

Accuweather rates Helene as one of the worst damaging hurricanes in U.S. history

October 3, 2024 | Carteret County News-Times, The (Morehead City, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News Times | 1120 Words OpenURL Link

STATE COLLEGE, PA. — The AccuWeather Global Weather Center said in a news release Thursday that as the scope of catastrophic infrastructure damage, loss of life, business disruptions and other economic impacts becomes clearer in the wake of Hurricane Helene, it has increased its estimate of the total damage and economic loss from Hurricane Helene in the United States to between \$225 billion and \$250 billion.

This update from AccuWeather experts accounts for new and additional verified information, including the horrific loss of life, the immediate and long-term costs of healthcare for storm survivors and injured first responders, extended power outages, major infrastructure reconstruction projects for utilities, highways, bridges and railroad tracks, major business and travel disruptions, as well as long-term losses to tourism, technology, renewable energy and other industries across the southern Appalachians and southeastern U.S.

"Helene brought historic devastation and has tragically changed lives forever. The level of human suffering, the rising death toll and the tremendous damage to people's homes and businesses, as well as to critical infrastructure, from telecommunications to roads and highways and water supplies has been overwhelming. Helene was a truly historic storm," said AccuWeather Chief Meteorologist Jon Porter.

"Our hearts go out to everyone impacted. It will take months and years for many areas to recover, and some communities may not be rebuilt. While recovery operations have already started, it will be a long process given the widespread destruction of homes, businesses and infrastructure.

"Previous disasters suggest that even 10 years after such a damaging storm, rebuilding and recovery efforts may still be ongoing in some places. People and businesses in the impacted areas will need considerable support and assistance in the coming years.

"The long-term impacts from flooding could also contribute to health conditions due to exposure to mold, mildew, contaminated flood waters and other hazards. Tragically, in the coming decade, there may be thousands of excess deaths indirectly caused by the storm or stress from experiencing the devasting impacts. Additionally, the long tail of negative impacts to health will include the risk for significant and widespread mental health conditions, as seen in many other disasters."

AccuWeather's estimate also includes the projected costs of repairing or completely rebuilding infrastructure, including power substations and water treatment plants that were destroyed. Interstate 40 is not just impassable in some places, but the highway has been destroyed in some places.

Interstate 26 is impassable in some places.

The electric grid in some places does not exist anymore. It will take not just months but years to recover if they ever rebuild. Should these infrastructure repairs take even longer to repair than expected, the estimated total damage and economic loss estimate could increase. The updated estimate also includes new reports on damage, loss and disruptions caused by storm surge, flooding rainfall and wind damage in Florida and Georgia. There were also millions of dollars of losses to agriculture, including cotton, peanuts, pecans, tobacco and others from the storm.

AccuWeather issued its first preliminary estimate for the total damage and economic loss from Hurricane Helene of \$95 billion to \$110 billion on Sept. 28. AccuWeather experts later updated the estimate for the total damage and economic loss for Hurricane Helene to \$145 billion to \$160 billion on Sept. 30.

"The 2024 Atlantic hurricane season has taken a tremendous toll on the U.S. economy," the company said in its news release. "Many people impacted in the southern Appalachians do not have flood insurance. AccuWeather's analysis shows that in some of the hardest-hit counties in North Carolina, less than 1% of homeowners have coverage for water damage through the National Flood Insurance program.

"We know that many families and small business owners were likely underinsured for this level of catastrophic impacts. This is particularly problematic for small business owners, as FEMA statistics show nearly 50 percent of small businesses damaged by a natural disaster may never reopen. The latest weather disaster to hit the U.S. is straining federal, state and local resources," Porter said. "

"The disruption to businesses could last for weeks or months, and it will likely take years for many to recover. Hurricane Helene will likely further complicate the insurance crisis in high-risk areas, where some families and businesses are already facing skyrocketing premiums or having their coverage dropped altogether due to the growing threats of flooding rainfall and storm surge in vulnerable areas."

Hurricane Helene will go down as one of the most damaging and impactful storms in U.S. history, along with Hurricane Ian from 2022, which brought \$180-\$210 billion in total damage and economic loss; Hurricane Harvey, which caused \$190 billion in total damage and economic loss, and Hurricane Irma (\$80 billion), both in 2017; Sandy in 2012 (\$210 billion); Katrina in 2005 (\$320 billion), as adjusted for inflation. Other storms this year included \$28-\$32 billion for Beryl and \$28 billion for Debby.

AccuWeather estimates Hurricane Maria caused an estimated \$90 billion in total damage and economic loss in 2017. Nearly 3,000 fatalities were reported in Puerto Rico during Maria.

The deadliest hurricane in the United States in modern times would be Hurricane Katrina, which took the lives of about 1,200 people.

Helene impacted many of the same areas that were damaged by the disastrous flood of 1916 in Asheville and across western North Carolina.

