

Baxter plant in Marion closed from flooding damage - Baxter production facility in Marion closed because of Helene flooding

October 3, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC)

Author: RICHARD CRAVER Staff Reporter | Section: A | 535 Words

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The North Cove manufacturing plant of Baxter International Inc. has experienced significant flooding damage from the remnants of Hurricane Helene, the company said Tuesday.

The Marion campus is closed for production. It is Baxter's largest manufacturing facility with more than 2,500 employees.

Production primarily involves making intravenous and peritoneal dialysis solutions. Baxter is the largest U.S. manufacturer of these solutions.

"Our hearts and thoughts are with all those affected by Hurricane Helene," said José Almeida, Baxter's chair, president and chief executive.

"The safety of our employees, their families and the communities in which we operate remains our utmost concern, and we are committed to helping ensure reliable supply of products to patients.

The company said "it is working around the clock in close coordination with local, state and federal officials to assess the extent of the damage and implement a plan to bring the plant back online as quickly as possible to help mitigate supply disruption to patients."

"Remediation efforts are already under way, and we will spare no resource - human or financial - to resume production and help ensure patients and providers have the products they need," Almeida said.

The damage occurred in spite of Baxter's preparation efforts, which included evacuation plans for workers, moving products to higher ground or secure storage where feasible.

However, the company said the heavy rain and storm surge triggered a levee breach, which led to water permeating the site. The bridges accessing the site have been damaged.

The Baxter International Foundation has committed \$1.5 million in donations to help address recovery needs, including allocating additional funds to its Employee Disaster Relief Fund, and is matching employee donations \$2 for \$1 toward relief efforts.

Baster said the temporary closing of the Baxter plant is expected to "negatively impact the company's financial results."

"Once the company can more fully assess the damage, it will be in a better position to estimate any expected impact and plans to provide an update in its third-quarter earnings announcement."

On Tuesday, the N.C. Division of Employment Security listed McDowell County among 25 counties in northwest and western N.C. whose citizens 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 North Carolina.

The assistance covers individuals who are unemployed as a direct result of Hurricane Helene. Business owners and

self-employed individuals affected by the storm also may qualify for benefits.

Benefits would be made retroactive to Sept. 29 and may last for up to 26 weeks.

The other counties, along with the Cherokee Indians of N.C., 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 and Yancey.

The division said additional counties may be added at a later date.

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.

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Volunteers offer a lesson in faith - In the town of Vilas, volunteers help clean up church flooded by Hurricane Helene

October 3, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC)

Author: SCOTT SEXTON STAFF REPORTER | Section: A | 1197 Words

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VILAS - Pastor John Mark Brown knelt over a brand new, right-out-of-the-box gas-powered water pump.

He had an adjustable wrench in one hand and a smile on his face.

His church, Brushy Fork Baptist, had very nearly been destroyed Friday by a torrent of flood water raging down the mountain after Hurricane Helene.

Brown held Sunday services for a group, about 25 percent smaller than usual, that had spent the better part of two days tending to the most basic of life's needs.

Afterward, Brown was free to assess the damage to his church.

A normally placid creek quickly turned into a torrent and left some 6 inches of thick gooey mud in the church's buildings, crumbled its parking lot and left a brown lake behind.

Even for the most optimistic and determined of souls, it must have seemed bleak.

But despite all that Mother Nature had thrown at a little church first chartered eight years before the start of the Civil War, Brown smiled and counted his blessings.

The proof, for doubters, turned up in ones and twos Monday morning.

"God does great things through the harsh," he said.

Determination and will

When the rain from Helene began to come down in buckets Friday, Brown was in Bristol, Tennessee. His wife and family were in home in Vilas, a small, unincorporated community of perhaps 4,300 souls in Watauga County, about five miles downslope from Boone.

He wasn't particularly worried; no one predicted biblical flooding and a disaster of a scale not seen since World War I.

But when the water started to rise with no signs of letting up, Brown knew he had to get home.

He made it to Mountain City some 18 miles away before he got stranded by high water, broken pavement and downed trees and power lines. So he began to walk. "It took me the rest of the day," he said.

As he trudged back to his church and the parsonage where he lives, the enormity of what was happening struck.

"When I walked up the hill," he said, gesturing toward U.S. 321/421 behind him, "Antioch Baptist Church was no more."

The damage left behind was unfathomable. The road shoulders crumpled. Homes and businesses were flooded.

Small bridges that connected pockets of modest houses were washed downstream. Mud and debris for as far as the eye could see in any direction.

Self-pity and lamenting things out of his control are not Brown's way.

Hard work and faith in God are.

Besides, he'd seen this movie before. Prior to answering a call to the ministry, Brown worked as a home builder. In Florida.

