

Helene lashes South with wind and floods

September 27, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: NEWS WIRE SERVICES | Section: Local | 578 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene roared ashore as a powerful Category 4 hurricane in Florida and then raked a path of destruction hundreds of miles to the north, with flooding as far away as North Carolina, and knocking out power to millions of customers in several states. At least 21 people were reported dead in four states.

Up to 10 inches of rain had fallen in the North Carolina mountains before noon Friday, with up to 14 inches more possible before the deluge ends, setting the stage for flooding that forecasters warned could be worse than anything seen in the past century.

The National Weather Service issued a flash flood emergency for Rutherford County, saying that a failure at the Lake Lure Dam was imminent and people below the dam should move to higher ground.

Buncombe County issued a mandatory evacuation order for people along the Swannanoa River from the North Fork Reservoir to Biltmore Village. Waters have gone over the spillway, the county said.

"Do not delay — take action to protect your loved ones," County Manager Avril Pinder said. "We understand that evacuation can be challenging, but the safety of our residents is our top priority. We urge everyone in the affected areas to take this order seriously and evacuate as soon as possible."

The sheriff's office in Haywood County declared all roads closed.

The storm made landfall late Thursday in a sparsely populated region with maximum sustained winds of 140 mph in the rural Big Bend area, home to fishing villages and vacation hideaways where Florida's Panhandle and peninsula meet.

Video on social media sites showed sheets of rain coming down and siding coming off buildings in Perry, Florida, near where the storm arrived. One local news station showed a home that was overturned, and many communities established curfews.

Nearly 4 million homes and businesses were without power Friday morning in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, according to poweroutage.us, which tracks utility reports.

One person was killed in Florida when a sign fell on their car, and two people were reported killed in a possible tornado in south Georgia as the storm approached. Trees that toppled onto homes were blamed for deaths in Charlotte and in Anderson County, South Carolina.

The hurricane came ashore near the mouth of the Aucilla River on Florida's Gulf Coast, only about 20 miles northwest of where Hurricane Idalia hit last year at nearly the same strength and caused widespread damage.

As the hurricane's eye passed near Valdosta, Georgia, a city of 55,000 near the Florida line, dozens of people huddled early Friday in a darkened hotel lobby. The wind whistled and howled outside.

Electricity was out, with hallway emergency lights, flashlights and cellphones providing the only illumination. Water dripped from light fixtures in the lobby dining area, and roof debris fell to the ground outside.

Helene is the third storm to strike the city in just over a year. Tropical Storm Debby blacked out power to thousands in August, while Hurricane Idalia damaged an estimated 1,000 homes in Valdosta and surrounding Lowndes County

a year ago.

Soon after the eye of the hurricane crossed over land, Helene weakened to a tropical storm.

Forecasters expected the system to continue weakening as it moved into Tennessee and Kentucky and dropped heavy rain over the Appalachian Mountains, with the risk of mudslides and flash flooding.

Helene is the eighth named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, which began June 1. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has predicted an above-average Atlantic hurricane season this year because of recordwarm ocean temperatures.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

NEWS WIRE SERVICES, 'Helene lashes South with wind and floods', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDC42994846D18



Helene lashes South with winds, floods

September 27, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: ENTERPRISE STAFF AND WIRE | Section: Archives | 569 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene left an enormous path of destruction across the entire southeastern U.S. on Friday, killing at least 30 people in four states — two in North Carolina — while snapping trees like twigs, tearing apart homes, sending rescue crews on desperate missions to save people from floodwaters and knocking out power to millions of customers.

More than a foot of rain fell in much of the North Carolina mountains — nearly 30 inches was recorded at Busick Raws in Yancey County — with up to 14 inches more possible before the deluge ends, setting the stage for flooding that forecasters warned could be worse than anything seen in the past century.

The National Weather Service issued a flash flood emergency for Rutherford County, where Lake Lure overtopped the entire length of its nearly 100-year-old dam. There is some erosion on one side of the dam caused by the overtopping, and town officials were monitoring it, state Department of Environmental Quality spokesperson Kat Russell said

Buncombe County issued a mandatory evacuation order for people along the Swannanoa River from the North Fork Reservoir to Biltmore Village. Waters have gone over the spillway, the county said.

"Do not delay — take action to protect your loved ones," County Manager Avril Pinder said. "We understand that evacuation can be challenging, but the safety of our residents is our top priority. We urge everyone in the affected areas to take this order seriously and evacuate as soon as possible."

Winds gusted to 108 mph atop Mount Mitchell, the highest peak east of the Mississippi River.

All roads in western North Carolina should be considered closed because it is too dangerous to travel, the state Department of Transportation said. Interstate 40 was closed near Old Fort west of Asheville, and Interstate 26 was shut down south of Asheville near Hendersonville.

Crews had conducted 100 swiftwater rescues Friday morning alone, Gov. Roy Cooper said. About half of them were around Asheville.

"The priority now is saving lives," Cooper said, adding no one should be on the roads unless they were seeking higher ground.

Roads in Buncombe County were washed out, preventing first responders from making it to some calls, including a mudslide that involved four homes and left an undetermined number of people unaccounted for, Buncombe County Assistant Emergency Services Director Ryan Cole said.

"This is the most significant natural disaster that anyone of us has ever seen in western North Carolina," Cole said.

Downtown Boone saw flooding in areas officials couldn't recall flooding before. Appalachian State University canceled its Saturday football game with Liberty University, blaming the severe impacts of the weather around the region.

The storm made landfall late Thursday as a fierce Category 4 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 140 mph in the rural Big Bend area, home to fishing villages and vacation hideaways, where Florida's Panhandle and peninsula meet.

Nearly 4 million homes and businesses were without power Friday morning in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, according to poweroutage.us, which tracks utility reports.

Soon after the eye of the hurricane crossed over land, Helene weakened to a tropical storm.

Forecasters expected the system to continue weakening as it moved into Tennessee and Kentucky and dropped heavy rain over the Appalachian Mountains, with the risk of more mudslides and flooding.

Helene is the eighth named storm of the Atlantic hurricane season, which began June 1. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has predicted an above-average Atlantic hurricane season this year because of recordwarm ocean temperatures.

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Storm conditions close the schools

September 27, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: ENTERPRISE STAFF AND WIRE | Section: News | 386 Words OpenURL Link

GUILFORD COUNTY — Because of the potential of severe weather on Friday ahead of Hurricane Helene, a number of North Carolina school systems — including Guilford County Schools — decided Thursday to cancel classes for today.

Guilford County Schools announced early Thursday afternoon that the schools would be closed and there would not be remote learning. High school football games were expected to be played as scheduled Friday evening.

Thomasville City Schools also announced that schools will be closed to students, with an optional teacher's workday, and all after-school activities and sports through Monday are canceled.

Davidson County Schools were already scheduled for an optional teacher's workday.

Hurricane Helene, which was expected to make landfall in northwest Florida on Thursday night as a Category 3 storm, is sending potentially catastrophic weather ahead of it as it moves north. Its path was expected to take the storm center over western Georgia and into Tennessee on Friday. All of Georgia and South Carolina, as well as the western part of North Carolina, were under tropical storm warnings.

In the High Point area, the National Weather Service said there was a 100% chance of showers and possibly a thunderstorm Friday morning, with winds of about 25 mph and gusts up to 43 mph possible. Rains are expected to ease in the afternoon, with total rainfall for the day of up to 1 inch.

Saturday is forecast to be mostly sunny, with a high near 80.