For the areas impacted by flooding, water damage tends to be particularly costly to repair and may either not be covered by homeowner's insurance policies or underinsured relative to actual damage sustained for people who do carry additional flood insurance.

The AccuWeather estimate largely accounts for damage to homes, businesses, medical facilities, roadways and vehicles, as well as power outages, which results in food spoilage and interruption to medical care.

AccuWeather incorporates independent methods to evaluate all direct and indirect impacts of the storm, includes both insured and uninsured losses and is based on a variety of sources, statistics and unique techniques AccuWeather uses to estimate the damage, the news release states.

It includes damage to property, job and wage losses, crops, infrastructure damage, interruption of the supply chain, auxiliary business losses and flight delays. The estimate also accounts for the costs of evacuations, relocations, emergency management and the extraordinary government expenses for cleanup operations and the long-term effects on business logistics, transportation and tourism as well as the health effects and the medical and other expenses of unreported deaths and injuries.

AccuWeather estimates can sometimes be multiples of estimates released by other sources because those sources consider only insured losses or provide an incomplete picture of the total damage and economic impact, which the AccuWeather estimate considers and includes.

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Crystal Coast Water Rescue Team returns home after Hurricane Helene deployment

October 3, 2024 | Carteret County News-Times, The (Morehead City, NC) Author: TODD WETHERINGTON NEWS TIMES | Section: News Times | 732 Words OpenURL Link

MOREHEAD CITY - A team of local rescue personnel formed in the wake of another historic storm got a chance to test their skills last week assisting those impacted by Hurricane Helene.

The Crystal Coast Water Rescue Team deployed 12 people to Black Mountain in hard-hit Buncombe County, arriving September 26 and returning home on October 1. Formed following Hurricane Florence in 2018, the swift water rescue team includes members of Morehead City Fire-EMS, the Newport Fire Department and Washington Fire-Rescue-EMS.

The deployment, which was the team's first, was made up of seven members of the Morehead City team, three from Washington and two from Newport.

Brandon Doshier, battalion chief with Morehead City Fire-EMS, was among those who witnessed the damage firsthand.

"There are some places out west that it's total devastation," he commented. "Infrastructure has to be rebuilt, roads were washed away, houses were gone. It's a pretty bad situation. There for a little bit you were pretty much on your own, you learned how to survive with what you've got until resources could come to you."

Having experienced hurricanes on the East Coast, Doshier said he was surprised by the storm's impact on the Buncombe County area, which includes Asheville and is bordered by the French Broad River.

"We're pretty accustomed to hurricanes on the East Coast, but we learned pretty quickly that hurricanes in the mountains definitely offer a new perspective to what we've seen," he said. "Just the reservoirs and the rivers, the way it funnels the water to low-lying towns really causes a lot of destruction."

Though he declined to give specifics about rescues the Crystal Coast Water and Rescue Team were involved with, Doshier said the group was initially tasked with helping evacuate towns ahead of the storm's arrival.

"We tried to get people to safer locations in the event that something was going to happen," he explained. "We were telling people if they could go east someplace outside their area that was probably the safest bet. They did have a couple of shelters in place if those people didn't have a place to go."

Doshier said a key to the team's efforts was the camaraderie between fire and rescue units from not only N.C.'s east and west coasts but other states as well.

"It really didn't matter where you were from, just being there helping each other with whatever they needed, providing resources and help," he noted.

Doshier said his experiences with the The Crystal Coast Water Rescue Team had given him a new appreciation for the power unleashed by major storms.

"Seeing that type of destruction really gives you an insight on what mother nature can do," he said. "You better prepare yourself, that's really something you need to take away from this."

Morehead Fire-Rescue is accepting donations for hurricane victims.

Donations for those impacted by Hurricane Helene will be accepted at Morehead City Fire-EMS Station 2, located at 4034 Arendell Street, through Monday, October 7, daily from 8 a.m.-7 p.m.

According to Kristen Davis, firefighter/paramedic with Morehead City Fire-EMS, donations that are especially needed include pediatric items such as bottles and pacifiers, over the counter medications, hygiene items and first aid supplies including ointments and bandages.

"They don't have anything in certain spots so we're trying to meet all of the immediate needs," Davis noted.

Davis said financial donations can also be made at the Morehead City Fire-Rescue in the form of cash or check through Crystal Coast Boots N Badges. Financial donations will also be accepted at the two Morehead City Fire Department booths at the North Carolina Seafood Festival.

Davis said local fire and EMS units are working with county and state officials to make sure donated items are reaching their intended destinations.

"The big thing is to make sure the help is being done in the right way so we're not causing more issues for those guys out west," she said.

Davis fought back tears as she described the "outpouring of love and support" she has witnessed.

"Everybody in Carteret County is familiar with the hurricanes but it's a different beast on the western end because you have the mountains and the water's running down," she commented. "We're all familiar with devastation and everybody in this county just wants to help."

Davis praised the efforts of the local water rescue team.