"I was down there for Hurricane Charley (in 2004,)" he said. "This is my second major catastrophe."

Pressing questions

First things being first, Brown knew cleanup and protecting church buildings from further damage had to be priorities.

The who and the how, though, presented the most pressing questions.

Monday morning, the sun managed to pierce the low-lying clouds and fog shrouding the valleys. Sporadic rain - remnants of Helene - was in the forecast for the afternoon, which made matters worse.

Pastor Brown, his family (including 3-year-old River McCoy Brown) and a handful of congregants grabbed shovels, hoes and wheelbarrows and began digging trenches to allow some of the standing water to drain.

"That creek back there," he said gesturing toward a gurgling brown ribbon behind a church building, "was there for 1,000 years 30 or 40 feet from the buildings.

"Now it's running across the back corner of the church."

In the hardest hit areas of the property, a couple dozen Appalachian State students clad in white hazmat suits began the hard work of digging out the fellowship hall and lower levels of the main sanctuary.

Then the kindness of complete strangers began to manifest.

A man who introduced himself only as Justin rolled up; his yellow t-shirt emblazoned with a logo from the N.C. Baptist Convention Disaster Relief men's group served as ID.

"Shovels are great and all," the man said. "But could you use a skid steer?"

Of course they could. Tons of mud caked much of the property; digging out by hand (and shovel) would take weeks.

But guarding against the immediate threat, the newly rerouted creek rushing next to church buildings was on Brown's mind.

"We could really use an excavator," he said. "A big one."

'Figured it would be like this'

Return to something even vaguely resembling normal, Brown said, will take at least a year.

And that's just cleanup. Rebuilding roads and buildings that were destroyed-and rerouting unexpected new waterways-will take much longer.

"That'll take the state of North Carolina or the Army Corps of Engineers to fix," he said.

Just then, a second man named Chuck Griffin pulled up in a heavy duty pickup truck.

They'd driven up from Concord, Griffin said, hauling the heavy equipment they used on job sites back home. A couple of their friends were down the road pushing debris out from driveways in front of homes and businesses and could be at the church within minutes if need be.

"We got a skid steer," Griffin said. "A big one. We'll be up here shortly."

That's the way it went up and down the highway in Vilas Monday. People with shovels, chainsaws, heavy equipment and plenty of gas turned up to help anyone in need.

"I figured it would be like this," Griffin said. "And we have equipment that can get a lot done fast."

And just like that, in ones and twos, the sight of congregants, neighbors and complete strangers showed that Brown's smile - and faith - was well placed.

"We're going to be OK," he said. "There are a lot of other people, people we haven't heard from yet who can't get out, that are going to need our help."

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Helene's long reach - Helene's long reach

October 3, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC) Author: TERRY SPENCER | Associated Press | Section: B | 1010 Words Page: 2 OpenURL Link

SEVERE WEATHER

Hurricane Helene killed and destroyed far and wide - from Tampa to Atlanta to Asheville, North Carolina, its high winds, heavy rains and sheer size created a perfect mix for devastation.

The storm made landfall late Sept. 26 along a largely undeveloped expanse of pine trees and salt marshes on Florida's Big Bend coast, but it immediately displayed its far-reaching power several hundred miles away. The death toll has surpassed 150.

Tampa Bay was inundated with a massive storm surge that sent water up to people's attics. Atlanta got more than 11 inches of rain, more than any 48-hour period in recorded history. So many trees were toppled in South Carolina that at one point more than 40% of the state lost electricity. In North Carolina, dams were in jeopardy of failing and entire communities were cut off by floods. Floodwaters submerged a hospital in Tennessee so quickly that more than 50 patients had to be rescued from the roof via helicopter.

How did a single storm unleash destruction so far away?

Dan Brown, a specialist at the National Hurricane Center near Miami, said Helene had all the attributes that make a storm widely destructive.

It was large, about 350 miles wide. It was strong, with winds reaching 140 mph when it made landfall, creating widespread storm surge. It carried heavy rains. And it was fast, speeding north at up to 24 mph offshore and 30 mph inland.

He compared the geographic scale of Helene's destruction to 1972's Hurricane Agnes, 1989's Hurricane Hugo and 2004's Hurricane Ivan.

"Systems that get very powerful, large and fast moving unfortunately do bring the potential for impact and damage well inland," Brown said Saturday.

Here is a look at the many deadly tentacles of Helene.

Florida

Helene's devastation began Sept. 26, hours before it made landfall, as it swept through the Gulf of Mexico. Its then-120-mph winds created storm surge that pushed 6 to 15 feet of water into island and coastal neighborhoods all along Florida's west coast.

Nine people who drowned were residents who stayed behind after their Tampa Bay area neighborhoods were ordered evacuated.

Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri expressed his frustration - issuing evacuation orders isn't a decision that's made lightly, he said. Many who ignored officials then called for help as some sought refuge in their attics from the rising waters. Deputies tried to help, using boats and high-profile vehicles, but they couldn't reach many neighborhoods.

"We made our case, we told people what they needed to do and they chose otherwise," Gualtieri said.

Helene's eye slammed into the northwest Florida coast in the Big Bend area, the spot where the Panhandle makes its westward jut from the peninsula - hurricanes Idalia and Debby hit the area within the past 13 months.

Susan Sauls Hartway evacuated her seaside home - it was gone and when she returned the next day.

"I knew it would be bad, but I had no idea it was going to be this bad," Hartway said. "This is unbelievable."

Georgia

After making landfall, Helene sped into Georgia. Among more than 20 dead were a 27-year-old mother and her 1-month old twins who died when trees fell on their house in Thomson, just west of Augusta. An 89-year-old woman was killed when trees fell on her house nearby.

Rhonda Bell and her husband were spending a sleepless night in the downstairs bedroom of their century-old home just outside Valdosta, where Helene's center passed shortly after midnight.

The winds broke off limbs, tore away neighbors' roof shingles and knocked down fence panels in the neighborhood with train tracks along one edge. Then a towering oak tree crashed through the roof of an upstairs bedroom.

"I just felt the whole house shake," Bell said. "Thank God we're both alive to tell about it."

Atlanta was hit with 11 inches of rain, the heaviest 48-hour downfall since the city began keeping records in 1878. Streets flooded, submerging cars. Firefighters rescued at least 20 people.

North Carolina

Helene's heavy rains in the state's western mountains caused massive flooding and mudslides in the Asheville region, cutting off most communication and making the roads impassable.

Video posted online shows large portions of the city underwater.

More than 1,000 miles away in Texas, Jessica Drye Turner begged on Facebook for someone to rescue her family members stranded on their Asheville rooftop.

But in a follow-up message the next day, Turner said the roof had collapsed before help arrived and her parents, both in their 70s, and her 6-year-old nephew had drowned.

"I cannot convey in words the sorrow, heartbreak and devastation my sisters and I are going through," she wrote.

Jeff Muenstermann and his wife, Lisa, friends of Turner, told The Associated Press they had spoken to Turner after she posted the initial plea for help. At her request, they messaged members of The Village Church in Flower Mound, Texas, where they all attend, to pray for the family's safety back in North Carolina.

"I just thought they were going to be rescued," Jeff Muenstermann said. "I asked everybody to pray and they did. And then a couple hours later, her husband called me, completely distraught and said ... we lost them. They all drowned."

South Carolina

The storm was especially deadly in South Carolina. The biggest impact appears to be falling trees. The storm also produced tornadoes in the state.

In Saluda County, two firefighters were killed when a tree fell on their truck while they were answering a call. In Greenville County, four people were killed by falling trees. Four people were also killed in Aiken County by trees falling on homes, including a 78-year-old husband and his 74-year-old wife.

Tennessee

Helene's heavy rains caused the state's eastern rivers to overflow their banks and threatened to break dams, endangering those living nearby and forcing them to flee.

Patients and others at a hospital near the North Carolina border had to be evacuated to the roof Friday when torrents from the overflowing Nolichucky River rushed into the building.

Unicoi County Hospital tried to evacuate 11 patients and dozens of others, but the water was too treacherous for boats sent by the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency to navigate.

Helicopters were flown in to help rescue them. Eventually, everyone was evacuated.

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Pilots help to deliver vital aid - 'Desperation': The missions are risky but necessary as Triad pilots deliver vital supplies to western NC

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Author: SUSIE C. SPEAR Staff Reporter | Section: A | 983 Words

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GREENSBORO - Raw. Shocked. Desperate.

Those were words volunteers at Piedmont Triad International Airport used to describe the voices and faces of hardhit mountain residents to whom they are flying critical supplies.

Volunteer Grant Mosby made calls to airports and sheriff's offices in smaller North Carolina and Tennessee mountain counties that are isolated by impassable storm damage from Hurricane Helene and still in need of life-sustaining aid. He organizes and weighs donated items on bathroom scales, then helps tailor aid packages to the needs expressed by community leaders.

And while Asheville has seen the arrival of a cargo plane full of supplies from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, it's unclear when rural areas will benefit from such help.

"One sheriff told me people were coming out of the woods with nothing on but underwear," said Mosby, 26, a student pilot limited to ground duty at the Signature Flight Solutions hangar. "The desperation was what I heard when I called one airport. They told me: 'Nobody's gotten to us. We're really struggling. We need water and food -bad."

