: News | 563 Words

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WASHINGTON At least 100 people have died and over 600 are unaccounted for across 10 states devastated by Hurricane Helene over the weekend, President Joe Biden said Monday, vowing to deploy the federal resources necessary for "as long as it takes" to help communities recover.

Inland Appalachian communities with little experience dealing with hurricane conditions faced a perfect storm in Helene, which barreled through the Gulf of Mexico and Florida's Big Bend with enough speed, breadth and intensity to bring devastation deep into the Southeast.

Biden said that over 3,600 personnel had already deployed to the region, including officials from FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers, to help restore cell service as quickly as possible, hopeful that many of those who remain unaccounted for are still alive. The number of federal personnel is expected to increase in the coming days.

"I've directed my team to provide every, every available resource as fast as possible to your communities to rescue, recover, and to begin rebuilding," Biden said.

READ MORE: 'Apocalyptic' damage: Helene kills at least 30 in Western NC, severs power, water, roads

"This is an historic storm. It's devastating. They've never seen anything like this before," he added.

Towns in western North Carolina, southern Georgia and rural Kentucky are still faced with flooding from the storm, forcing FEMA and the Defense Department to airlift supplies like meals, fresh water and tarps to those hardest hit. Power is still down in many communities that, because of the damage, remain largely inaccessible and practically isolated.

RELATED CONTENT: A new storm could form in the Caribbean this week. Florida should watch it

The crisis has prompted an all-of-government response from the Biden administration. On Monday, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas canceled planned travel to Mexico to focus on the emergency response.

FEMA officials have said that rainfall totals in North Carolina, in particular, were "absolutely extreme" and exceeded expectations. The Department of Health and Human Services has declared a public health emergency throughout much of the Southeast warning of threats to the region's water systems.

READ MORE: Hurricane Helene left thousands without power in Kentucky. How long until it's back on?

Biden said he spent hours on Sunday speaking with local leaders, including Republican Gov. Brian Kemp of Georgia, Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper of North Carolina, and local officials in affected regions of Florida, South Carolina and Tennessee.

"I want them to know: We're not leaving until the job is done," Biden said.

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida, where the storm first made landfall, told reporters at a news conference on Monday that he missed a call from Biden while he was on a plane Sunday. He did not say whether he attempted to call the president back.

For now, Florida has the situation "handled," DeSantis said, encouraging federal officials to direct resources to North Carolina.

Former President Donald Trump, who is running again for the presidency this year, has criticized the federal response and attempted to tie his Democratic rival, Vice President Kamala Harris, to the fallout in battleground states.

The former president plans to visit Valdosta, Georgia, on Monday, to survey the damage. Biden said he expects to visit North Carolina in the coming days.

Miami Herald reporter Ana Ceballos contributed reporting.

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF28B7E246A0B0>



Pair defy Helene - in NC mountain wedding in Lake Lure

October 1, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Martha Quillin; Staff Writer Section: News 478 Words

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Hurricane Helene whittled down the guest list by more than half. Her father couldn't get there to give the bride away. And the caterer and photographer were shut out by downed trees and power lines and submerged highways.

But the love between Sereyna Bianchi and Gavin Walker was deeper than any floodwaters, so the pair stood before 45 of their most intrepid friends Saturday night to promise it would last forever.

The wedding at The 1927 Lake Lure Inn was both a demonstration of the kind of flexibility marriage requires and a desperately needed bit of joy in the face of a natural disaster.

"It never really occurred to me we would not do it," said Bianchi, a graphic designer and project manager in Raleigh.

The remnants of Helene caused historic devastation across Western North Carolina. It killed at least 30 people in Buncombe County alone, the sheriff there announced Sunday.

Lake Lure and its close neighbor Chimney Rock were hit by a powerful flood Friday as Helene's rains filled the Broad River to overflowing. In Chimney Rock, the river went crashing down Main Street, sweeping away the pavement and more than half of the buildings that lined it, along with houses, cars and infrastructure. Much of that came to rest at the top of Lake Lure or against or on top of the bridge over the Broad that connects the two communities.

The wedding couple's original wedding venue, Morse Park, was obliterated by the flood. No problem; Bianchi simply moved it to a grassy area beside the pool at the inn.

No caterer? No servers? No worries. Bianchi's family rallied. A cousin who's a chef toured the inn's pantry and coolers and, with the innkeepers' blessings, put together a perfect reception dinner of prime rib.

Bianchi, a devoted do-it-yourselfer, had brought with her a van full of decor to create a "Great Gatsby" theme, with Art Deco gilded mirrors and floating candles on the tables. The hotel, built just before the Great Depression, provided the perfect backdrop.