"These guys went beyond to put this team together," she said. "They helped complete strangers gather belongings when imminent danger was right at their backs. I couldn't be prouder of them."

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Shelter volunteer Curran Cloer in Morganton, N.C.

October 3, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Video (NC)

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Watch: Popular YouTuber uses chopper to rescue Hurricane Helene victims in Western NC

October 3, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Evan Moore, The Charlotte Observer | Section: north_carolina | 184 Words OpenURL Link

As Western North Carolinians recover from the devastating impacts of Hurricane Helene, a popular YouTuber has taken to the skies to assist with rescue efforts.

In a YouTube video posted Tuesday, Lawrence Mitchell, a racing driver and helicopter pilot known professionally as Cleetus McFarland, detailed his experience flying a helicopter to help those affected by the hurricane evacuate the area on Saturday.

"My wife and I got someone to watch the kids, and we loaded up with one bag and flew to North Carolina with no plan, and posted that we were on our way," Mitchell said in the video. "By the time we got there, we had about 500 emails and a ton of text messages, my post had been shared thousands of times, and we were blown away."

Mitchell and his wife, Madi, were able to rescue multiple people, including a mother and her 4-month-old baby, he said in the video, and deliver food, water and other supplies to the area.

"It's been some of the craziest days of my life, and I just wanted to share some of these clips," Mitchell said.

Cleetus McFarland Helene

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Evan Moore, The Charlotte Observer, 'Watch: Popular YouTuber uses chopper to rescue Hurricane Helene victims in Western NC', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 3 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFAE3FACCB4CE8>



Rethinking your homeowners insurance after Helene? What to know about what policies cover

October 3, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Chyna Blackmon, The Charlotte Observer | Section: north_carolina | 703 Words OpenURL Link

The road to recovery after Hurricane Helene, one of the worst storms in U.S. history, is expected to be a long one, especially for many in Western North Carolina.

After catastrophic flooding that swept through much of the western part of the state, the NC Department of Insurance is working with law enforcement agencies, emergency management, first responders and other groups to help those in need, including the processing of insurance claims.

lakelurechmineyrock_26.JPGA destroyed house with a car under it in Chimney Rock, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

With nearly two months left of the Atlantic Hurricane Season, more storms could be on the way that could have just as much of an impact as Helene.

"It is extremely important that every North Carolinian know what to do well before, during and after a storm occurs to best mitigate any damages and loss of life," state Commissioner of Insurance Mike Causey said in a release ahead of Helene's hit.

"These storms are powerful, but precious lives and property can be spared if you take the time in advance to familiarize yourself with these tips."

Here's what to know.

ncdoi storm insurance prep tips youtube video

'Know exactly what your policies do or do not cover'

Taking inventory of your belongings at home and making sure you have the right coverage are among the most important things to do to prepare for a storm, according to NCDOI, especially because you may need additional policies depending on the damage left behind.

RAL_092822-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-16.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.

"Standard homeowners policies do not cover flood damage and, in some coastal areas, windstorm and hail coverages are also excluded from the standard policy," the NCDOI website says.

"The only way to protect your property from flood losses is to purchase flood insurance from the National Flood Insurance Program. Policies must be in place for 30 days before coverage takes effect."

0926helene-4.jpgArden residents survey the damage along Oak Terrace Friday afternoon after Hurricane Helene passed through the Asheville area the night before.

For those that rent their homes, a landlord's insurance only covers the building, according to NCDOI, so you would

need to buy your own renters' policy to make sure your personal belongings could be protected.

In the event that your home has been damaged in a storm, here's what the agency recommends to do after a storm:

Report any loss to your homeowners' insurance agent or company Document any damages before making any temporary repairsDo what you can to prevent any further damageDo not dispose of any damaged materials or make permanent repairs until your insurance company has done an inspection. If your home is inhabitable, contact your insurance company about which expenses will be reimbursed.

RAL_092822-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-32.JPGBlake Nelson, 11, and his father Mitch Nelson clean up a flooded salon in Clyde 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.

Does your NC home need flood insurance? What to know about cost + coverage options

After Helene: Tips for assessing storm's damage to your home & filing insurance claims

Assistance for Helene storm victims

As recovery efforts continue for Helene, NCDOI announced that two Victim Assistance Centers will be opening soon to help those in need at the department's North Wilkesboro and Gastonia offices:

Oct. 4 and Oct. 7: 307 Ninth St., North Wilkesboro, N.C. 28659.Oct. 7: 1422 Burtonwood Drive, Suite 101, Gastonia, N.C. 28054

"These Victim Assistance Centers will help to give in-person and on-the-ground recovery assistance and provide insurance-related support to those directly impacted by Hurricane Helene," Causey said in a release. "Our goal is to open more VACs in other locations and to provide valuable resources in the coming days and weeks."

The centers will be open for assistance between 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. to help those affected.

You can find more information about storm-related insurance policies and updates online at ncdoi.gov/helene.