Bent over his computer tablet, flight instructor Brooks Parker used a finger to trace the lines on his screen that detailed restricted airspace on Wednesday, a requirement for President Joe Biden's expected afternoon flyover to examine Hurricane Helene's damage.

And while President Biden and Air Force One have tried to yield most airspace to relief efforts, the commander in chief's flight will slow their efforts a tad, volunteer pilots estimated.

"They need help in Burnsville and in Transylvania and Avery counties pretty badly," said the 23-year-old Parker, who was wheels up in his Piper Aero single-engine aircraft and headed to Avery by about 10 a.m. Coincidentally, Parker was born in Avery and his family has a Christmas tree farm there.

All business when he speaks about flying, Parker breaks easily into a broad smile and wears a brown leather flight jacket and combat boots. A member of the U.S. Army National Guard, Parker's been flying since age 15.

"It's tricky to land there," he said, pointing out the tiny Avery County airport's elevation of 2,745 feet and a nearby mountain's height of about 4,300 feet. "I remember flying into that airport with my dad and you have to be really careful ... really watch for those mountains," he said.

One mission took Parker to Johnson County, Tenn., where Mountain City is in crisis.

"I took in 350 pounds of supplies and we were the first aircraft that had gotten there since the storm. It's very blocked in. Schoolchildren were there to unload the plane," Parker marveled. "And one person came up to us who hadn't eaten in two days, so we gave him a sandwich."

On Tuesday, some 15 pilots from the Triad made flights that "risked their lives" rotating in and out of a congested airspace to deliver 8,000 pounds of supplies to Johnson County. Johnson County received the heaviest attention

because of its isolation, explained Aaron Elder, a flight school student who served in the U.S. Army for 10 years, working in logistics and operational planning.

Elder's training is ideal for this task, which keeps him on the phone with pilots and packing priority goods for transport into the tight compartments of smaller planes. At his side is Rylee Gaus, a Greensboro bartender working on her commercial pilot's certificate.

"They need supplies in Transylvania County!" Gaus yelled to pilots milling about in the hangar.

Just before lunch, Craig Gillespie, a retired American Airlines pilot from Greensboro, taxied up in a small jet. He fell in with a crowd of eight other volunteers, toting giant bags of dog food, canned goods and case after case of water to load into his aircraft.

First, Gillespie packed the nose of the plane with as much water as would fit. Then the group loaded the craft to its maximum, filling seats with Chef Boyardee cans, baby wipes and giant jars of peanut butter.

Flight school student Kyle Razik, 18, of High Point was on hand to help.

"I love the mountains and I love to fly there and go hiking there," Razik said. "I wanted to do something to help them and I didn't know what to do. So I bought a couple hundred dollars worth of groceries to donate and here I am, and it feels good."

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In Helene's wake, leadership is crucial - John Hood: In Helene's wake, leadership is crucial

October 3, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC) Section: A| 703 Words Page: 5 OpenURL Link

RALEIGH - I got it wrong. Deeply wrong. Embarrassingly wrong.

It was a few days after Hurricane Floyd struck the coast on Sept. 16, 1999. I'd been covering North Carolina politics for more than a dozen years by then, penning my syndicated column and appearing regularly on radio and television. Our discussion program "N.C. Spin" had debuted the previous fall on the Triangle's Fox affiliate and was in the process of expanding to some two-dozen TV and radio stations across the state.

During a segment of the show devoted to the destruction wrought by Floyd, I said something to the effect that North Carolina's emergency personnel, government agencies, utilities, private contractors and relief organizations knew what to do and how to do it. They didn't need politicians holding newsconferences and yapping incessantly about matters beyond their ken.

I thought I was praising the skill and determination of those at the forefront of the response to Hurricane Floyd, which devastated much of eastern North Carolina and killed an estimated 85 people, including 51 North Carolinians. I thought I was championing policy expertise over political exploitation.

What I was really doing was exhibiting my ignorance.

One "N.C. Spin" viewer was particularly incensed: then-Gov. Jim Hunt. One of the targets of my criticism, he let it be known through a mutual acquaintance that he considered my argument poorly reasoned. I don't remember the specifics of what got passed on to me, but it was something to the effect that in times of crisis, political leadership is crucial.

Emergency responders aren't necessarily sure what to do when. Agencies butt heads. Harried public and private actors misinterpret, miscommunicate and inadvertently misinform. Sometimes they move too slowly, making people wait too long for rescue and relief. At other times they react recklessly, misspending scarce resources on lower priorities rather than waiting to make wiser decisions with a firmer grasp of the facts on the ground.

It is the task of leaders, elected and appointed, to make such judgment calls, to focus minds and referee disputes, to comfort the suffering, and to offer hope and reassurance to a panicky public.