Hurricane Helene is forecast to be one of the largest storms in breadth in years to hit the Gulf Coast, Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach said. Since 1988, only three Gulf hurricanes were bigger than Helene's predicted size: 2017's Irma, 2005's Wilma and 1995's Opal.

Areas 100 miles north of the Georgia-Florida line can expect hurricane conditions. More than half of Georgia's public school districts and several universities canceled classes.

Through Friday, Helene is expected to bring to North Carolina flash flooding, downed trees and landslides in higher elevations and isolated tornadoes. The storm's impacts could create treacherous travel conditions and power outages in the mountains and much of the Piedmont.

The N.C. Department of Transportation is encouraging people to postpone unnecessary travel during the storm and use DriveNC.gov to check for real-time road conditions. Never drive through flooded roads and don't try to drive around barricades and road closure signs.

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ENTERPRISE STAFF AND WIRE, 'Storm conditions close the schools', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDAA9217569FE8



Eastern Guilford blanks Bison, 60-0

September 27, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: GREER SMITH SPECIAL TO THE ENTERPRISE Section: Newsletters | 497 Words OpenURL Link

HIGH POINT – An inexperienced team and a steady rain resulted in a bad combination for High Point Central against visiting Eastern Guilford on Thursday.

In a Mid-State 3A game moved up a day because of possible severe weather threats from Hurricane Helene on Friday, the winless Bison fell 60-0 in another lopsided loss as the conditions added to the misery.

They went backward on every possession but the last one, committed six turnovers (one of them a fumble that Eastern recovered for a touchdown), had ball carriers twice tackled in the end zone for safeties and stopped the Wildcats' offense just twice.

Helped by the Bison turnovers, Eastern started all but two of its possessions in Central territory. The Bison offense didn't come close to crossing midfield.

Eastern gained all of its 260 or so yards on the ground and didn't attempt a pass.

Steven Murray returned a free kick 61 yards for a touchdown. Caleb Creech scored on touchdown runs of 40 and 23 yards. Tyler Whaley-Melvin added a 39-yard scoring run and Sammy Raphael Jr., who got most of the carries after the lead reached 42, tallied the last three touchdowns on runs of 16, 18 and 18 yards.

The Wildcats scored its first 28 points over a four-minute span in the middle of the first quarter and were up 34-0 at the end of the first quarter.

Long before then, the coaches agreed to cut the second quarter from 12 minutes to 10. The period ended with Eastern ahead 42-0, and the coaches agreed at halftime for the third and fourth quarters to be 8 minutes each.

Eastern scored one touchdown in the third and one in the fourth, with both of those set up by Bison turnovers — one of them a fumble that followed Eastern losing a fumble.

Central dropped to 0-5, 0-2 Mid-State, with the losses by a combined 281-0. Eastern improved to 2-3, 2-0. The handshake line after the game deteriorated into pushing and shoving. Coaches and staff managed to separate the teams before a fight broke out.

Central started on a positive note when it stopped Eastern on its first possession and forced a punt. The Bison took possession at its 20 but losses and penalties put them on the 5 for a third-down play that ended in a fumble that the Wildcats recovered for a touchdown with 7:39 left in the first.

The roof quickly fell in after that. Central's next possession ended with a bad snap on a play from its 5 that resulted in the first safety. Murray returned the ensuing free kick for a touchdown. A fumbled kickoff return resulted in Central starting its next possession at its 4 and its second safety two plays later when the ball carrier was tackled in the end zone.

Eastern started its next possession at the Central 42. Creech scored easily on a 40-yard run two plays later and a 2-point conversion upped the lead to 28-0 with 3:27 left.

Central travels to Northeast Guilford on Friday, Oct. 4.

• Citation (aglc Style)

GREER SMITH SPECIAL TO THE ENTERPRISE, 'Eastern Guilford blanks Bison, 60-0', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDC429AD202F60



Eagles defeat the elements and Davie County

September 27, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: Duncan McInnes Staff Reporter | Section: Sports | 370 Words OpenURL Link

A wet field and constant rain turned out not to be problems for the East Forsyth varsity football team on Thursday night in a 55-0 rout of visiting Central Piedmont 4-A conference rival Davie County.

The game was originally scheduled for Friday night but was moved to Thursday due to the possibility on Friday of heavy rain and strong winds from the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

The Eagles prepared during the week for adverse conditions and it showed on Friday night, Eagles Head Coach Todd Willert said.

"I felt like we had a good plan. I felt like we prepared the kids during the week for the elements, how our footing would be and all of those things coaches sometimes overlook. We were mentally prepared to play in the rain. Chris Kirby on our defensive line had an outstanding game and Robbie Whitney on our defensive line had three sacks," he said. "Offensively, the ball never hit the ground. We had no fumbles or bad snaps. I am just so proud of the kids because it rained the whole game, and sometimes it rained hard. JP Gilchrist did a great job punting and holding on kicks. Brayden Cresimore, our kicker, had a good game, and Camden Johnson, our long snapper, did a great job. Coach Studevent had the special teams locked in, and it showed last night. Davie struggled sometimes and they really struggled on special teams."

East led 14-0 by the end of the first quarter and had a commanding 34-0 lead at halftime. The Eagles ran for 355 yards, and Corey Blair led the team with five carries for 152 yards and two touchdowns. He ran 96 yards on his last touchdown.

The Eagles (5-0) will play away against Mount Tabor (3-1) on Friday at 7:35. This will be the My 48 televised game of the week.

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EF—Jaylin Murry 20 yard run (Brayden Cresimore kick)

EF—Jaire Richburg 39 yard pass from Bryce Baker (B. Cresimore kick)

EF—Bryce Baker 13 yard run (B. Cresimore kick)

EF—Cannen Rottweiler 2 yard run (B. Cresimore kick)

EF—Corey Blair 32 yard run

EF—Cannen Rottweiler 11 yard run (B. Cresimore kick)

EF—Jus Lewis 2 yard run (Brayden Cresimore kick)

EF—Corey Blair 96 yard run (Brayden Cresimore kick)

• Citation (aglc Style)

Duncan McInnes Staff Reporter, 'Eagles defeat the elements and Davie County', *High Point Enterprise* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDC429B3D3F1C0



Inside Helene HQ: Haywood emergency team is the best of the best

September 27, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Becky Johnson | Section: News | 951 Words OpenURL Link

An all-hands-on-deck gathering of Haywood emergency officials on Thursday afternoon made one thing clear: no matter what Helene dished out over the next 24 hours, Haywood was ready. Very ready.

Swiftwater rescue crews stationed around the county. An emergency shelter up and running. A central donation site to funnel relief supplies and volunteers to where they're needed. Meals being served to keep emergency crews fueled up. Trailers ready to deploy as mobile command centers. And on and on the list went.

"Everybody is getting in a battle rhythm here. Pretty much the next 24 hours, from this point on, will be a litte bit hairy," Haywood Emergency Services Director Travis Donaldson told the war room. "We want to make sure to spread people out and not get too heavy or thin, night or day. Take care of yourself, sleep. We need you, but we can't use you when you get to the point you can't make a solid decision."

Laptops, banks of radios and tangles of cords were splayed across tables, ringed by emergency officials donning the badges of their various agencies, each laser focused on their piece of the puzzle.

"This is a very serious incident. Think: 'what bit of information do I have that is necessary for somebody else to do their job?'" Incident Commander Bill Miller told those in the war room. "Sharing information and commnicating is absolutely critical to our success."

Indeed, that was the purpose of the round-robin emergency operations briefing held at the Haywood County Sheriff's Office at 3 p.m. Thursday.