RAL_100124-HELENE-KLM-02.JPGA person walks next to a demolished building in Frank, N.C. on Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024, days after Hurricane Helene brought heavy rain and flooding to the western part of the state.

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Free legal assistance available for Helene storm victims in NC. How to get help.

October 3, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Chyna Blackmon, The Charlotte Observer | Section: north_carolina | 338 Words OpenURL Link

As thousands of North Carolinians continue to pick up the pieces from the destruction left behind by Hurricane Helene, free legal help is now available to help those in need.

The North Carolina Bar Association and Foundation, Legal Aid of North Carolina, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have teamed up to launch a pro bono legal program with local lawyers.

RAL_100124-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-08.JPGResidents and volunteers clean up on Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024 after the French Broad River flooded downtown Marshall. The remnants of Hurricane Helene caused widespread flooding, downed trees, and power outages in western North Carolina.

The Disaster Legal Services hotline (866-219-5262) is available for low-income survivors to connect with volunteer attorneys to assist with any storm-related questions and disaster benefits, including:

FEMA appealsDisaster Unemployment Assistance Insurance claimsHome repair contracts and contractor disputesContractor fraud and consumer protection mattersReplacing destroyed legal documentsMortgage-foreclosureLandlord or tenant issues

Rethinking your homeowners insurance after Helene? What to know about what policies cover

RAL_100124-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-04.JPGResidents and volunteers clean up on Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024 after the French Broad River flooded downtown Marshall. The remnants of Hurricane Helene caused widespread flooding, downed trees, and power outages in western North Carolina.

The toll-free hotline is available 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 5:30-8:30 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays. To be connected to a volunteer lawyer, explain which county you are located in and ask for Disaster Legal Services assistance.

According to Legal Aid of North Carolina, 26 continues have been approved for the federal assistance: 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 counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

You can find more information about the Disaster Legal Services hotline and Legal Aid's resource library with tips for replacing lost documents, property taxes, unemployment assistance and more online at legalaidnc.org/disaster.

How Apple, T-Mobile & Verizon customers can access Wi-Fi & phone signals after Helene

Price gouging law is in effect following Helene. How to recognize & report it in NC

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Congress ignored disaster relief requests. Now, calls begin to return for Helene recovery

October 3, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Danielle Battaglia, The Charlotte Observer | Section: politics_government | 1711 Words OpenURL Link

Members of Congress saw Hurricane Helene coming.

Last week, they had planned to be in Washington through Friday, and then recess for the month of October to focus on the election. But as Helene strengthened while approaching Florida, they announced an early dismissal to get home ahead of the storm.

Now, lawmakers from the states devastated by Helene are asking for help from congressional leadership, including the possibility of coming back in October to fund the relief efforts.

And costs could be high.

"I've heard numbers in the \$150 billion range, particularly in North Carolina," said Sen. Ted Budd, a Republican from Davie County, who spoke to McClatchy Tuesday night. "If you consider the volume and the velocity of water in the mountains, it's devastating."

RAL_100124-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-16.JPGResidents and volunteers clean up on Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024 after the French Broad River flooded downtown Marshall. The remnants of Hurricane Helene caused widespread flooding, downed trees, and power outages in western North Carolina.

Both Budd and Sen. Thom Tillis signed a letter Tuesday to Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Appropriations Chair Patty Murray and Vice Chair Susan Collins asking for help.

"Although the true level of devastation is still unfolding, it is clear that Congress must act to meet the unmet needs in our states and address the scope and scale of destruction experienced by our constituents," the senators wrote. "This may even require Congress to come back in October to ensure we have enough time to enact legislation before the end of this calendar year."

RAL_100224-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-27.JPGNick Morel, an offshore operator, refuels a portable light in Biltmore Village in Asheville on Wednesday October 2, 2204. The area received extensive damage from flooding of the Swannanoa River after the remnants of Hurricane Helene caused torrential rainfall in western North Carolina.

Government shutdown

Congress recessed Wednesday and instead of passing 12 appropriation bills to fund the government, members approved a continuing resolution to keep the government operating at its current levels until Dec. 20. Congress isn't scheduled to return until after the election to take up the budget again.

The CR included an increase in funding for the Secret Service after two attempts on the life of former President Donald Trump.

But multiple lawmakers raised concerns about the lack of emergency relief aid in the the bill. And they were forced to vote on the bill or risk a government shutdown after Sept. 30.

Both Budd and another Republican from North Carolina, Rep. Dan Bishop, voted against the CR.

How close the country came to a government shutdown while Helene ripped through Western North Carolina is something Rep. Chuck Edwards, a Republican from Flat Rock, has thought about a lot as he's tried to help his constituents in the days since.

"I think it's important to realize how critical it is that our federal government continues to operate, and we should take a moment to take note that we were within hours, yet again, of the federal government shutting down," Edwards told McClatchy Monday. "I can't imagine what Western North Carolina would be like right now were we in a government shutdown."

Edwards said that should be enough of a wake-up call for Congress that it needs to get work done ahead of time.