Now, as North Carolinians grapple with the tragic aftermath of another monstrous storm, Gov. Roy Cooper and other political and civic leaders must rise to the challenge Hunt helped me grasp a quarter of a century ago.

Helene has ravaged western North Carolina. Her path of destruction is broad, deep and jaw-dropping. Homes, businesses, entire towns crushed or swept away. At this writing, hundreds of thousands of people remain without power, some trapped in place by gaping holes or raging rivers. The death count, already heart-rending, will grow as more of the missing are found.

North Carolina will recover. We will rebuild. We've done it before. But there's nothing automatic about the process. And we all have parts to play in it, whatever our roles, wherever we live.

If you have family or friends in the affected areas, keep trying to reach them. Once you do, offer help and comfort. If you'd like to contribute money, supplies or volunteer time to relief and recovery efforts, there are many organizations well-situated to deploy your gifts effectively, including Samaritan's Purse, Baptists on Mission,

Catholic Charities USA and Operation Airdrop.

At the state level, lawmakers have prudently accumulated \$4.75 billion in our rainy-day fund plus billions more in unreserved credit balance. That rainy day is here. Localities will spend additional dollars from their own reserves, as will utility companies, cooperatives and municipal agencies.

There are many tough decisions to be made, some now, some weeks or months from now as the full extent of the needs and priorities come more clearly into view. That's something else I learned from past disasters. Some funds originally earmarked for reconstruction after Hurricane Matthew in 2016 have still not been expended.

Through it all, North Carolinians will look to our leaders for guidance and reassurance. Pray for them, and for us all.

John Hood is a John Locke Foundation board member.

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'In Helene's wake, leadership is crucial John Hood: In Helene's wake, leadership is crucial', *Winston-Salem Journal* (online), 3 Oct 2024 5 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF9B6AD20868C8



Harris and Trump are tested - Harris and Trump are tested by the Mideast, Helene and the port strike in the campaign's final weeks

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Author: AAMER MADHANI, ZEKE MILLER and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press Section: B 778 Words

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WASHINGTON - A trio of new trials - a devastating hurricane, expanding conflict in the Mideast and a dockworkers strike that threatens the U.S. economy - are looming over the final weeks of the presidential campaign and could help shape the public mood as voters decide between Democrat Kamala Harris and Republican Donald Trump.

How events shake out - and how the candidates respond - could be decisive as they claw for votes in battleground states.

The sitting president, Joe Biden, is still the steward of a U.S. economy and foreign policy at this tumultuous moment and may well bear ultimate responsibility for how they play out. But how Harris and Trump approach the three disparate issues could have rippling impact on how Americans perceive their two choices this November.

"Unfortunately, there are going to be events like this, and this is where you see the leadership of a president show up," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters on Tuesday. "I think this should send a message to Americans: It matters."

Harris, with Biden's help, is trying to display steady calm as a flurry of difficult problems arise all at once.

She and Biden on Tuesday toggled between directing Hurricane Helene recovery and rescue response work and huddling with aides in the White House Situation Room to watch as the U.S. helped Israel defend against a massive attack by Iran in retaliation for the killing of Tehran-backed leaders of Lebanese Hezbollah.

All the while, they were keeping close contact with economic advisers as dockworkers took to the picket line Tuesday, a walkout stretching from ports in Maine to Texas that threatens to snarl supply chains and cause shortages and higher prices if it stretches on for more than a few weeks.

Trump, for his part, lashed out at Harris as in over her head, while claiming that this sort of crush of problems never would have happened under his watch.

"We have been talking about World War III, and I don't want to make predictions," Trump said at a campaign event in Wisconsin. "The whole world is laughing at us. That's why Israel was under attack just a little while ago. Because they don't respect our country anymore."

Yet voters cast Trump aside four years ago in large part because of how they viewed his handling of the swirling economic, social and public health challenges that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Biden, in comments to reporters before meeting with aides Tuesday to discuss the ongoing hurricane response, seemed to acknowledge the growing frustration with the federal response to the massive storm.

"I've been in frequent contact with the governors and other leaders in the impacted areas, and we have to jump start this recovery process," Biden said. He traveled to the Carolinas on Wednesday to get a closer look at the hurricane devastation. He is also expected to visit hurricane-impacted areas in Georgia and Florida later this week.

Harris, meanwhile, headed to Georgia on Wednesday and will visit North Carolina in coming days to do the same.

Tuesday's vice presidential debate offered a sampling of how the two campaigns react to new developments to bolster their own messages and sharpen their attacks on their rivals. Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz promised "steady leadership" under Harris while Ohio Sen. JD Vance pledged a return to "peace through strength" if Trump is returned to the White House.