The Helene HQ was akin to an air traffic control tower, the central intelligence hub that would keep the emergency crews in the field humming like a well-oiled machine.

"Everybody is on the same page and understands the graveness of the conditions we might face in the next 24 hours. We're ready to protect those who might be in harm's way," Donaldson said.

Most in the room still have battle scars from the flood of 2021, which killed six people in Haywood County. It's a far different climate this time, however.

"We kinda of got caught off guard because nobody was predicting what landed here. This time, they were predicting this is going to happen, so our level of alertness is much more heightened," Donaldson said. "We've had plenty of time to get ready and prepare for what's coming."

Around the room

Among those checking in for the briefing: a sopping wet reconnasiance crew that had been making rounds throught the county, checking for early warning signs of flooding.

"You want to bring us up to speed with your field trip?" Miller queried of the ground task force.

"It's raining," one quipped back.

"OK, thanks. Let's move forward," Miller said.

Such moments of levity were few and far between, however. As they went around the room round-robin style, lessons learned from the 2021 flood were front and center.

Take 911 dispatch, for instance.

"The calls after Tropical Storm Fred came in by the hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. We did not have resoures to respond to all of the calls," Miller said.

But this time, four dispatchers from down east were on site in advance of the storm to help field calls.

"They will be ready to roll and help us," reported 911 director Chanda Morgan.

The cavelry of outside help also included a 35-man crew of swiftwater rescuers and a fleet of boats from down east. Teams would fan out to flood hotspots and be at the ready if rescue calls came in.

"We've got a local person embedded in each team since they know their way around town," reported Josh Wise from Pasquantank County with the N.C. Incident Management Team.

"Is there a GIS guy in here?" Wise asked, seeing a hand shoot up across the room. "Can I work with you to get some maps?"

"Digtal or printed?" the GIS guy asked.

"Old school — printed and laminated," Wise replied.

Keeping everyone fed would be paramount, of course, but that, too, was accounted for. Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center had stepped up to serve as a central site where emergency workers could cycle through to get a meal, as well as housing out-of-town responders.

Meanwhile, an emergency shelter was up and running by Thursday afternoon at the former National Guard Armory in Clyde adjacent to Haywood Community College — and was already housing flood evacuees.

"We took a few citizens a little bit early who were in need," reported Michelle Haynes with Haywood County Health and Human Services. Transportation was on standby to bring people to the shelter if needed, she added.

There were logistics to cover, as well — like keeping receipts and daily logs so the county could get reimbursed after Helene was said and done.

"You are gonna think you'll remember what you did three days ago, but it's a lot easer to keep a daily log of where you went and what you did," Tiawana Ramsey told the room. "Let's keep the documentation and get every penny we can."

Another order of business was donations. Truckloads of food, water and cleaning supplies and armies of volunteer labor poured in after the floods of 2021, but directing those resources to where they were needed was like building a plane while flying it.

This time, a central location has already been designated to stockpile the supplies, and disaster nonprofits are standing by ready to roll up their sleeves. Bus drivers with Haywood County Schools are even on call to transport volunteers to work sites.

Miller again reminded the room that cooperation and teamwork would make or break the emergency response.

"If you can't contact somebody by telehpone, get up and go find them. If you have a problem or an issue, come to us with a solution to your problem, and we will try to make that happen," Miller said.

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Canton's early warning call served the county well

September 27, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Vicki Hyatt| Section: Editorials | 500 Words OpenURL Link

Once burned, twice shy is a phrase that perfectly describes the Canton mayor's philosophy in the week leading up to Hurricane Helene.

In August 2021, the entire county was caught flat-footed when flood waters came careening down the East Fork of the Pigeon River, leaving a path of destruction in its wake.

Town-owned facilities in Canton were all but demolished — the town hall, park amenities, the police station, the Colonial, the Armory, the museum. Some have reopened, others are in the process of being relocated and yet others are in varying stages of being rebuilt.

Through it all, Canton leaders learned more about floods, how to prevent them and how to rebuild in their aftermath than anyone in a mountain community 3200 feet above sea level should be expected to know.

The experience has led Mayor Zeb Smathers, an attorney by trade, into another field of sorts. That of an amateur meteorologist. More than most, Smathers monitors tropical storms, even ones a week out or more to see if Western North Carolina is anywhere in their path.

That's how he spotted the beginnings of Helene a full five days before in landed in Western North Carolina, leaving in its wake an "active natural disaster area" in the words of N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper.

Unlike three years ago when Haywood County and especially Cruso, bore the brunt of Tropical Storm Fred, this time the devastation from Hurricane Helene is widespread.

Out-of-state help, supplies, donations, emergency help, N.C. Department of Transportation resources, and so forth, were focused on Haywood three years ago. This time, Haywood will be one of many areas in dire need of assistance, so it could may well be Haywood residents will be mostly on their own.

If any community is in a position to ensure its people are OK, it's Haywood. We did it during Tropical Storm Fred three years ago; we pulled together when the devastating news hit that the county's oldest and largest employer would be closing its Canton mill, and now we're called to do it once again.

We know the drill, and as was made clear during a Sunday morning in Cruso where emergency workers, residents who could get out and others who heard about the service gathered, we also know who is in charge.

God's got this. Our job is to check on people and greet them with smiles and joy so desperately needed in times like this.

"You can tell people what is bad, or tell them about the good going on," Mitch Burress said during the service. "This shall pass. We need to put our trust in God, not things."

As the communities within Haywood County work their way through the many challenges, it is comforting to know we don't have novices at the helm. There is a world of talent, a world of experience and caring that knows no bounds right here in Haywood.

Going forward, these qualities and the sheer resilience Haywood residents have proven time and again will help us get on the other side of this disaster, too.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Vicki Hyatt, 'Canton's early warning call served the county well', *Mountaineer, The* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDA66DDC0BE2C8



Inside Helene HQ: Haywood emergency team is the best of the best

September 27, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Becky Johnson | Section: On Premise | 44 Words OpenURL Link

An all-hands-on-deck gathering of Haywood emergency officials on Thursday afternoon made one thing clear: no matter what Helene dished out over the next 24 hours, Haywood was ready. Donning the badges of their various agencies, each laser focused on their piece of the puzzle.

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Becky Johnson, 'Inside Helene HQ: Haywood emergency team is the best of the best', *Mountaineer, The* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDA66DE60DD240



Widespread flooding, power outages hit Surry County

September 27, 2024 | Mt. Airy News, The (NC) Author: John Peters jpeters@mtairynews.com| Section: News| 343 Words OpenURL Link

Surry County was inundated Thursday and Friday, with strong and gusty winds added to the mix overnight and into Friday morning, shutting down schools, flooding businesses, and leaving thousands without power.

The foul weather was cause by bands of heavy rain and high winds sweeping ahead of the Hurricane Helene, which made landfall in Florida Thursday night and crept northward through Georgia and the Carolinas.

The National Weather Service in Blacksburg, Virginia, issued and extended warnings for Surry County and the surrounding region several times Thursday evening and through the day on Friday. Surry County, along with Yadkin, Stokes, and Rockingham counties and Patrick and Carroll counties in Virginia, remained under a flash flood warning and a tornado watch through much of the day, with some weather alerts warning of life-threatening flooding in the region. Rainfall totals were not available Friday afternoon, but various portions of Surry County had seen 4 to upwards of 8 inches of rain over the previous day or two.

Widespread power outages accompanied the storm. Surry-Yadkin Electric Corporation reported more than 12,000 customers without power across its two-county region at the worst of the storm. The largest of those outages were in the Jonesville-Elkin area.