RAL_OLDFORT-NE-100224-RTW_13.JPGBrooke Canning climbs out a window of her damaged home on Wednesday, October 2, 2024 in Old Fort, N.C. Canning was trying to salvage personal items after flood waters from Hurricane Helene flooded Mill Creek and her neighborhood in the center of town.

Begging for emergency relief

The reality wasn't lost on lawmakers on the Senate and House floors as they had to make that decision.

Both Rep. Rosa DeLauro, a Democrat from Connecticut, and Sen. Brian Schatz, a Democrat from Hawaii, expressed their concerns that they were once again voting on a bill at the last minute; and neither liked that it lacked funding for relief efforts. But to vote against the bill had catastrophic consequences.

For Schatz, it was personal. The Democrat from Hawaii is still fighting for additional relief for his constituents whose lives were ripped apart in the fire that tore through Maui in August 2023.

"All across the country, in more than 20 states and territories, millions of Americans are reeling from disasters," Schatz said, on Sept. 12, on the Senate floor. "Wildfires, hurricanes, droughts, floods. And having lost their homes, their communities, and their livelihoods, they're counting on the federal government for help."

Schatz told his colleagues that that was one of their basic jobs in Congress.

RAL_OLDFORT-NE-100224-RTW_14.JPGTwo cars, completely demolished by flood waters from Mills Creek in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene on Wednesday, October 2, 2024 in Old Fort, N.C.

Tillis joined Schatz and eight other senators who wrote to leadership Sept. 13 asking for additional disaster relief funding through a supplemental appropriations package.

But when the bill was signed, it excluded billions in requested dollars for emergency relief.

On Tuesday, Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters that the CR replenished funds for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and that that money could address the immediate response needed for Helene, The Hill reported.

His remarks come just two days after Biden said he may call back Congress to fund Helene relief, and less than 24 hours after Budd and Tillis sent their letter to Senate leadership along with the every senator from South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee and Virginia.

All of those states experienced devastation from the storm, and Budd said that added an extra complication to relief efforts. He said typically neighboring states would come to each other's aid, but right now each needs to focus on its own people.

RAL_100124-HELENE-KLM-01.JPGVolunteers unload donated supplies at Spear Country Store & Hardware in Avery

County as residents recover from the effects of Hurricane Helene on Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024, in Spear, N.C.

Missing and hurting people

Budd said it will take years to rebuild, but for now, North Carolina is still in a search and recovery phase.

"The search and rescue is still going on," Budd said. "People are still being extracted. There are people that need oxygen, they need diabetic medicine, insulin, they need critical care, they're elderly."

Budd said the first goal is to get them to safety; simultaneous with that is getting communications up and running and power restored.

"You know, this part of North Carolina is resilient mountain people. Given them a chainsaw, five gallons of gas, they're going to be able to take care of themselves and their neighbors and if you give them some clean water, they'll be OK — and a little food."

RAL_092922-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-39.JPGA man crosses a narrow section of flood damaged bridge in Swannanoa on Sunday, Sept. 29, 2024. The remnants of Hurricane Helene caused widespread flooding, downed trees, and power outages in western North Carolina.

Damaged infrastructure

Budd, Tillis and Edwards, along with Reps. David Rouzer and Greg Murphy and Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Troxler, took an aerial tour of the storm damage in North Carolina Tuesday.

President Joe Biden planned to take the same tour Wednesday afternoon.

"There is so much damage to critical infrastructure," Budd said. "Bridges are gone, roads are gone."

RAL_092922-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-16 (1).JPGA washed out bridge over the Swannanoa River in Black Mountain on Sunday, Sept. 29, 2024. The remnants of Hurricane Helene caused widespread flooding, downed trees, and power outages in western North Carolina.

He said there's an added complication that normally these types of disasters strike flat areas, where sand can be easily moved out of the way, but right now they're dealing with rough terrain and downed trees.

Budd said state lawmakers had been fiscally responsible and maintained a rainy day fund of \$5 billion, but the cost to rebuild will surpass that by leaps and bounds.

He said money is needed to repair Interstate 40, Interstate 26, bridges, roads and other infrastructure.

"That's what we need support in, and we want to make sure that it's as clean as possible," Budd said. "That no one's taking advantage of anybody, and that the money gets to repair what we say it's doing. That it's not doing some sort of social justice program, but it's really just helping rebuild Western North Carolina, and of course the other states: eastern Tennessee, North Georgia, southwest Virginia."

See the damage of I-40 through Pigeon River GorgeDrone video taken by NCDOT's Division of Aviation shows some of the damage Helene caused to Interstate 40's path through the Pigeon River Gorge.

Damaged crops

Then there's the state's farmland.

"In regard to agriculture, so much of the fertile ground that we have in North Carolina is in riverbeds, creek beds, or

floodplains," Budd said. "It doesn't get flooded that often, but when it does, it's usually not this bad, and it's just devastating."