Sara Walling, Bianchi's aunt, said her niece was the opposite of the petulant bride who pouts when her best-laid plans go awry.

"She had been planning this for a year, down to the last detail," Walling said. "Then this storm comes along, and that's all out the window."

During the reception, the bridal party crossed the muddy parking lot of the inn to take photos with the lake behind them. Just then, several trucks carrying uniformed troops from the N.C. National Guard rolled up, finished for the day, and stopped to wish the happy couple well.

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Much of western NC still without power, roads - mostly 'impassable'

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Author: Renee Umsted; Staff Writer | Section: News | 823 Words

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Helene passed through North Carolina on Friday, Sept. 27, bringing heavy rains and strong winds that flooded parts of the state.

Days after the storm, which made landfall in Florida on Thursday, Sept. 27 as a Category 4 hurricane, many communities in western North Carolina are dealing with the aftermath.

Hundreds of thousands of Duke Energy customers in western North Carolina and South Carolina were still without power as of Sunday, Sept. 29, the company said in a press release. Meanwhile, several highways were washed out or destroyed by the storm.

As electric companies, power plants and emergency personnel continue with recovery efforts, here's what you need to know on Monday, Sept. 30.

How many people are still without power in western NC?

While Duke Energy has restored power to more than 1.1 million customers affected by the storm in the Carolinas, there are still nearly as many who are without power.

As of 6 p.m. Sept. 29, around 508,000 people in South Carolina and 396,000 in North Carolina - mostly in the western regions of each state - still lacked power.

Use Duke Energy's map to track outages.

When will power be restored in western NC?

"Based on what we can see on the ground, from helicopter and by drone, there are lots of areas across the South Carolina Upstate and North Carolina mountains where we're going to have to completely rebuild parts of our system, not just repair it," Jason Hollifield, Duke Energy storm director for the Carolinas, said in a Sept. 29 press release. "And there are stretches of damage that we still can't even assess due to mudslides, flooding and blocked roads."

Helene damaged Duke Energy's infrastructure, submerging substations and toppling utility poles and transmission towers.

Restoring power to the hardest-hit areas could take "several days or longer," according to the press release. Duke Energy restores power first to public health and safety facilities, but it also considers how to restore service to the greatest number of customers.

The company can't restore power to homes or businesses that have been flooded until the electrical system passes inspection by an electrician.

Which roads are closed in western NC?

The North Carolina Department of Transportation said all roads in western North Carolina should be considered closed, and "non-emergency travel is prohibited," The News & Observer previously reported.

Parts ofInterstate 40 are "impassable," according to NCDOT.

Near the Tennessee border, Interstate 40 has been washed out, and Interstate 26 is closed.

All of US 276 and US 64 are closed in Transylvania County, according to NCDOT.

Two bridges leading to Burnsville, a town in Yancey County northeast of Asheville, have been damaged, former N.C. Supreme Court Justice Bob Orr shared on X.

NC towns and cities destroyed by flooding

- * Roads and buildings in the village of Chimney Rock were swept away by the flooding, a resident captured in a video.
- * Many businesses in Asheville's River Arts District, a popular cultural hub, were destroyed by the flooding, according to the Asheville Citizen-Times.
- * The Old Marshall Jail Hotel in Marshall regained internet access on Sept. 29 and shared an update on the situation in the town. "We are safe but the town of Marshall is destroyed," the hotel wrote in an Instagram post. "Whole buildings are gone. All the businesses are destroyed."
- * Southeast of Asheville, the Lake Lure Dam nearly failed, the National Weather Service shared on X around 11 a.m. Sept. 27. Water crested the dam, but Josh Kastrinsky, a spokesperson for the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality, said it continued to hold despite structural damage, The Charlotte Observer previously reported.

Lake Lure Dam is now stable, and emergency repairs are set to begin, The N&O reported.

Recovery efforts from Red Cross, NC National Guard

As of the evening of Sept. 29, there were more than 30 shelters with more than 1,000 people looking for refuge in the Carolinas, according to a Red Cross press release, and the organization is working to increase its shelter footprint.

Along with providing refuge, the Red Cross is also increasing its mass care services such as food, health and mental health care, and relief supplies.

Around 550 North Carolina National Guard members have been deployed to help with recovery efforts, along with more than 100 vehicles and 11 aircraft, according to a press release Sept. 29 from the office of Gov. Roy Cooper.