Biden stayed off the campaign trail since announcing in July that he was ending his reelection effort amid sliding public approval ratings.

His conspicuous absence underscores that Democrats see him as more of a liability than an asset in making the case for Harris, said Christopher Borick, director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion in Pennsylvania.

But how well Biden deals with the three latest emergency situations could have a big impact in how undecided voters perceive Harris in these final days.

"President Biden can't help Kamala Harris on the stump," Borick said. "But in a campaign where you are turning over every rock in a few states to get that undecided voter, how he manages these crises over the next several weeks could have an impact."

The Harris campaign understands the risks it faces with multiple crises converging all at once, especially given their varied and unpredictable nature. A prolonged strike, a bungled disaster response or a further expansion of Middle East conflict could raise doubts about Biden's leadership, and by extension that of his second-in-command.

At the same time, Harris campaign aides believe the perilous moment presents an opportunity to demonstrate to voters the stakes of who's in the job and the seriousness with which they approach it, according to campaign officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal thinking.

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Flooding swept away 11 workers at a factory - Flooding swept away

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Tennessee state authorities said Wednesday they are investigating the company that owns a plastics factory where 11 workers were swept away by cataclysmic flooding unleashed by Hurricane Helene.

As the nearby Nolichucky River swelled from rainfall, employees in the Impact Plastics factory in Erwin, a small community in rural Tennessee, kept working. Several asserted that they weren't allowed to leave in time to avoid the storm's impact.

It wasn't until water flooded into the parking lot and the power went out that the plant shut down and sent workers home. Several never made it.

The raging waters swept 11 people away, and only five were rescued. Two of them are confirmed dead and are part of a toll across six states that surpassed 170. Four others in the factory are still missing since they were washed away Friday in Erwin, where dozens of people were also rescued from the roof of a hospital.

Tennessee Bureau of Investigation spokesperson Leslie Earhart said Wednesday the agency is investigating allegations involving Impact Plastics at the direction of the local prosecutor.

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Atrium Health deploys mobile hospital - Atrium Health deploys mobile hospital to western NC

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Atrium Health deployed Tuesday its mobile hospital unit, known as MED-1, to western North Carolina to assist with initial patient treatments that include triage.

Atrium has two mobile emergency department units that include supply trucks, satellite trailers, dormitory trailers and other essential equipment vehicles.

Each unit can be deployed within 24 hours and become operational within hours of placement.

The unit is being placed at the request of state health officials in Tryon, a city in Polk County in the southwestern part of the state.

Each unit typically can operate on a self-sustaining basis for up to 72 hours. It features 14 acute care beds, a two-bed operating room, digital X-ray equipment, ultrasound, laboratory and pharmacy.

The mobile hospital will serve patients affected by the remnants of Hurricane Helene, which devastated much of western N.C. with flooding and mudslides.

Patients seeking care will continue to go directly to the emergency room and directed by staff from there.

Other examples of treatment administered might include rashes, ear pain, lacerations and minor sprains.

Atrium previously has used MED-1 during the COVID-19 pandemic to support rural areas struggling with high patient counts.

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Ask SAM: More ways to help relief efforts - Ask SAM: Second Harvest offers more ways to help Western North Carolina

October 3, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC) Section: A | 488 Words Page: 2 OpenURL Link

As recovery efforts continue, another group working to help the residents of Western North Carolina is Second Harvest Food Bank.

Second Harvest has been in touch with other agencies that serve the areas that were in the path of the storm to find out their status and see what they need.

On Tuesday, Second Harvest went to Ashe County to help the Ashe Food Pantry with a large food distribution to serve about 400 households.

They said that the MANNA Food Bank that serves Asheville and other Western North Carolina communities was completely destroyed.

"As we are getting through to our on-the-ground partners in impacted communities, we are placing orders for requested items and moving staged products to impacted areas. Many are requesting prepared meals owing to power outages, and our Community Meals team is preparing 10,000 additional shelf-stable meal boxes (providing a total of 50,000 meals) for distribution this week and next," Second Harvest said in a press release.

Second Harvest also said on Tuesday that they are working in the Watauga County area with other providers to improve the food offerings at Appalachian State University beyond soups, stews and chowders. ASU has invited anyone who can get to the campus cafeteria to have a meal.

What can you do to help? Second Harvest says that donations of money are needed right now.

"Financial donations are the best way to help right now. Financial support is crucial; every dollar donated allows us to rapidly source and distribute essential food, water, and supplies to meet the urgent needs of neighbors affected by this crisis," the agency said.

To donate money, go to www.secondharvestnwnc.org and click on Virtual Food and Fund Drive.