Duke Energy reported hundreds of thousands of customers without power across the Carolinas. Locally, several thousand Surry County customers spent time in the dark, with the largest Duke outages in the Mount Airy and Pilot Mountain regions of the county.

The rain sent creeks and rivers over their banks throughout Surry County and the surrounding region, with low-lying areas, roads, and some businesses being flooded. In Elkin, parts of downtown were underwater Friday, with North Carolina Department of Transportation shutting down the Elkin-Jonesville bridge and other access roads into town

In anticipation of the move, area schools, including Mount Airy, Surry County, and Elkin closed early Thursday and announced they would remain closed today. Local EMS and utility officials also spend the week ramping up, preparing equipment and crews for extended work clearing roads, restoring electricity, and being ready to help those in need because of the weather.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

John Peters jpeters@mtairynews.com, 'Widespread flooding, power outages hit Surry County', *Mt. Airy News, The* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDF8D3333AA3A8



What Raleigh area can expect from Hurricane Helene

September 27, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC)

Author: Renee Umsted and Adam Wagner; Staff Writer | Section: News | 744 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene was expected to make landfall in Florida Thursday, bringing heavy rain and strong winds throughout parts of the Southeast, including North Carolina.

The storm, which has been moving from the northeastern Yucatan Peninsula across the Gulf of Mexico, was named a Category 2 hurricane Thursday morning. Additional strengthening was expected before it hit the United States coast, according to a National Hurricane Center report Thursday morning.

Hurricane and tropical storm warnings have been in place for portions of Florida. A storm surge could reach as high as 20 feet above ground level along parts of the Florida Big Bend Coast, the NHC said.

More rain for NC mountains

Parts of the southeastern U.S. were expected to receive rain ahead of the storm. Asheville for example, was expected to receive several inches of rain Thursday.

Gov. Roy Cooper issued a state of emergency for North Carolina on Wednesday, in response to Helene's predicted impacts on the state.

At a Thursday briefing ahead of Helene's arrival, Cooper called Helene "an unusually dangerous storm."

Cooper warned of heavy rains that could cause flooding, debris flow and landslides in parts of Western North Carolina.

Helene is expected to bring 9 to 14 inches of rainfall to Western North Carolina, with more than 20 inches possible in some locations, N.C. Emergency Management Director Will Ray said at a Thursday news conference. Those were expected to cause "significant flash flooding" starting Thursday evening.

Ray also warned that Central and Eastern North Carolina could see impacts from the storm. Places like Asheville and Charlotte need to be prepared for flash flooding, Cooper said.

"If you do not need to travel, please stay off the roadways, especially in the foothills and the mountains. Do not drive through floodwaters. We have lost too many North Carolinians who have driven around barricades and into floodwaters," Cooper said.

North Carolina activated 175 soldiers and airmen from the N.C. National Guard and deployed 16 of the state's swift water rescue teams, with teams also coming from Illinois, Indiana and New York.

"This storm path is wide, and its impacts will be felt far from the center of the storm," Cooper said.

Prep for a potentially 'devastating' hurricane

Several sources have been encouraging people in the Southeast to prepare in the days leading up to the storm's arrival and respond accordingly to possible forthcoming evacuation orders. The Weather Channel's Jim Cantore wrote in a tweet Sept. 25 that the threat of Helene "cannot be understated" for the region.

"Because of the shape of the coast, which can trap excess water in the Big Bend area of northern Florida, and the forecast intensity and track of Helene, AccuWeather meteorologists anticipate a storm surge up to the height of a two-story building, or 15-20 feet, Thursday night," according to an AccuWeather report. "At this height, some single-story buildings along the coast may be completely underwater."

Mandatory and voluntary evacuation orders were issued for many counties along the Florida coastline.

While the storm is expected to weaken after it hits land, its "fast forward speed will allow strong, damaging winds, especially in gusts" across the Southeast, the NHC said early Thursday.

How and when will Hurricane Helene's effects be felt in Raleigh and central NC?

Ahead of Helene's arrival, the Triangle was forecast to experience light rain and embedded storms Thursday, said Nick Luchetti, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Raleigh.

Parts of the Triangle have received 4 to 7 inches of rain over the past seven days.

The center of Hurricane Helene isn't expected to reach western North Carolina until Friday.

It will bring rain and strong winds throughout the state, with the most severe weather focused in the western part of North Carolina.

In the Triangle, residents should expect about 1 to 3 inches of rain from the storm, with most of it coming Friday, especially between the morning and mid-to-late afternoon.

Heavier downpours that could occur as a main band of the storm pushes through the area could result in flash flooding, especially in urban areas.

Starting Friday morning, parts of the Triangle could also see sustained winds of 15 to 25 mph, with gusts of up to 30 to 40 mph, Luchetti said. Stronger winds may cause power outages.

Isolated tornadoes are also possible as the main band of the storm comes through the Triangle on Friday.

Some rivers that flow through the Triangle may flood, especially in days after the storm passes through North Carolina.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Renee Umsted and Adam Wagner, Staff Writer, 'What Raleigh area can expect from Hurricane Helene', *News & Observer, The* (online), 27 Sep 2024 1A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDD7A6105941C8>



Short-term funding patch ready for Biden's signature

September 27, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Aidan Quigley; CQ-Roll Call | Section: News | 701 Words Page: 2A OpenURL Link

WASHINGTON The Senate on Wednesday cleared a 12-week spending bill that would kick this year's spending tussle until after the November elections.

The 78-18 vote means the bill is now on its way to President Joe Biden's desk well ahead of the Sept. 30 deadline to prevent a partial government shutdown.

The rapid-fire votes in both chambers Wednesday - an unusual occurrence - allowed lawmakers to head home to campaign. They'll have roughly five weeks after the elections to secure a full-year fiscal 2025 spending deal before the new Dec. 20 deadline.

Senate Appropriations Chair Patty Murray, during a very brief floor debate, called the bill a "straight-forward, bipartisan compromise" to temporarily fund the government. She said lawmakers should start negotiating final spending bills.

"It's time for Democrats and Republicans to negotiate those bills together, instead of House Republicans just following the loudest voices on the far right," Murray, D-Wash., said.

During the brief debate, Senate Appropriations ranking member Susan Collins said a shutdown would be disastrous for the Pentagon and other federal programs. "Government shutdowns are inherently a failure to govern effectively," she said, urging her colleagues on both sides to support it.

The House earlier on Wednesday had voted 341-82 to pass the measure under suspension of the rules, which requires a two-thirds majority of those present and voting. There were zero defections on the Democratic side, while Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., comfortably secured the support of a majority of the majority of his conference.

With lawmakers eager to get back home and Hurricane Helene set to make landfall in Florida, Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., and Senate GOP leaders on Tuesday night locked in a time agreement to vote on the bill Wednesday after no more than two hours of debate, with no amendments.

"Americans can breathe easy that because both sides have chosen bipartisanship. Congress is getting the job done," Schumer said earlier Wednesday. "We will keep the government open. We will prevent vital government services from needlessly coming to a halt."

The bill is mostly just a clean extension of current spending levels to Dec. 20, though many GOP conservatives believe those existing spending levels are already too high.

Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, an influential House Freedom Caucus member, pointed out lawmakers' consistent inability to pass individual spending bills to fund the government on time, while continually adding more debt to the national credit card.

"What are we doing?" Roy said during the House debate. "It's absurd. And the American people look at us and say, what on earth is wrong in Washington?"

Conservatives also wanted tough voter ID measures attached to the bill, but last week enough Republicans refused to vote for a six-month stopgap bill that included the proof-of-citizenship legislation that it was defeated on the

floor. That left Johnson with few options but to cut a bipartisan deal.