On Sept. 28, President

Joe Biden approved a "major disaster" declaration for North Carolina, which will allow the Federal Emergency Management Agency to supply additional help quicker to people who need it. Federal funding is available to more than two dozen counties along with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Death toll from Helene continues to rise

At least 30 people in North Carolina's Buncombe County have died as a result of Helene, Sheriff Quentin Miller said in a press briefing Sept. 29.

Overall, at least 107 people in six states have died, AP News reported around 11 a.m. Sept. 30.

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'There's just nothing left.' Helene wipes - out Chimney Rock's Main Street

October 1, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Martha Quillin; Staff Writer | Section: News | 888 Words Page: 2A OpenURL Link

CHIMNEY ROCK For a while on Friday morning, it looked as if Chimney Rock and Lake Lure had been spared the worst of Hurricane Helene.

And then worse than the worst happened, as a wall of water came rushing down the Broad River, wiping out most of the structures along Main Street - and Main Street itself - in the Village of Chimney Rock, and straining the dam that holds back Lake Lure.

"I've never seen concentrated damage like we've seen here," said Chris Murray, an emergency manager in Pamlico County who came to help lead teams of rescuers as soon as Rutherford County could send an S.O.S. "There's nothing left."

"The village? There's just nothing left."

'Not so bad' at first

For a couple of days, the wreckage left the two communities as isolated as they were a century ago.

Townspeople and visitors awoke Friday morning after a restless night to more of what they had seen the day before: tree branches falling in heavy rain and wind as the remains of what became Tropical Storm Helene cut through Western North Carolina. Power had been out since Thursday.

Tracy Stevens had left her house in Chimney Rock Thursday night and gotten a room at the Lake Lure Inn, which had a generator and was staying open through the storm. The two towns, both popular tourist destinations, are walking distance to one another, joined by a bridge across the Broad River in the mountains of Rutherford County.

"I got up around 7 and went down to the lobby and got a cup of coffee," Stevens said. "I was looking at the lake out the window of the inn, and I thought, Is that all? OK. This is not so bad."

But when she checked again, it looked like the lake had risen. The next time she looked, she was sure the water was coming up. And by 8:30 a.m., it was several feet higher, nearly covering the door of a small building next to the lake.

The National Weather Service reported that in some places just west of the two communities, more than 19 inches of rain fell. And it kept falling, down the mountainsides and into the creeks and rivers.

Broad River rises

No official source has said yet how deep the water rose in the Broad River, normally so tame that bars and restaurants on that side of Main Street in Chimney Rock serve drinks and meals on patios overlooking the stream.

Some of those buildings had stood since at least the 1950s. A few had gotten wet during historic floods such as one that followed a pair of hurricanes in 1996, "but this is 10 times worse," said Patrick Bryant, a Lake Lure town commissioner who lives in Chimney Rock.

"This is Katrina-level damage," Murray said.

With the help of teams from many other North Carolina counties and some from outside the state, Murray said rescuers had fetched more than 150 people by sundown Saturday who had been stranded by the rushing water.

As the water plowed through, it carried the buildings and their contents with it, slamming all that material against the concrete bridge between Chimney Rock and Lake Lure with such force that it exploded refrigerators and trees.

It took a day of heavy equipment and chainsaw work to make one lane of the bridge passable to emergency vehicles and residents who wanted to leave Chimney Rock.

Meanwhile, water completely took out another bridge across the Broad River, this one to Chimney Rock State Park. The park was closed.

Wall of water

On Lake Lure, the water relocated the marina docks and all the boats that had been moored on them. Sunday, the boats seemed to sit on top of a spilled box of toothpicks, some of the remains of the structures swept in from Chimney Rock.

Search-and-rescue teams Sunday were reaching more remote places, and were still finding survivors, including one woman and her dog who appeared to have been pulled from a collapsed home on the riverbank.

Officials have not said whether there were deaths or if anyone still was missing by midday Sunday. Across Western North Carolina, at least 30 people were reported dead and that number was likely to climb, Gov. Roy Cooper said.

While rescuers looked for people, the N.C. National Guard and local chainsaw-wielding volunteers began cutting trees to allow people to leave their homes and neighborhoods. Power was expected to be out in Chimney Rock and Lake Lure for several days at least, but with trees cleared to open at least one lane, residents whose cars weren't too damaged to drive began making their way out.

Word spread quickly about spots outside of Lake Lure where there might be a cellphone signal, and people congregated in those, calling relieved relatives or reaching out to insurance adjusters with bad news.

Nick Stamper, who lives in Green River Cove, a few miles from Chimney Rock and Lake Lure, had to make some difficult phone calls Saturday night. His house was moved several feet off its foundation by what he estimated was a 20-foot wall of water that came down the Green River, normally more than 100 yards from his house.