Budd said everything from tomato crops to orchards were affected.

"There's so much produce that comes out of Henderson County," Budd said.

On Tuesday morning, Rep. Deborah Ross, a Democrat from Wake County, helped lead a group of 33 members from both chambers and parties in sending a letter to Schumer, McConnell, Johnson and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries saying it is "imperative that Congress make appropriations as soon as possible upon the completion of damage assessments to fully fund unmet agricultural disaster relief needs in our states and across the nation."

The lawmakers added: "Farmers and growers nationwide, not only those damaged by Helene, have now faced multiple growing seasons without sufficient federal support. Our constituents are counting on us to act swiftly."

Tillis, Edwards, Murphy, Bishop and Reps. Don Davis, Kathy Manning, Alma Adams, Wiley Nickel and Jeff Jackson also signed onto the letter.

NC residents dig out of the mud, knowing Helene has forever changed their communitiesThe News & Observer's Travis Long, Kaitlin McKeown and Josh Shaffer capture the scenes in Marshall and Avery County, NC as residents begin the long process to recover from Helene's devastation.

Coming back to Congress

Budd told McClatchy he wasn't sure whether Congress would need to return in October to help with relief efforts, but he was ready to respond to whatever North Carolina needs.

"I'm pushing for funding," Budd said. "How that happens and the timing of it, I don't know."

Budd said that in the past, funding was able to be provided through unanimous consent.

But he wants to see any legislation before he cast his vote.

"You want to hold the government accountable, while having excellent use of taxpayer dollars," Budd said. "So I think we need to see the bill and see where the money would be appropriated."

Under The Dome embed (2022)

New Under the Dome newsletter subscriber embed (graybox)

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'In one day, it's wiped out.' Helene brought misery to businesses near the Catawba too

October 3, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Chase Jordan, The Charlotte Observer | Section: north_carolina | 1057 Words OpenURL Link

Nzelle Mayeba stood outside her medical business in Morganton wearing mud-covered rubber gloves while a work crew tossed office furniture on a trailer like trash.

"We lost everything," Mayeba said. "This is just crazy."

Flood waters from the Catawba River destroyed Faith Primary Care Plus after Hurricane Helene swept through Western North Carolina. "Look at our brand new \$5,000 fax machine," Mayeba said while staring at the damage.

Most of Helene's deadly wrath centered on the Western North Carolina mountains around Asheville. But damage from the hurricane's floods also impacted communities in the N.C. Foothills like Morganton, a Burke County city an hour east of Asheville.

RE_8Flood-damaged furniture and office equipment were placed in a piles by business owners at the Rivers Village center in Morganton.

Small business owners at the Rivers Village shopping center are feeling plenty of pain and devastation. And it's going to take a lot of time to recover for the area sitting near the Catawba River.

After the storm, Faith Primary office manager Vicki Brown went through the damage to safeguard medical records, which are also backed up on computers.

It may take the Federal Emergency Management Agency up to three to six months to provide help with recovery, according to Brown.

RE 20Vicki Brown, an office manager for Faith Primary Care Plus, observes damage to a weight scale.

Mayeba wished she had an earlier warning to remove refrigerators, freezers, computers, an X-ray machine, medication and vaccines. And she's no stranger to storms after experiencing hurricanes in Florida and coastal North Carolina.

"The least we expect from the government is just tell us 'there's danger coming, get out,' " Mayeba said.

Now, she's left with a lot of questions.

"Who's going to pay for all of these damages? I'm going to do that," Mayeba said about the setback. "Who's going to help us? The government? The state?"

President Joe Biden granted Gov. Roy Cooper's request for a Federal Major Disaster Declaration on Sunday for Helene providing immediate federal help for 25 North Carolina counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, according to a news release from the governor's office.

Mayeba, an African immigrant from Cameroon, started Faith Primary Care Plus about three years ago, and it took a lot of steps for the nurse practitioner to build the business.

"You do it little by little," she said. "You try to get your stuff together as time goes on. And all of a sudden, in one day, it's wiped out."

Although Faith Primary Care lost a lot, she's optimistic about a couple of things that were spared from Helene.

The only things that survived were a flower arrangement and Mayeba's medical book for psychiatry and mental health disorders. It was sitting on her desk and she believes it was able to stay dry after the table floated up.

"That's just unbelievable," she said. "I'm going to keep that book forever."

Caught off-guard by Helene

Nearby at the shopping center, dirt stains from the Catawba River covered Flossie Amoia as she sloshed through the soaked floor of her physical therapy business called Rivers Edge.

"I had a sauna in here," Amoia said. Helene brought about 8 feet of floodwaters to Rivers Edge, which has been open for 15 years.

After the water receded on Sunday, Amoia and helpers began working at 10 a.m. Tuesday.

RE_6Flossie Amoia takes in the flood damage from Hurricane Helene at Rivers Edge, a physical therapy business in Morganton.