There will be community-wide food drives that will concentrate on the items that are needed the most. There will be a drive-thru food drive from 5 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Thursday at Second Harvest's headquarters, 3330 Shorefair Drive, Winston-Salem.

Here is a list of items that are needed: Paper towels, trash bags, disinfecting cleaners, peanut butter and jelly (plastic containers only), pop-top complete meals (including soups), pop-top fruits in natural syrup, canned chicken or tuna, individual cereal bowls, and family-sized shelf-stable milk.

Another way to help is to volunteer. Volunteers are needed on a daily basis. Second Harvest expects that as more information and assessments in the affected area are received, there will be a need for more volunteers.

For information about volunteering at Second Harvest or to fill out an application, go to secondharvestnwnc.org and click on Get Involved, then Volunteer.

Second Harvest is working to help its partner agencies in affected areas, in addition to carrying out its everyday

operations.

"In addition to specific disaster relief efforts, Second Harvest's every day operations addressing food insecurity across all our counties continue, recognizing that unprecedented needs for food assistance exist in communities not impacted by Hurricane Helene," Second Harvest said.

Email: AskSAM@wsjournal.comWrite: Ask SAM, 418 N. Marshall St., #100, Winston-Salem, NC 27101

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Polls show Stein widening lead on Robinson - Polls show Stein widening governor's race lead; Robinson criticized for missing Council of State hurricane aid vote

October 3, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC)

Author: RICHARD CRAVER Staff Reporter | Section: A | 1151 Words

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The latest round of polls on the North Carolina governor's race shows that the continuing fallout from the Sept. 19 CNN report has severely damaged the campaign of Republican Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson.

The CNN report included that Robinson called himself a "Black Nazi," that he enjoyed watching transgender pornography, and said he supported a return of slavery - all in comments made on porn website Nude Africa between 2008 and 2012.

Robinson, who has vowed to continue his campaign, has hired a law firm that has represented former President Donald Trump to investigate the CNN report.

Meanwhile, Robinson is facing another round of controversy, this time not making himself available for Gov. Roy Cooper's Council of State vote of Sept. 24-26 to authorize Executive Order 315, which released state emergency funds and supplies in response to the devastating flooding from the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

Robinson was quoted by multiple media sources at Wednesday's relief effort appearance in Franklin that he was busy with his own private relief efforts, that the Council of State vote "was inconsequential" and the executive order "was going to pass with or without my vote," which it did 9-0 with the support of five Republicans and four Democrats.

All nine polls posted since the CNN report listed by 538.com have Democrat Attorney General Josh Stein widening his lead.

The nine polls provide more evidence of a significant amount of either ticket spitting among Republican and unaffiliated voters when it comes to the presidential race, or choosing not to cast a vote in the governor's race.

The biggest margin is 19% - 52% to 33% - by Emerson College/Real World Politics conducted Sept. 27-29 of 850 likely voters.

Meanwhile, the poll has former Republican President Donald Trump ahead in N.C. 50% to 49% over Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris.

Trump has not publicly asked Robinson to withdraw from the race.

On Sept. 26. Trump was asked by conservative cable channel NewsNation in the lobby of his Trump Tower property whether he plans to rescind his endorsement of Robinson, someone he called "Martin Luther King on steroids" in March. Trump leaned in to listen to the question, said "I don't know the situation," and then walked away from the gathered media. Robinson relief comments Robinson's absence from voting on Executive Order 315 is noteworthy not only for being the only Council of State member out of 10 not to respond in the Sept. 24-26 window. Robinson has pushed for post-COVID-19 pandemic legislation - included in the 2021-22 state budget and effective on July 1, 2023 - that requires the governor to get the approval of a majority of Council of State members for an executive order in response to a statewide disaster or public health emergency, as well as a reapproval after a certain amount of time, typically 30 days. Robinson has been criticized in a bipartisan manner for rarely fulfilling his lieutenant governor duties of presiding over N.C. Senate chamber sessions and on the State Board of Elections. Raleigh TV station WRAL reported Robinson saying that he was making his own relief effort, calling Cooper's efforts

"abysmal." "I'm urging the governor to do more, more National Guardsmen, allow the energy of private industry to get involved," Robinson said. Robinson wrote on social media Tuesday that the federal government has "failed to act" in response to the storm, and that Biden and federal response are "of little or no consequence to me." Cooper, meanwhile, has made several appearances in western N.C. since Friday, including Wednesday with President Joe Biden. Biden approved Sunday Cooper's request for a Federal Major Disaster Declaration that provides immediate federal help for 25 counties - including Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes counties - and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The declaration means that FEMA will be able to speed additional help to the state, and provide Individual Assistance to people living in those counties, as well as public assistance to reimburse local governments, state agencies and non-profits or other eligible organizations for money spent repairing facilities and infrastructure. Trump has posted on social media that Cooper and Biden's relief efforts are neglecting conservativeleaning counties in western N.C. Biden responded Monday by saying Trump "is lying ... and the governor told him he was lying." "I don't know why he does this," Biden added. "I don't care what he says about me. I care about what he communicates to people that are in need. He implies that we're not doing everything possible. We are." Cooper's communications director Jordan Monaghan said "an online disinformation campaign by the LG during an unprecedented crisis is unhelpful, causes confusion in areas with limited communications and potentially puts lives at risk. State, federal and local partners are leading a massive, coordinated response to a catastrophic storm."