He counted 13 other homes that disappeared in the flood.

"Washed completely away," he said. "Just, gone."

He was calling the owners to let them know.

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NCDOT says all roads - in Western NC should be considered closed, even the big ones

October 1, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Richard Stradling; Staff Writer| Section: News| 373 Words Page: 4A OpenURL Link

If you're thinking of traveling to or through Western North Carolina in the coming days, better think again.

The N.C. Department of Transportation repeated Monday that all roads in the region should be considered closed and that "non-emergency travel is prohibited." Torrential rain from Hurricane Helene flooded many roads and washed out others. Landslides and downed trees and wires were also blocking the way.

"Motorists should not travel in this area, should not attempt to drive through standing water, and must respect barricades and road closure signs," NCDOT wrote on its travel advisory website, drivenc.gov.

It's not just local roads or city streets that are overwhelmed. Interstates 40 and 26 remain closed in several places near Asheville and the Tennessee line, and NCDOT says some stretches of interstates may not reopen until sometime Tuesday, if then.

Interstate 40 is closed in both directions near the Tennessee line after the eastbound lanes of I-40 washed into the Pigeon River Gorge. NCDOT spokesman Jamie Kritzer says it's not clear how long repairs there could take.

An alternative route, I-26, is also closed in Tennessee, between Exit 37 (TN 107) and Exit 43 (U.S. 19W). NCDOT says it's likely to remain that way a while.

Westbound I-40 is closed west of Statesville to all but emergency traffic.

NCDOT was able to reopen I-26 south of Asheville over the weekend, providing the first major access to the city since the storm.

"But we want people to avoid unnessary travel," Kritzer said. "We need an opportunity to have those roads, any roads, open to emergency response, and that includes utilities and the countless volunteers who are trying to get food, water and necessary supplies to people who may be stranded."

NCDOT usually tracks and lists all closed roads and highways on its travel advisory website, drivenc.gov. On Monday, it said about 240 roads remained impassable in places but offered this caveat: "There are many closed roads that are not listed on this site as many areas are not able to report at this time."

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Reasonable expectations - Major college football in North Carolina is in a rough state

October 1, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Andrew Carter; Staff Writer | Section: Sports | 2092 Words

Page: 1B OpenURL Link

Anyone who's a fan of a North Carolina college football team had to have a couple of thoughts Saturday night, if they were watching the Alabama-Georgia game. And it's not hard to imagine what those thoughts were.

Thought No. 1: Wow - this is an incredible college football game.

Thought No. 2: The team I root for (North Carolina, N.C. State, Duke, Wake Forest, ECU, etc., etc., etc.) has no shot, ever, of competing at this level.

And you know what? It's true, on both counts.

Indeed, the Crimson Tide's victory made for incredible theater. Alabama raced out to a huge lead. Georgia came back and took a late lead, itself. The Tide went back ahead on a dramatic touchdown pass and reception that will be replayed forever. Georgia threatened. Alabama held on.

Amazing. What a game. Big-time college football at its best.

But also: something of a reality check, if your rooting interests lie with any school in North Carolina (or, really, if your rooting interests lie with a lot of schools that aren't, say, among the half dozen or so with a real chance of competing for a national championship in any given year).

As great as the Alabama-Georgia game was, it also underscored the truth that a select few schools, at the very top, are simply playing a different sport than everyone else. The version of college football those teams played in Tuscaloosa was not the same as, say ... what UNC and Duke offered in Durham earlier in the day. Or what N.C. State and Northern Illinois offered in Raleigh.

Or Wake Forest-Louisiana. Or ECU-UTSA.

And the list goes on.

And yes, college football has always been this way, to a degree, with a few teams at the very top of the sport separating themselves. Miami of the 1980s. Florida State of the 1990s. Those Urban Meyer-led Florida teams of the mid-to-late 2000s. A lot of Nick Saban's Alabama teams. Clemson, at its peak, in the not-so distant past.

But doesn't it feel like the best teams are somehow even better than they used to be, relative to the rest of the sport? Doesn't it feel like the gap is somehow widening between the UNCs and N.C. States of college football, and those schools at the very top? Shoot, the Wolfpack thought it had put together a team capable of competing with the best of the best this season - and then lost by 41 against Tennessee, before suffering a similarly lopsided defeat at Clemson.

The question has to be what is the reasonable hope for a lot of schools playing FBS college football, because competing nationally at the highest level is out of the realm for the vast majority of them. It's just never going to happen for about 90% of these teams, and that might even be a generous estimate of the schools capable of reaching that level.