She's thankful for flood insurance, but it may only cover half of the damages. Amoia hopes she can rebuild at Rivers Village. But in the meantime, she is looking for a temporary space so her staff can continue to work. She's seeking assistance from the U.S. Small Business Administration so she can pay and keep her employees.

"It's been devastating," Amoia said.

RE_3Flooding from the Catawba River damaged equipment from Rivers Edge after Hurricane Helene came through North Carolina.

The storm also caught Rivers Village owners and brothers Carl and Jimmy Kirksey off guard. They went through a flood about 20 years ago, but it wasn't this severe.

"We knew it was coming," Carl said, "but we didn't know it was going to be this intense."

The total cost of damage to the shopping center is not known yet, but the landlords are paying for the building damages. Inspectors will examine the spaces after business owners remove everything.

"We're just devastated for (the tenants), more than anything," Jimmy added.

Helene brings up reminder of Hurricane Hugo

About 4 miles away, Oak Hill Methodist Church opened its door for American Red Cross to operate a shelter in Morganton.

"There's not a better feeling," said Heather Frazee, executive director of the American Red Cross Piedmont Triad Chapter. "To be able to give them hope and comfort at a time that's probably the worst in their whole life — that's why we're here."

"I think everybody needs to band together to help each other out right now, and it seems like people are doing that," said volunteer Julie Cardenas.

RC_3The American Red cross operates a shelter at Oak Hill Methodist Church in Morganton for people impacted by Helene.

Volunteers came from near and far to help. Pam Pickle traveled from Colorado to volunteer with the Red Cross. "Luckily, I have a supportive significant other that can stay home and take care of the house and animals," Pickle said.

Many area residents are still without power and need the electricity to use oxygen tanks for health reasons. About 25 people stayed at the shelter overnight on Tuesday or came by to pick up water, enjoy a hot meal or to charge their phones.

RC_3(1)Volunteer Julie Cardenas breaks down boxes after meals were sent by Cracker Barrel to serve at the Oak Hill Methodist Church.

Siblings Terry Davis, Ron Davis and Bonnie Johnson have lived in the region for decades and haven't experienced anything like Helene since Hurricane Hugo struck in September 1989.

"It tore up these mountains and that water got to go somewhere," Ron said.

They are slowly getting back services. And although water comes from their faucets, they were advised to boil it."You can't use the water and they said don't drink it," he said about being on the safe side. "It's really hard and putting a hurting on us."

Elementary school teacher Tracy Wright came to the shelter to charge her two laptops so she could check in with her students.

"I'm making sure these are on 100% because I know I have 1,000 emails," she said. "I just want to know they're OK."

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Bananas, beer and coffee could be supply chain casualties from Helene and a port strike

October 3, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: John Marks, The Charlotte Observer | Section: north_carolina | 1402 Words OpenURL Link

Bananas, imported wine and beer, coffee and car parts — there's a long list of items consumers across the Carolinas might struggle to find in coming weeks. A dockworker strike on the heels of a destructive hurricane is a main reason why, but shopping habits could become another.

"This is highly unusual," said Robert Handfield, professor and supply chain expert at North Carolina State University.

"Big storms hitting major interstate highways combined with port strikes is unprecedented."

Hurricane Helene ripped through the Carolinas last week, cutting power to the western parts of both states.

Western North Carolina faced major flooding and widespread destruction. Many people across the Carolinas still are without power. The storm badly damaged major freight routes Interstate 40 and Interstate 26 near the North Carolina and Tennessee border.

Now, dockworkers across the eastern half of the country are on strike. That labor dispute will disrupt supply chains that rely on facilities in Wilmington, Morehead City and Charleston to stock the region with goods.

RAL_092922-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-07.JPGInterstate closings in North Carolina due to damage from Hurricane Helene could combine with a port worker strike to create supply chain disruptions that increase prices for goods across the Carolinas.

Grocery store supply chain impact

Mark Ferguson is an associate dean at the University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business. Grocery stores across the Carolinas that lost power and had to throw out fresh items will result in higher prices and harder-to-find items "probably within days," he said Wednesday afternoon.

"Short-term, predominantly we'll probably see fresh vegetables, fruits, anything being imported from South America. To a lesser degree, Europe."

Ferguson isn't aware of loss of power at cold storage facilities, where food stocks are kept before going to supermarkets. But when they and grocery stores have to restock, it could be difficult getting items from the West Coast.

"The strike would create that by itself. But it's going to be amplified by the hurricane because existing inventories are depleted," Ferguson said. "It's going to be up and down the East Coast from the port shutdowns, but particularly the Carolinas, Florida, Georgia."

The port strike could impact anything from larger European auto parts used in South Carolina's BMW or Volvo plants to French or Italian wines, German beer or cheeses. Large appliances like washing machines or heavy machinery from Europe could become difficult to get.

The strike also could impact produce from the West Coast. How long consumers see those impacts will depend on the strike.

"That's going to be a problem until the ports reopen," Ferguson said. "There's not really an economical way to get fresh food to the East Coast, other than the ports."

