

After Helene hit IV fluid plant, NC hospitals use Gatorade, rationing to handle shortages

BY CHASE JORDAN
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Hospitals in Charlotte, like their counterparts across the Carolinas and the nation, continue to deal with IV fluid shortages after Hurricane Helene flooding caused major problems for a manufacturing site in Western North Carolina.

The rain and storm surge from Helene flooded Baxter International's North Cove manufacturing site in McDowell County. Baxter supplies 60% of IV solutions used at hospitals and care centers in North America. Liquids with electrolytes like Gatorade are even being used for drinks as an IV fluid substitute for some patients in North Carolina and elsewhere around the country.

Novant Health, one of the Charlotte region's two main health care provid-

ers, told The Charlotte Observer it is conserving IV fluid supplies to minimize any impact to patient care. The hospital system said it is not planning to stop medical procedures.

Novant said it evaluates patients' needs to find the proper way to provide hydration, which can include water or fluids with electrolytes.

Atrium Health, the biggest health care provider in the Charlotte region, did not respond to multiple requests for comment from The Charlotte Observer about its IV fluid needs.

Novant was notified about not receiving its full allocation of Baxter products, and is working to source additional products from primary suppliers not impacted by Helene. "Our thoughts are with (Baxter's) teams as they face this unimaginable disaster," Novant said in a statement.

N.C. Department of Health and Human Services reported that health-care facilities will use conservation methods such as Gatorade to ensure IV fluid supply can be maintained for situations where oral hydration is not an option.

Ensuring that people impacted by the storm can access medical supplies is a top priority, said DHHS spokeswoman Summer Tonizzo.

REBUILDING THE BAXTER IV FLUID PLANT

The federal government and state partners are in touch with Baxter and helping the North Cove facility evaluate damages and engage in recovery efforts.

On Wednesday, Baxter announced that it would be increasing allocation for IV solution supplies from 40% to 60%. Baxter also expects to be at 70% by

the end of October, and 90% to 100% by the end of the year, according to the American Hospital Association and the company.

Baxter will continue to ration its IV products, the Raleigh News & Observer reported, including: saline, used to rehydrate patients and replace electrolytes; dextrose, a sugar solution used when patients are dehydrated or have low blood sugar; (Saline and dextrose are also used with other drugs that need to be administered by IV.); and dialysis solutions for patients with kidney failure.

The state's health department is focused on reducing supply chain disruptions that may result from damage to the facility and surrounding infrastructure, Tonizzo said.

The state will continue to coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to help the company clean up the

facility, Tonizzo added.

In the wake of Helene, Baxter managed to build a causeway into the plant, the News & Observer said. It has hundreds of workers at the plant already handling repairs to damaged and flooded areas.

And NCDOT is rebuilding a bridge to the plant with a temporary one provided by the Florida DOT.

Baxter also set up an onsite command center, and is contacting customers and industry officials about the allocation of products. Baxter officials were not available for comment Thursday.

IV FLUID CONCERNS ACROSS THE CAROLINAS

The IV fluid shortages are impacting hospitals across the Carolinas.

Last Friday, Duke University Hospital told the News & Observer that it is "working to assess in-

ventory, deploy conservation strategies, and triage future distribution in an equitable manner across the health system. At this time, we are making case-by-case assessments of our ability to safely perform certain surgeries and procedures going into the weekend and next week."

And the South Carolina Department of Public Health issued a health advisory Oct. 4 about the Baxter site impact to IV fluid and dialysis solutions.

The state agency, prior to any federal declaration of a supply shortage, recommended health facilities start conserving inventory and reduce non-essential uses. A recommendation was made to prioritize IV fluid use for urgent medical needs.

The agency notified healthcare agencies across the state formally asking them to follow those same guidelines.

The (Rock Hill) Herald reporter John Marks contributed to this report

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Charlotte restaurant inspection sanitation scores

BY EVAN MOORE
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An east Charlotte restaurant received a "B" grade from the Mecklenburg County Health Department for numerous health violations, including the presence of bugs.

- **El Paisano**, 5846 Albemarle Rd. in Charlotte, received a score of 86.5% during its Oct. 3 inspection.

The restaurant was cited after inspectors found "live roaches throughout facility and inside of ice machine," county documents show.

Other violations the restaurant was cited for include:

- Chicken wings cooling below required temperature
- Spray bottle of glass cleaner stored above herbs
- Multiple containers without labels
- Litter and debris buildup in dumpster enclosure

This is the restaurant's first "B" grade.

MECKLENBURG COUNTY SANITATION SCORES

The Mecklenburg County sanitation grades database shows that at least 259 restaurant in-

spections were completed Oct. 1-11.

- Most restaurants received an A grade, or a score of at least 90%.
- Four restaurants received a B grade, or a score of at least 80% but lower than 90%.
- **Biryani Nation** (14027 Conlan Cir.) received a score of 81.5% during an inspection on Oct. 1.
- The restaurant was in violation of 19 standards, including the presence of cockroaches and food residue on kitchen equipment.
- Some violations were

corrected during the inspection

- The restaurant previously scored 90.5% in June 2024.
- **Subway** (6133 South Blvd.) received a score of 83% during an inspection on Oct. 1.
- The restaurant was in violation of 19 standards, including the presence of flies and food stored on the floor.
- Some violations were corrected during the inspection
- The restaurant previously scored 95.5% in March 2024.
- **Lagz Restaurant**

Bar & Grille (2539 Little Rock Rd.) received a score of 87% during an inspection on Oct. 2.

- The restaurant was in violation of 12 standards, including the presence of flies and gnats, and kitchen facilities in disrepair.
- Most violations were corrected during the inspection
- The restaurant previously scored 90% in June 2024.

HOW TO SEARCH NC RESTAURANT INSPECTION SCORES

Sanitation scores and their corresponding letter grades are used in North Carolina to assess restaurants' adherence to rules

and standards intended to mitigate and prevent the spread of food-borne illnesses.

You've likely seen sanitation grade cards at restaurants you've visited, and The News & Observer previously explained what those scores mean and how they're calculated.

According to state law, permits are immediately revoked if a restaurant receives a score of less than 70%.

You can search all restaurant inspections in Mecklenburg County at public.cdpehs.com.

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