A lot of the focus these days among fans and media is on that widening revenue gap, attributable to television

money, between the Big Ten and SEC and everyone else. And undoubtedly, it's significant. It's why Florida State and Clemson are trying to sue their way out of the ACC. But here's another truth, too: No amount of TV revenue is transforming a lot of these schools into some kind of football power.

UNC, which surrendered a 20-0 lead against Duke on Saturday, hasn't won the ACC since 1980. N.C. State hasn't won it since 1979. It does not look like that drought will end this season. Duke hasn't won it since 1989, when the Blue Devils finished in a tie with Virginia. Wake Forest last won it in 2006, which is downright recent compared to the rest of the ACC schools in this state.

But for different reasons, none of these schools really has all that much of a chance of ever reaching the sort of level we witnessed in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, on Saturday night. And that's perfectly OK. But in this football-mad era, in which school and conference administrators and practically everyone else seems to be going all-in on prioritizing the sport, it begs the question of why schools are throwing tons of money at something that's ultimately a losing enterprise (or, at least an enterprise that is going to end up causing a lot of frustration, the vast majority of the time).

And also, on a similar note: At what point do fans stop propping up a sport - through television viewership, booster contributions, NIL donations, buying tickets and everything else - that is so exclusive, and growing more so? The few schools at the very top of college football are simply playing a different game. And it can be wildly entertaining and compelling, as Alabama and Georgia proved. But it's a different game, nonetheless, and the gap between them and everyone else is only growing.

If the goal of college football is to become a two-conference version of the NFL then, well, good luck with that. Such a thing just doesn't seem sustainable. Part of the sport's draw has always been that your school - any school - might just have a shot at glory, regardless of how much of an illusion that's always been. But now, it's growing more and more impossible to believe that illusion. And the people running the sport seem to want it to become even more geared toward the elites.

ONE BIG THING

Meanwhile, the Blue Devils are partying like it's 1994 again. Bring back those puffy Starter jackets. The Zubaz pants. Call your friends on their home telephones, and ask whomever picks up if Johnny is there, because you've got some news to share: Duke is 5-0, with victory No. 5 coming in dramatic, come-from-behind fashion Saturday against UNC.

Indeed, this is the first time Duke has won its first five games since '94. Last time it happened, 30 years ago, Fred Goldsmith was head coach. Manny Diaz, Duke's current head coach, was a 20-year-old college student at Florida State. The schedule toughens from here, but the Blue Devils are owed their due, especially after that gutsy rally against a rival on Saturday.

THREE TO LIKE

1. The aforementioned Blue Devils, showing some grit.

An understandable thought manifested early Saturday evening at Wallace Wade Stadium, while Duke dug itself into a 20-point hole against the Tar Heels. That thought: Well, looks like Duke's first four wins came against some pretty suspect teams. And that's probably true. Nonetheless, the Blue Devils came alive over the final quarter and a half, and rallied for a memorable 21-20 victory. The Victory Bell is back in Durham for the first time since 2018, and it's a darker shade of blue.

2. Salty Dave is back.

Is there a coach anywhere who likes poking his fans more than N.C. State's Dave Doeren? It has to be something of a bit these days, with Doeren leaning into character. And, in fairness, he showed some modesty after those lopsided

losses against Tennessee and Clemson. But after something of an uninspired victory against Northern Illinois Saturday, there he was, with a classic Dave-ism: "Don't be mad about winning," he said. And you know what: He's actually right. Would you have rather lost, State fans?

3. The vibe of Duke's "Devil's Deck."

For a lot of folks around here (me included), Saturday offered a first-look, of sorts, for Duke's new fan-centric "Devil's Deck" - a space for spectators to gather, hang out, eat, drink, play cornhole and occasionally maybe even watch the game going on down on the field. The space replaced what normally had been swaths of empty or lightly-filled seats. The deck works. It looks fun. It adds to the environment. More and more schools will likely be adding amenities like it. This is the future.

THREE TO ... NOT LIKE AS MUCH

1. A meltdown of a different kind for UNC.

The debacle at home against James Madison was bad. Historically so. Blowing a 20-point second-half lead at Duke on Saturday somehow felt worse for the Tar Heels. Mack Brown is arguably the best coach in school history. He has done a lot for UNC. He brought stability and hope when he returned in late 2018. But the trends are not good here, and fair or not it's looking more and more like his second tenure at UNC will not end well.