Speaking to reporters after the House vote, Johnson blamed the Senate for not passing appropriations bills and reaching no agreement on topline spending.

"So we've had no choice, but I want to assure everyone, and I've said this multiple times this week, we are not going to return to a Christmas omnibus spending tradition, and that's significant," Johnson said. "We worked very hard to break that tradition."

House Appropriations Chairman Tom Cole during a floor debate applauded Johnson's efforts, saying he made the best of a difficult hand.

"Like most, my preference would be to pass full-year appropriations bills through regular order, but we are out of time," Cole, R-Okla., said during the debate. "We cannot afford a shutdown, which would be greatly damaging to our national security, to critical government programs, and to the American people."

The Senate's unusually quick action allows members to hit the campaign trail for an extended October recess. The December end date will allow lawmakers to see where the electoral chips fall before deciding whether they want to attempt to wrap up the fiscal 2025 spending bills this year.

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Aidan Quigley, CQ-Roll Call, 'Short-term funding patch ready for Biden's signature', *News & Observer, The* (online), 27 Sep 2024 2A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDD7A62D9232E0



Video: Helene brings flooding to mountain areas of western North Carolina

September 27, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Video (Raleigh, NC)

Section: News | 19 Words

OpenURL Link

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'Video: Helene brings flooding to mountain areas of western North Carolina', *News & Observer, The: Video* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDF8F59E805980



Watch videos as Helene causes major flooding throughout the NC mountains

September 27, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Travis Long, News & Observer | Section: weather news | 312 Words OpenURL Link

Major flooding hit the mountain areas of western North Carolina Friday as Helene passed over the state.

Two men escape car being carried away in rushing floodwaters in Boone, NCVideo shows two men climbing onto the roof of their car that is being carried away in rushing floodwaters in Boone, N.C., Friday, Sept. 28, 2024 as heavy rains from Helene caused massive flooding in the N.C. mountains.

Reports of flooding stretched the from the northern border of the state to the southern in one of the most widespread severe weather events to hit the area in decades.

Flood waters from Helene rage through NC mountain townFlood waters from heavy rains from Helene raged through downtown Hot Springs, NC in the western North Carolina mountains, Friday, Sept. 27, 2024.

Gov. Roy Cooper declared all roads in western North Carolina "closed" at a briefing Friday morning. Evacuations and water rescues were happening across the region.

Video: Helene brings flooding to mountain areas of western North CarolinaHeavy rains from Helene are causing creeks to overflow, flooding mountain areas of western NC, Friday, Sept. 27, 2024.

Lake Lure Dam at risk of breaching, NC officials order evacuation downstreamEmergency crews and residents scrambled Friday «as Helene - the hurricane downgraded to a tropical storm - overwhelmed the Lake Lure dam in western North Carolina, causing damage and erosion along its structural supports.

Over 290 roads are closed in the state according to Gov. Roy Cooper.

Watch Helene causing flooding in Boone, NCHeavy rains from Helene are causing flooding on King Street in Boone, NC as remnants of the once hurricane pass through the western part of the state on Friday, Sept. 27, 2024.

NC Gov Cooper: Helene threatens to bring catastrophic rain to stateDuring an NC Emergency Briefing on Thursday, Gov. Roy Cooper said that "Helene threatens heavy rain, flash flooding, landslides, and damaging winds to the mountains and Piedmont areas of our state."

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Travis Long, News & Observer, 'Watch videos as Helene causes major flooding throughout the NC mountains', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027C227C1060>



Helene heads north of the Triangle, leaving flooding, fallen trees and damage in her wake

September 27, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC)
Author: Renee Umsted, Adam Wagner and Mary Helen Moore, News & Observer Section: weather news 874 Words
OpenURL Link

As Helene made her slog through North Carolina, she brought heavy rains and gusty winds to the state, leaving behind flash flooding, two tornadoes and at least two deaths.

The storm's eye made landfall in Florida's Big Bend around 11:10 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 26, as a Category 4 hurricane, with maximum sustained winds of 140 mph, according to the National Hurricane Center.

By 5 a.m. Sept. 27, Helene had been downgraded to a tropical storm, according to the NHC. Maximum sustained winds had decreased to around 70 mph, and the center of the storm was expected to move over central and northeastern Georgia before turning northwestward and slow down over the Tennessee Valley.

The NHC predicted "catastrophic and life-threatening flash and urban flooding, including numerous landslides" across parts of the southern Appalachians and "damaging wind gusts" over parts of Georgia and the Carolinas on Sept. 27.

But damage wasn't limited to the mountains. At least 15 people were injured, four seriously, in Nash County when a tornado hit the Eastern North Carolina city of Rocky Mount.

By the time Helene crawled out of the state, it had become a tropical depression and then a post-tropical cyclone.

duke power outages.jpgDuke Energy's power outage map shows hundreds of thousands without power in the Carolinas Friday morning as Helene moves into the area.

How Helene will impact western NC

President Joe Biden approved an emergency declaration for North Carolina on Sept. 26, which allows the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help fund emergency protective measures in much of western North Carolina, including evacuations and emergency shelters, The News & Observer previously reported.

The National Weather Service's office in Greenville, South Carolina, called Helene "one of the most significant weather events to happen in the western portions of the area in the modern era" in a Sept. 26 social media post.

Helene was predicted to bring heavy rain to western North Carolina, increasing the risk of landslides.

Flash flood warnings were issued across western North Carolina - including in Asheville, Hickory and Charlotte - the morning of Sept. 27.

Mandatory evacuation orders were issued for parts of Mecklenburg, Transylvania and McDowell counties.

Helene-path-Friday.jpgThe predicted path of Helene shows the center of the storm passing over western North Carolina after 8 a.m. Friday, Sept. 27.

Helene to bring rain, winds & potentially tornadoes to the Triangle

Severe weather had moved out of the Triangle by Friday afternoon.

A band of showers and thunderstorms with heavy rain moved across the Triangle through the morning.

NWS Raleigh 11 update

Sustained wind speeds of 15-25 mph were expected, with gusts of 35-45 mph, throughout the morning and early afternoon Sept. 27.

The most life-threatening risks were flash flooding and tornadoes, the meteorologist said, encouraging people to have a way to quickly receive alerts about weather hazards as they arise.

Make sure you're signed up for emergency alerts in your Triangle county. Here's how

Duke Energy customers may report and track outages on the provider's website. More than 215,000 Duke Energy customers in North Carolina were without power around 7 a.m. Sept. 27.

Check where tornado, flood and other severe weather watches and warnings have been issued here.

Helene causes power outages and flooding across NC

Gov. Roy Cooper said during a morning briefing Sept. 27 that there are an estimated 879,000 power outages across the state and that there have already been more than 100 swift water rescues.

"This is one of the worst storms in modern history for parts of Western North Carolina. The end of the rain is not the end of the threat," Cooper said.

As N.C. Emergency Management Director Will Ray gave a Sept. 27 morning update on Helene, a harsh tone sounded from cell phones throughout the room, warning of a flash flood warning in the immediate area until 3 p.m.

"With such significant rainfall, water levels and flooding in the Western North Carolina mountains can rapidly change and cause a substantial threat to life. Many counties in Western North Carolina have ordered evacuations to save lives," Ray said.

Cooper also emphasized that Western North Carolinians should stay at home instead of driving through stormy conditions on roadways that could be susceptible to flooding.

"People in Western North Carolina should consider all roads closed unless you're seeking higher ground," Cooper said.