More governor poll results

The latest East Carolina University Poll, released Monday and covering Sept. 23-26, has Stein ahead 50% to 33% among 1,005 likely voters. The same poll has Trump leading by a 49% to 47% margin.

The Washington Post Poll of 1,001 likely voters, taken Sept. 25-29, has Stein ahead 54%-38%, while Trump is ahead 50%-48%.

The Quinnipiac University Poll of 953 voters has Stein leading 52%-39% and Trump ahead 49%-47%.

The Marist College Poll conducted Sept. 19-24 had Stein with a 54% to 42% lead over Robinson among 1,507 registered voters. The poll has Harris leading Trump by a 49%-48% margin.

CNN released its latest poll with SRSS on Sept. 27 in which Stein has jumped to a 53%-36% lead among 831 likely voters, while Harris and Trump are listed at even at 48%.

Also on Sept. 27, Fox News' latest poll with Beacon Research has Stein ahead 56%-40% among 991 registered voters. In that poll, Harris leads Trump by a 50% to 48% margin.

The AtlasIntel poll of 1,173 likely voters has Stein ahead by a 55%-38% margin, while Harris is up 51%-47%.

Although Robinson has denied making the CNN reported comments, four Southeast Republican governors - Georgia's Brian Kemp, South Carolina's Henry McMaster, Tennessee's Bill Lee and Virginia's Glenn Youngkin - have withdrawn their endorsements of Robinson.

Lee's decision is particularly noteworthy given he is chairman of the Republican Governor's Association. The association stopped placing new campaign ads on Robinson's behalf in North Carolina as of Sept. 24.

John Dinan, a political science professor at Wake Forest University and a national expert on state legislatures, said "the question at this point is not whether Robinson has a path to victory in his own race, because that is now off the table."

"The only question is whether his campaign continues and continues to attract news coverage.

"Any day that he is still in the race and is the subject of news stories is a gift to Democrats running for office in North Carolina and a headache for Republicans on the ballot."

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State parks in Western disaster zones closed indefinitely

October 3, 2024 | Yadkin Ripple, The (Yadkinville, NC) Author: Ryan Kelly ryan.kelly@mtairynews.com| Section: News| 387 Words OpenURL Link

Following the devastation felt in the Western reaches of the state following Hurricane Helene, the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources announced the closure of all state parks in the affected areas.

"All North Carolina state parks West of Interstate 77 and closed through at least Oct. 31," the Division of Parks and Recreation announced in a statement.

These parks include Chimney Rock, Crowders Mountain, Elk Knob, Gorges, Grandfather Mountain, Lake James, Lake Norman, Mount Mitchell, New River, South Mountains, and Stone Mountains state parks, as well as Mount Jefferson State Natural Area and Rendezvous Mountain.

In addition to the closure of the parks, all events and programs at all state parks have been canceled through Oct. 31, which exceptions made for events near month's end at Carolina Beach, Fort Macon State Park, and the Dismal Swamp State Park.

"The division is assisting with the statewide emergency and rescue efforts in western North Carolina, in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. About 30 staff have been deployed on law enforcement assignments requested through the North Carolina Emergency Operations Center," the state wrote.

They said scaling back operations across the state will allow their staff to, "Continue to assist with critical deployments. In addition, the closure of western parks can help limit travel in the area while roads and other infrastructure are repaired and replaced."

"The devastation brought by Helene in many communities across western North Carolina has been profound," said State Parks Director Brian Strong. "The entire division wants to provide whatever assistance we can to our neighbors and to these areas that were hit hardest. We want to prioritize our resources, both staff and equipment, towards immediate and lifesaving needs."

He added that once the vital needs of post-storm recovery efforts have been met, staff will focus then on recreational facilities at parks such as visitors centers, trails, and campsites.

"In the last few days alone, we have seen the entire state come together to support each other during this difficult time," Strong said. "We know our parks are beloved by North Carolinians, but we also know our visitors are eager to help those who are grieving and those who have lost so much because of this storm."

All reservations for campsites and other facilities such as picnic shelters at western state parks through Oct. 31 have been canceled and refunded in full.

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