2. Florida State: an ACC embarrassment.

So, to recap: The Seminoles are attempting to sue their way out of a conference its administration and fans claim to be beneath them, but now FSU is 1-4 after a 42-16 loss against SMU? Got it. There's some kind of irony here, or at least a hilarious juxtaposition: FSU is trying to leave the ACC because it thinks it deserves more money. SMU, meanwhile, agreed to take no share of conference revenue for seven years, just to be a part of the ACC. Maybe FSU should try asking for less.

3. Maybe Clemson shouldn't have played that game.

The first season of this new coast-to-coast ACC has actually gone better than anticipated. Cal has been an entertaining and good fit. SMU is proving worthy. But this weekend underscored the challenges of this cumbersome arrangement. For one thing, Stanford had a heck of time making it to Clemson, given the catastrophic effects of the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

But more than that, maybe Clemson shouldn't have played that game, anyway, with so many nearby communities under water, and devastated. It wasn't about whether the game could be played, remember - but about how many resources (in public safety, especially) hosting a game requires, that could have been diverted to places in need.

THIS WEEK'S BEST PROGRAM IN THE STATE

Look, this category is an inside joke about the uproar that resulted a couple of years ago when I wrote that Appalachian State had the best college football program in the state - but it's not going to work anymore if only one team (Duke) is actually worth mentioning. And yet ... that's what continues to happen. UNC can't get out of its own way. N.C. State has, um, not looked all that great. Wake Forest is going through it. ECU and App State and Charlotte are not standing out.

So Duke it is, again. Can anyone else in North Carolina rise to the occasion? (And yes, we see you, Pirates, with the nice victory against UTSA on Saturday.)

CAROLINAS RANKING

1. Clemson (don't look now, but the Tigers have done nothing but blow people out since that Week 1 loss against

Georgia); 2. South Carolina (can't win during an off week but, even better - can't lose, either); 3. Duke (can the Blue Devils match that 7-0 start from '94); 4. N.C. State (maybe? Sure.); 5-9. Some combination, in any order, of UNC, Wake Forest, ECU, Coastal Carolina and App State, which has a lot more important things going on than football.

10. Charlotte (but the 49ers did get a nice win at historic Rice Stadium on Saturday).

FINAL THOUGHTS, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER

- * I think it's becoming something of a worst-case scenario for UNC and Mack Brown. It's like Florida State and Bobby Bowden all over again, except without the national championships. The important, well-monied boosters at UNC love Brown. It's why they brought him back. But it has now become a fair question of how ugly this gets.
- * I think to the question posed in the opening, about reasonable expectations: for Duke, State and UNC, it's probably to occasionally compete for a conference championship and win eight or nine games. In other words, what N.C. State has done for a while under Doeren and what UNC has mostly done under Brown. Breaking through to a higher level does not seem feasible.
- * I think you have to appreciate the Charlotte 49ers rolling into Rice and walking out with a 21-20 victory. Some trivia: Rice Stadium is where JFK in 1962 delivered one of his most important and memorable speeches, about how the United States would one day land on the moon. Can 49ers coach Biff Poggi take his program to the moon, in a metaphorical sense? Time will tell.
- * I think football will be the least of App State's concerns for a while, and rightfully so. We've not yet really started to get a sense of the devastation in Western North Carolina after the flooding from Helene. A lot of mountain cities, towns and communities will need a lot of help. The early images and reports of the destruction are heartbreaking.

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Panthers show promise vs. Bengals, but it wasn't enough

October 1, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Scott Fowler; Staff Writer | Section: Sports | 890 Words

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The home fans at Bank of America Stadium saw another loss Sunday for the Carolina Panthers, and there was nothing unusual about that.

But the way the Panthers lost? That was actually encouraging. Yes, the Panthers have fallen far enough that they are allowed to have encouraging losses, and that's what Cincinnati's 34-24 win over Carolina was.

"A day of near misses," Carolina head coach Dave Canales would call it later, and that's true. But it was the right type of near misses, the "you did the right thing and it still went wrong" sort of errors that you can live with - especially if you're a supporter of a team that went 2-15 and looked hopeless throughout 2023.

The Panthers went for it on fourth-and-inches inside the Cincinnati 1 on their first drive. Didn't make it. They called a fake punt and had a first down all but assured after punter Johnny Hekker threw a great pass. Reserve tight end Feleipe Franks dropped it.

"I loved the mindset, the mentality," quarterback Andy Dalton said.

And yet despite those critical fourth-down misses, the Panthers kept coming. And in doing so, a little of their fraught relationship with their fans was repaired.

"The energy is just different," said Panthers wide receiver Diontae Johnson, who scored one touchdown but had his hands on another that he said later he should have caught as well. "To me, I feel like it's a different team."