Statewide, there were more than 290 road closures the morning of Sept. 27, many in the western part of the state but some lingering in the Southeastern corner from last week's unnamed storm that brought heavy rains to the region.

Helene closes Triangle schools & cancels and delays flights at RDU

All public schools in the Triangle were closed to students and staff Sept. 27. These include:

Wake County public schoolsDurham Public SchoolsOrange County SchoolsChapel Hill-Carrboro City SchoolsChatham County SchoolsJohnston County Public Schools: These schools will have a remote learning day. After-school activities are canceled.

Wake Tech and Durham Tech also closed their campuses.

Helene created problems for travelers out of RDU Airport on Sept. 27. Flights to Charlotte scheduled to leave RDU before noon were canceled, and some afternoon flights are delayed. More than 1,000 flights at Charlotte's airport have been disrupted during the past couple of days, The Charlotte Observer reported.

Flights scheduled to leave RDU before noon Sept. 27, headed to cities including Boston, Detroit, Atlanta, Chicago, Indianapolis, Washington, D.C., Orlando and Austin, were canceled or delayed.

Check the status of flights to and from RDU Airport here.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Renee Umsted, Adam Wagner and Mary Helen Moore, News & Observer, 'Helene heads north of the Triangle, leaving flooding, fallen trees and damage in her wake', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027C153F2DB0



2 deaths in NC attributed to Helene, more expected, Gov. Cooper says

September 27, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Adam Wagner, News & Observer | Section: weather news | 381 Words OpenURL Link

North Carolina officials have confirmed Hurricane Helene and its remnants caused two deaths in the state, Gov. Roy Cooper said during a Friday morning briefing.

A motor vehicle crash on a flooded road Thursday morning caused one of those deaths, in Catawba County, Cooper said. The other came Friday morning when a tree fell on a house in Charlotte.

The Charlotte incident happened around 5 a.m. The tree killed one person in a northwest Charlotte home and injured another, according to The Charlotte Observer.

The Catawba County car crash happened just after 8:10 a.m. Thursday, as rainfall extending in front of Helene entered the region. The Charlotte Observer reported that an SUV crossed the center line on Boggs Road near Hunsucker Drive, causing a head-on collision,

A 4-year-old girl in the SUV was killed, while a 12-year-old in that vehicle also suffered "life-threatening" injuries. A 2-year-old in the other vehicle also suffered life-threatening injuries, while three other people in the cars suffered what the N.C. State Highway Patrol called non-life-threatening injuries.

As Cooper urged people to stay home, especially in Western North Carolina, he sounded a dire note.

"There will be more (deaths), as we know this storm is continuing across our state. We are working to try to prevent as many as we possibly can," Cooper said.

Storm conditions are expected to improve later Friday afternoon and into the evening as Helene's remnants pass through the state, but Cooper also warned that flooding is likely to continue well after the rainfall stops.

Drivers should not risk driving on flooded roads, Cooper said. Last week, Potential Tropical Cyclone Eight resulted in the death of a Brunswick County man after he drove around stationary law enforcement vehicles warning the road was closed..

"As I've said so many times, we've lost too many North Carolinians who've driven into floodwaters. So turn around, don't drown," Cooper said.

The storm has caused more than 20 deaths across the Southeast as of 1:15 p.m. Friday.

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

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4 critically hurt after tornado associated with Helene hits Eastern NC city

September 27, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Mary Helen Moore and Adam Wagner, News & Observer Section: weather news 1082 Words OpenURL Link

A tornado associated with Hurricane Helene, now a tropical depression, touched down in a Nash County city on Friday, Sept. 27, injuring 15 people.

Around 1:30 p.m., the tornado struck two restaurants with people inside, and several other buildings near North Wesleyan Boulevard and Benvenue Road in Rocky Mount, emergency officials said.

RAL_092724-ROCKYMOUNT-TORNADO-KLM-07.JPGPeople walk past damage to Hing Ta Restaurant following a tornado in Rocky Mount, N.C. on Friday, Sept. 27, 2024.

"We've had multiple injuries, with four of those being critical," Nash County communications director Jonathan Edwards said at 2:30 p.m.

Edwards said EMS was triaging patients and taking those who required hospitalization to UNC Health Nash. He said they didn't have reports of other serious damage to share yet.

RAL_092724-ROCKYMOUNT-TORNADO-KLM-02.JPGPeople walk through a parking lot off of North Wesleyan Boulevard where buildings sustained damage following a tornado in Rocky Mount, N.C. on Friday, Sept. 27, 2024.

Hing Ta Restaurant suffered heavy damage, with a back wall crumpled and a piece of wood pointing through the roof. Bricks were strewn throughout the surrounding parking lot and several cars in the area had their windows blown out.

RAL_092724-ROCKYMOUNT-TORNADO-KLM-03.JPGOfficials work outside of Hing Ta Restaurant after the building sustained damage during a tornado in Rocky Mount, N.C. on Friday, Sept. 27, 2024.

The steel frame of the auto repair shop next door was crumpled and one wall was almost entirely blown out, though a gold colored car remained on lifts inside what remained of the business.

A medical supply store had crumbled into a pile of bricks nearby, and El Tapatio Restaurant also suffered damage. The city is still taking stock of the scene.

"We are just manning the area, checking in, making sure buildings are cleared," said Catina Phillips around 4:30 p.m., a spokesperson for the Rocky Mount Fire Department.

Rocky Mount is about an hour east of Raleigh. Another potential tornado touched down in Garland, about 80 miles south of Raleigh in Sampson County. The National Weather Service is sending teams to both scenes to assess the damage.

RAL_092724-ROCKYMOUNT-TORNADO-KLM-01.JPGBuilding damage is visible in a shopping center near North Wesleyan Boulevard and Benvenue Road following a tornado in Rocky Mount, N.C. on Friday, Sept. 27, 2024.

K&W cafeteria becomes a refuge

Tonya Ward was at work inside the K&W Cafeteria around 1:30 p.m. Friday when her manager shouted to look at the tornado outside.

"You saw the trees and the leaves and everything was rotating. It was dark, it was jet black," Ward said.

Then she saw the sign.

Across the parking lot, about 200 feet away, a sign for Precision Tune Auto Care had been ripped from its post and was twisting and turning in the air. Ward didn't wait around to see where it would land, rushing to huddle in an interior hallway near the bathrooms along with everyone else in the K&W.

Ward described hearing the tell-tale freight train noises and other sounds of destruction. But the tornado seemingly did not damage the K&W.

"It seemed like it hopped over us," Ward said.

When the sound ended, chaos set in.

Customers and workers from Hing Ta restaurant next door streamed into the K&W, tending their wounds and looking for family members. As Ward considered heading over to Hing Ta to help, the first emergency vehicles arrived.

A short while later, she saw the yellow and black Precision Tune sign again.

It ended up landing next to her car, shattering on the asphalt. Somehow, it didn't cause any damage.

'I got lucky. Some people didn't get lucky today.'

Dean Holmes was at work Friday afternoon when he heard a tornado had damaged Hing Ta restaurant. He immediately knew that his home on Short Spoon Circle, less than half a mile away, would have suffered damage, too.

So Holmes wasn't surprised when he came down the street about 4 p.m. and discovered a tree crew at work, the air filled with buzzing from chainsaws and beeping from a small excavator carrying loads of branches to the street.

IMG_9848.jpgDean Holmes' front yard on Short Spoon Circle in Rocky Mount after Friday's storm on Sept. 27, 2024.