After the Panthers got bombarded with boos in their home opener Sept. 15 - a 26-3 loss to the L.A. Chargers that was also the last game Bryce Young started at quarterback - this time the Carolina fans were far more positive with Dalton in charge. And they should have been.

In danger of being blown out when they went down 31-14 in the late in the third quarter, the Panthers instead scored 10 straight points.

Then, with the deficit cut to 31-24, Carolina forced a punt and got the ball back. With 4:42 to go, the ball was in Dalton's hands - albeit at the Panthers' 8-yard line - with a chance to tie the game if Carolina could go 92 yards.

Alas, that's where it fell apart. Jonathan Mingo dropped an easy 7-yard pass on first-and-10. Then Dalton threw two more incompletions and the Panthers punted when Canales chose to trust the defense instead of go for a fourth-and-10 at his own 8 with 4:31 to go. Cincinnati ran the clock down and kicked a game-clinching field goal, and that was that.

Still, much like last week and the win in Las Vegas, there was some hope for Carolina.

Dalton threw for 220 yards and two touchdowns, including the first career TD for rookie Xavier Legette and a dart of a 21-yarder to Johnson. Chuba Hubbard rushed for 100-plus yards again behind a steady offensive line that also didn't allow a sack. Dalton's only interception came when left tackle Ickey Ekwonu allowed Cincinnati defensive end Trey Hendrickson to hit the quarterback's arm as he threw, resulting in a flutterball that was easily picked off.

Otherwise, though, the offense was pretty good. The Panthers scored 24 points and none of them came cheap. All

three of their TD drives covered at least 65 yards. Except at the 1-yard line, they ran the ball well again. "This is exactly my dream of how this thing works from an offensive standpoint," Canales said.

It was the defense and the fourth-down misses that let Carolina down in this one.

The Bengals scored touchdowns on four straight drives spanning the second and third quarters, On one remarkable play, wide receiver Ja'Marr Chase pinballed through and around three Carolina defenders for a 63-yard TD that made all the Bengals fans in attendance (and there were a lot of them in the lower deck) roar in glee.

Panthers safety Xavier Woods had the most egregious missed tackle on that play, as he lowered a shoulder and hit Chase, but didn't wrap him up. The Panthers saw their fundamentals lacking on several similar plays. Woods would make up for some of that, however, by intercepting Joe Burrow in the fourth quarter and returning the ball 33 yards to set up a field goal.

Of course, nothing that happened on a football field in Charlotte matters a bit compared to what's going on in western North Carolina right now. It was an incongruously sunny day where football seemed secondary after the devastating flooding and loss of life caused by Hurricane Helene in the Carolinas over the past several days. Canales acknowledged that tragedy at the beginning of his news conference.

But if you're only talking about football, the Panthers lost one the right way Sunday. If they had scored on that first drive, as they should have - they ran four straight plays at the Cincinnati 2- or 1-yard line - things might have been different. My only quibble is that fourth-down play was run out of the shotgun when they only needed a few inches. Still, Carolina should have been able to bang that one in.

"That's going to haunt me tonight,"Panthers offensive guard Robert Hunt said.

The belief in this team is there," Canales said. "But we just have to pair it with our execution."

That's right. The Panthers hit rock bottom a couple of weeks ago, getting outscored 73-13 in their first two games.

At least, for now, they've stopped digging.

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HELENE IMPACT

October 1, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com| Section: Helene Impact | 546 Words OpenURL Link

After Tropical Storm Helene moved out of the area, many residents of Catawba County were still without internet and power on Sunday.

Approximately 19,000 customers were without power as of 11 a.m. Sunday morning. On Sunday, customers aff ected by the outages did not have an estimate for when power would be restored, according to Duke Energy's online outage map.

"For many of these, we are still assessing and have not been able to update the restoration times," Duke Energy lead communications manager Logan Stewart said Sunday. "These are individual outages, and crews will have to respond to each one, and I would expect that will change as they identify the issues and update the map. We do have damage assessors, vegetation management specialists and lineworkers on the ground actively working, with additional assistance from outside Catawba County."

In a press release Saturday, Duke Energy said it prioritizes restoring power to public health and safety facilities first and then to the greatest number of customers aff ected by an outage.

In the statement, the company said it has 13,000 Duke Energy employees and customers working throughout the region to restore power.

The company also reported that lakes in the area, including Lake James, Lake Rhodhiss and Lookout Shoals Lake were receding Sunday.

The lakes were still experiencing increased flows from the Catawba River and were higher than normal. The company is continuing to move water throughout the system.

Many Spectrum internet customers also did not have service after the storm.