Short Spoon Circle backs up to a golf course, its comfortable two-story homes surrounded by large, mature trees. The needles scattered across the road - and woody smell in the air - proved that many of those trees are pines.

Ribbons of blue metal were scattered throughout the neighborhood, wrapped around trees and strewn across yards. Holmes believes they must have come from one of the businesses hit by the storm.

A post in a local Facebook group said the storm had carried a sign from Hing Ta into a yard on Short Spoon Circle, but Holmes didn't know whose.

In Holmes' backyard, his son's trampoline was still standing, although it was buried underneath a heap of fallen limbs. One of the two windows in his attic was broken, a set of closed blinds serving as the barrier between inside and outside.

Still, as Holmes gathered fallen leaves and pine needles Friday evening, he knew some of his neighbors had been hit much harder by the storm.

"I got lucky. Some people didn't get lucky today," Holmes said.

'Worst is over'

Helene, which was downgraded to a tropical depression around 2 p.m. Sept. 27, brought heavy rainfall and strong winds to portions of North Carolina. Areas in the west of the state are dealing with flooding and dangerous road conditions in the wake of the storm.

The threat of tornadoes for central North Carolina was over by 2:30 p.m., though wind and flood advisories remain in effect, according to Jonathan Blaes, meteorologist-in-charge for that National Weather Service in Raleigh.

"The worst is over for sure," Blaes said around 3:30 p.m. "The sun's even poking out spots, so things are ramping down pretty quickly."

Flooding could continue to cause issues for several days as rivers crest.

"It's been so wet of late that much of the rain that fell is just washing and draining into creeks and streams," Blaes said. "So that is a worry."

The National Weather Service Forecast Office in Raleigh issued tornado warnings for most of the Triangle as the band of storms passed through the area at midday, including in Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, Holly Springs and Fuquay-Varina.

Helene and its remnants have caused two deaths in North Carolina, Gov. Roy Cooper said during a morning briefing Sept. 27.

One person died Thursday, Sept. 26, following a motor vehicle crash on a flooded road in Catawba County. Another died Sept. 27 when a tree fell on a house in Charlotte.

RAL_SubmitWeatherPhoto_EMBED

Check Triangle power outages as Tropical Storm Helene moves through the state

Tornado warnings across the Triangle as Helene moves through. 'Shelter in place' urged

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Mary Helen Moore and Adam Wagner, News & Observer, '4 critically hurt after tornado associated with Helene hits Eastern NC city', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027C1900FC58>



North Carolina Observer: Helene's devastation and Mark Robinson fallout

September 27, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Jessica Banov, News & Observer | Section: north carolina observer nl | 785 Words OpenURL Link

Good morning, and welcome to the North Carolina Observer.

We're still learning the extent of the devastation from Helene, the hurricane-turned-tropical storm, that dropped a deluge of water on our state, leaving destruction in its wake.

And this past week continued to see additional fallout from a scathing CNN report about Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, the GOP candidate for governor.

Here's a look at the big stories from the week.

RAL_092822-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-04.JPGResidents in Clyde begin cleaning up on Saturday, Sept. 28, 2024 after massive flooding damaged dozens of homes and businesses. The remnants of Hurricane Helene caused widespread flooding, downed trees, and power outages in western North Carolina.

Helene's wrath

Weather experts issued ominous warnings before Helene arrived in North Carolina, cautioning us about an unprecedented once-in-a-lifetime storm. They were correct. Much of western North Carolina was flooded in ways we've never seen (at least in modern history), and Rocky Mount was hit with yet another tornado.

Torrents of water poured through the streets of mountain towns, leaving devastation that will be hard to recover from. Here's just a sampling of our coverage from The News & Observer and The Charlotte Observer.

At least 10 people dead in Western NC from Helene, 200 rescued from floods'We've lost everything.' Western NC town of Clyde is rebuilding - again - after Helene4 critically hurt after tornado associated with Helene hits Eastern NC cityNCDOT says all roads in Western NC should be considered closed, even the big ones Some western NC universities to close doors for at least a week due to Helene rampageA count in progress: Helene damage to North Carolina, by the numbersSee photos and video from Helene's devastation in the mountains of western NC

Imagn-24240800.JPGRepublican gubernatorial candidate Mark Robinson addresses the crowd at his rally in Burnsville, North Carolina, September 14, 2024.Republican gubernatorial candidate Mark Robinson addresses the crowd at his rally in Burnsville, North Carolina, September 14, 2024.

Mark Robinson fallout

In the week since a scathing CNN report about Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, which detailed offensive and racist comments made online a decade ago, Robinson's campaign seems to be in free fall. He saw an exodus of campaign staff, followed by the exit of high-ranking staff members in the lieutenant governor's office.

Amid pressure to prove the allegations are false, he has hired a law firm to investigate the allegations made in the CNN report. But will it be enough to ease concerns from North Carolina's members of Congress or former President Donald Trump, who has previously endorsed him? And then, of course, will his efforts sway voters? According to one poll, voters are pretty decided on how they'll vote. Robinson was treated Friday night for burns at an campaign rally incident

jackson bishop.jpgDemocrat Jeff Jackson (left) will face Republican Dan Bishop in the race for N.C. Attorney General.

Attorney General election

North Carolina's governor's race is grabbing headlines, but don't sleep on the attorney general election. It's one of the most closely watched races in the country, and one of the most expensive. Republican Dan Bishop and Democrat Jeff Jackson are both North Carolina lawyers serving in Congress who are seeking a return to state government. Learn more about each of the candidates in these profiles.

Long before his run for attorney general, Dan Bishop was a conservative hardlinerCharlotte dad and TikTok star: Could Jeff Jackson be NC's next attorney general?

Public records in Charlotte

Some Charlotte city leaders have raised questions about transparency and access to information, putting a spotlight on a big backlog of public records requests. The Charlotte Observer reviewed the city's open data portal, which tracks requests that have been filed since 2019. Journalists found that over 1,500 requests have not been fulfilled. Here's more on the situation, and some efforts to resolve it.

Getting Charlotte records may take weeks - or years. Council questions city's transparencyNC is 'black hole' for public records. Is there a fix for state law that's 'getting worse'?How to request records from state, local governments in Charlotte, Mecklenburg County

Big reads of the week

Inside North Carolina's fight to make hospitals relieve billions of patient debtLandlord with thousands of NC homes sued by feds. Here's how much renters could get backSports Legends of the Carolinas: Sports broadcaster Jim Nantz on his deep NC roots and the origin story of 'Hello friends'Avett Brothers musical 'Swept Away' set for 'leap of faith' in upcoming Broadway debutAs developers pave over Charlotte, a local farm gets \$1.4M boost to grow dramatically On his 100th birthday, a father's lifelong question answered, an old companion found 'Who killed Beth-Ellen?' Man's podcast aims to solve Raleigh's oldest unsolved homicideAnd the mystery artists bringing a 'major' concert to Bank of America Stadium in 2025 are...

Thanks for reading, and enjoy the rest of your weekend. Stay safe out there.

Jessica Banov Newsletter Author tag.pngJessica Banov

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Jessica Banov, News & Observer, 'North Carolina Observer: Helene's devastation and Mark Robinson fallout', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C653E1F0F2B360>



NC officials detect damage to Lake Lure dam after emergency evacuation of people nearby

September 27, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Tammy Grubb, News & Observer | Section: weather news | 667 Words OpenURL Link

Emergency crews and residents scrambled Friday as Helene - the hurricane downgraded to a tropical storm - overwhelmed the Lake Lure dam in western North Carolina, causing damage and erosion along its structural supports.

A mandatory evacuation was ordered Friday morning after local officials notified the National Weather Service that a dam failure was imminent.

By late Friday afternoon, water had crested the dam, but it was continuing to hold despite the structural damage, according to Josh Kastrinsky, a spokesman for the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality.

Some erosion was also spotted on the left abutment, where water "is flowing uncontrolled," Kastrinsky said. An engineer was expected to inspect the dam late Friday or Saturday and determine the scope of the damage and needed repairs, he said.

lake lure dam.jpg

The dam, built in 1925 and 1926, is a tourist and recreational destination for the rural county. It also harnesses the Broad River and two creeks to power a hydroelectric plant producing electricity for Duke Power Co. from two hydroelectric turbine generators.

Dam workers typically lower the water in the lake by as much as 8 inches below the normal lake level before big storms, according to a document posted on the town's website. The town manager approves lowering the lake by more than that amount, it notes.

Workers use three flood gates to release excess water, but once the lake reaches 992.6 inches, the dam overflows, the document says. At that point, the docks on the lake "are underwater and boat tops have been crunched in boathouses," it says.

Gauges operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported the Broad River was nearing 992 feet Friday morning as Helene brought historic flooding to Rutherford County and the surrounding region.

0927-NWS-dampost

At 9 a.m. Friday, town officials notified the Rutherford County Emergency Management office about the pending dam failure, saying water from the lake was expected to top the dam before 10 a.m.

Sirens were activated to let residents in low-lying areas below the dam know about the pending failure, Rutherford County emergency officials said in a Facebook post.

"Evacuations have occurred from the Dam to Island Creek Road," they said. "Evacuation sirens are sounding downstream of the Dam. Emergency personnel are working with the structural engineers and are going house to house to ensure all citizens have been evacuated."

The danger from water overflowing the dam would be largely to homes near the Broad River, which flows southeast of the dam. The flash flood warning for Rutherford County was expected to remain in place until at least 2 a.m. Saturday, the NWS reported.

Emergency shelters have been opened at Lake Lure Town Hall on Memorial Highway and the Rutherfordton Presbyterian Church on North Washington Street in the town of Rutherfordton, they said.

Lake Lure DamThe area at risk from the Lake Lure dam failure is highlighted on this map from Google Earth. Residents in the surrounding neighborhoods were ordered to evacuate Friday morning.

The town has known about problems with the aging dam since a 2018 study that recommended millions of dollars in repairs and upgrades.. The work is underway, according to town updates posted online.

The evacuation was expected to displace many residents in the largely rural county, who emergency officials earlier on Friday urged to stay in their homes due to trees and power lines blocking roads across the county.

Blocked roads also forced local fire departments to suspend road clearing operations and EMS crews to stop responding to non-life-threatening calls until conditions improved, officials said. Kastrinsky said nearly 30 roads in the dam's flood zone were being evacuated at 11 a.m. Friday, and counties downstream were alerted that the situation could require more evacuations later.

Helene made landfall late Thursday night in Florida's Big Bend, where maximum sustained winds were 140 mph, according to the National Hurricane Center.

Buncombe County also issued a mandatory evacuation order for people along the Swannanoa River, from the North Fork Reservoir to Biltmore Village, because of water cresting the spillway. Other parts of the county were also urged to evacuate.

The story will be updated.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Tammy Grubb, News & Observer, 'NC officials detect damage to Lake Lure dam after emergency evacuation of people nearby', News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027C1FC237F0>



Check Triangle power outages as Tropical Depression Helene moves through the state

September 27, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Renee Umsted, News & Observer | Section: weather news | 219 Words OpenURL Link

Helene is bringing heavy rain and strong winds across North Carolina on Friday, Sept. 27, following days of showers for many parts of the state.

With the ground saturated and additional rainfall predicted, meteorologists and power companies are warning Triangle residents of potential power outages.

The Raleigh area is expected to receive 1 to 3 inches of rain throughout the morning and mid-afternoon Sept. 27, along with wind gusts of up to 45 mph.

We'll continue to update this story.

Duke Energy customers without power in Triangle counties

As of 4:53 p.m. Sept. 27, Duke Energy was reporting the following outages in the Triangle:

Durham County: 384 customers without powerFranklin County: one customer without powerJohnston County: 119 customers without powerOrange County: 1,219 customers without powerWake County: 300 customers without power

Track outages here.

Apex Electric Department

The Apex Electric Department serves 30,217 customers in Apex, North Carolina. Track outages here.

As of 4:54 p.m. Sept. 27, one power outage was reported.

South River Electric Membership Corporation

The South River Electric Membership Corporation serves more than 47,500 customers in Harnett, Cumberland, Sampson, Johnston and Bladen counties. Track outages here.

As of 4:54 p.m. Sept. 27, no outages were reported.

Wake Electric Membership Corporation

Wake Electric provides service to about 47,000 customers in Durham, Franklin, Granville, Johnston, Nash, Vance and Wake counties. Track outages here.

As of 4:55 p.m. Sept. 27, no outages were reported.

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Citation (aglc Style)

p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C695590613CD28>



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

September 27, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Richard Stradling, News & Observer | Section: weather news | 627 Words OpenURL Link

Click here for updated information on road closings in Western North Carolina.

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, downed trees and debris were also blocking the way in many places.

i 40.jpgSeveral lanes of I-40 in N.C. near the Tennessee line washed out and collapsed during catastrophic flooding from Helene. The North Carolina Department of Transportation said I-40 was closed in multiple locations between Asheville and eastern Tennessee due to washouts and debris.

Joey Hopkins, the Secretary of Transportation, said people should avoid traveling through Western North Carolina for the time being.

"We don't want you here if you don't live here and you're not helping with the storm," Hopkins said during a press conference at Asheville Regional Airport late Monday.

Flood waters from Helene rage through NC mountain townFlood waters from heavy rains from Helene raged through downtown Hot Springs, NC in the western North Carolina mountains, Friday, Sept. 27, 2024.

RAL_092722-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-21.JPGFoodwaters overrun a road in Canton on Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 as the remnants of Hurricane Helene caused flooding, downed trees, and power outages in western North Carolina.

NC road closings

It's not just local roads or city streets that are overwhelmed; interstates and other four-lane highways remain closed in several places.

I-40 is closed in both directions near the Tennessee line after the eastbound lanes washed into the Pigeon River Gorge in several places. 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), near the town of Erwin. NCDOT says it's likely to remain that way awhile. I-40 east of Asheville is clear of water, mud and debris, and people evacuating the Asheville area can use the highway going east. But the road going west into the mountains is open only to people responding to the storm, Hopkins said. 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 unnecessary 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 crews are still assessing the damage to roads and bridges, but the department says it's clear some repairs will take months. NCDOT says it will focus on reopening interstates and U.S. and state highways, and providing access to communities that have been cut off, before getting to state-maintained secondary roads.

"The scope and magnitude of this devastation is unlike anything many long-time residents have ever seen in western North Carolina," Hopkins said in a written statement. "We're doing everything we can to help North Carolina recover from this devastating storm, but this will be a long-term effort. We need people to be patient and help us with the recovery effort by staying off the roads."

NCDOT usually tracks and lists all closed roads and highways on its travel advisory website, drivenc.gov. On Monday, it said more than 300 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."

GYfUNGXXMAAjW3r.jpgFlood waters rage on U.S. 74 looking down from the Interstate 40 bridge near Asheville, N.C., as Helene dumps heavy rain on the area Friday.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Richard Stradling, News & Observer, 'NCDOT says all roads in Western NC should be considered closed, even the big ones', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027C12469E90>