"Network lines servicing the area were damaged due to Hurricane Helene," said Scott Pryzwansky, Charter Communications senior director for communications for the Mid-South. "Our technical teams are on-site working to restore services as quickly as possible for those impacted customers. We are communicating with impacted customers about the service interruption and that our restoration process is underway."

Thursday and Friday, Hickory got about 5.5 inches of rain, according to National Weather Service data.

Hickory airport

The city of Hickory is working with the Air National Guard and other agencies to provide assistance to areas of western North Carolina impacted by Helene, the city said in a Facebook post on Saturday.

U.S. Army helicopters were flying in to Hickory Regional Airport and multiple agencies and resources are staging at the airport to coordinate relief efforts, the city said.

Supplies were being loaded into planes and helicopters Sunday afternoon to be taken to areas in need.

Roads closed

According to the N.C. Department of Transportation, there were almost 300 road closures statewide due to Helene as of Sunday.

In Catawba County into Alexander County, N.C. Highway 16 was closed in both directions over the river.

The state transportation department said all roads in western North Carolina, west of Catawba County, should be considered closed.

Parks and recreation

Catawba County reopened Mountain Creek Park and St. Stephens Park on Sunday morning. Bakers Mountain Park and Riverbend Park will remain closed until further notice.

The city of Hickory said Ridgeview Recreation Center, Brown Penn Recreation Center and Winkler Ceramics Studio opened Saturday.

Schools

The App State Hickory campus will be closed through Friday, Oct. 4.

Catawba County Schools, Hickory City Schools, Newton-Conover City Schools, Caldwell County Schools and Alexander County Schools canceled school Monday, according to Facebook posts from the school systems.

Burke County Public Schools canceled school Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

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Town Tavern destroyed by Hurricane Helene flooding from Catawba River

October 1, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Sharon McBrayer smcbrayer@morganton.com| Section: Business | 575 Words OpenURL Link

Justin Davis summed the damage caused by Tropical Storm Helene to his Morganton restaurant in one word Monday afternoon: "Heartbreaking."

Davis is one of the owners of Town Tavern in the River Village shopping center on Sanford Drive in Morganton. He said flooding from the adjacent Catawba River rose about 5 feet into the restaurant.

"It's devastating. It's pretty sad to see," Davis said.

He said the damage to the restaurant is substantial.

"I guess they call it a hundred-year flood," Davis said. "I hope I never see nothing like it again in my lifetime."

He said he hopes to rebuild but the owners, like everyone else, are taking it day by day. He said the restaurant will have to be gutted and renovated from scratch.

"Build back bigger, better," Davis said of starting over.

The restaurant opened in its River Village location in March 2021, Davis said.

He said it was a beautiful restaurant that people seemed to enjoy. Other locations of Town Tavern are in Blowing Rock and Banner Elk. Even though those two towns suffered devastating destruction, the Town Taverns in those locations faired much better than the Morganton location, Davis said.

"We were real fortunate that all of our locations are good, but all around us is just so much destruction everywhere," Davis said. "Roads washed out, trees, roads, homes destroyed and flooding. It's just so much to process. All the office buildings in that strip (in Morganton) all washed out, all destroyed."

Lisa Rector, owner of Salon 337 in the same shopping center, didn't think the water would get above the greenway behind River Village.

But when she made it to the salon to check out the damage, the inside was ruined. Almost everything needs to be thrown out. Water made it all the way to the roof.

"I just imagined it would be just a little bit of flooding, maybe halfway up," Rector said. "I didn't realize it would go to the ceiling, to the gutters. It's just heartbreaking because we're a family, and I don't want everybody to be out of a job, so we're sticking together."

She was headed to check out a building the salon could rent moving forward while her friends and family cleaned out the building. She said other salons have already offered temporary spaces for their staff to work until the salon is back up and running.

"I don't want everybody out of a job, so we're sticking together," Rector said. "It's just devastating. We're going to rebuild and hang in there together. ... This is a salon that's going to come back again."

Her husband, Rob, said Lisa had asked if they should pack up some of the stuff and take it home to keep it safe from flooding.

"I said, 'It'll never get that high,'" Rob said. "But it fooled us all."

He worked for Rutherford Electric for more than 30 years, but he'd never seen flooding that bad.

Davis said he is thankful none of the Town Tavern employees were hurt, and said things can be replaced.

"It is sad for the staff," Davis said. "We have so many key employees. Great and wonderful employees."

He hopes there are some programs they can get in place for the restaurant's staff to help them out until the restaurant can rebuild.

"It's just going to take some time," Davis said. "But we look forward to getting back open and seeing all of our family and friends and people in the community come back in and pick up right where we left off.

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