Companies that trade in non-perishable items, particularly large retailers, pre-ordered inventory ahead of the strike to have a month or so of supply.

"I don't see a real need to panic buy things like electronics, toys, Christmas presents," Ferguson said. "These big retailers were anticipating strikes."

Prices are likely to rise on construction materials, due to port availability and tremendous need in Helene's path, he said.

"There's going to be a lot of rebuilding," Ferguson said.

If the strike lasts longer than the month most companies stocked up for, then consumers will begin to feel a steeper impact, he said.

USATSI_24373787.jpgAn International Longshoremen's Association member holds a picket sign along with fellow union members outside the entrance to the Garden City Terminal in Georgia on Tuesday as the ILA went on strike at the Georgia Ports Authority. The Carolinas face supply chain concerns on staple items as a port strike follows damage from Hurricane Helene.

Panic buying could impact product availability

Because retailers began prepping for a possible dock worker strike during the summer, impacts on customers should be minimal for the first couple of weeks, said University of South Carolina research economist Joey Von Nessen. That's if — and it's a big if — consumers follow normal buying patterns.

For communities that remember how fast toilet paper flew off the shelves during the height of the COVID pandemic, or tried to buy milk and bread on a snow day, there's always the threat of panic buying.

"Anticipated shortages can sometimes lead to current shortages," Von Nessen said. "That creates that self-fulfilling prophecy."

Both sides of the worker strike have incentive to resolve in quickly, he said, since both are consumers themselves and know how critical that work is to the region's infrastructure. The port in Charleston contributes to one of every nine South Carolina jobs and has an annual economic impact of \$87 billion, Von Nessen said.

Unlike bananas that may spoil if they have to take a longer, more expensive route through the West Coast due to the strike, South Carolina's main exports or vehicles, tires and agricultural products. "All of those are non-perishable items," Von Nessen said.

But if the strike goes beyond two weeks, price increases and product shortages could start to rise, he said. It's an unusual time to forecast, with variables from labor negotiations to markets and roads wiped away by the hurricane and unable to receive goods.

"It is very unusual to have two events like this happen at the same time," Von Nessen said. "It just magnifies the challenge. It's important to keep in mind not to panic."

Interstate loss to drive regional concerns

Even without the dockworker strike, the Carolinas would be facing logistical concerns.

"I-40 and 26 are major thoroughfares for a lot of freight for the east coast," Handfield said. "So it is hitting many

different areas of the country, which will likely impact many different categories. One of the biggest concerns is healthcare supplies for the hospitals in Helene's path, which typically do not have a lot of inventory."

It likely will be months before logistical channels improve.

"We need to be thinking about the infrastructure — cell phone towers, roads, power lines and many other elements," Handfield said. "This will take months to repair and get this community working again."

RAL_092922-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-40.JPGAn aerial view of flood damage in Swannanoa on Sunday. The remnants of Hurricane Helene caused widespread flooding, downed trees, and power outages in western North Carolina. Interstates out there, plus a port worker strike, could cause supply change issues that increase prices across North and South Carolina.

Price gouging at retail shops

Too many retailers to name have donated millions of dollars worth of supplies to places ravaged by Helene, said Andy Ellen, president and general counsel for the 2,500-member North Carolina Retail Merchants Association. Yet there's still a cost to all those diverted trucks and manpower.

"Those are some of the items that would have moved from a distribution center into a store that wasn't impacted by the hurricane," Ellen said.

He doesn't expect a short-term problem getting water, cleaning supplies or plywood to rebuild from the storm. But he does see potential issues with the dockworker strike. About 40% of what ends up on store shelves in the country pass through those ports, Ellen said.

Even if the strike ends quickly but workers get the wage increases they're seeking, he said, markets could feel it. "That will also potentially impact price points," Ellen said. The group negotiating for the ports has offered 50% raises over the six-year life of the contract, while the union has demanded 77%.

Consumers should expect to see some price increases, including staples like coffee, Ellen said. Customers also can help or hurt supply based on how they shop.

"Regardless of the hurricane and regardless of this strike, it is not a time for consumers to panic," Ellen said. "We've had that before."

Avian flu drove up egg prices in the past, and the war in Ukraine impacted wheat. COVID stressed items across the supply chain. As prices increase and people buy what they can find, either for themselves or to donate, some people might mistake the natural supply and demand of pricing with price gouging, Ellen said.

"That doesn't mean that the retailer is doing anything wrong," he said.

Ellen is hopeful conditions will improve by the holiday shopping season. He's also concerned as the country is still recovering from high prices due to inflation.

How long the port strike lasts will determine whether it's a blip or something closer to the COVID-era supply chain challenges.

"We could see some of that in the future," Ellen said. "If this strike is elongated, we will see higher prices on store shelves."

I40 MM4.pngThe Pigeon River damaged or destroyed the eastbound lanes of Interstate 40 in several places after the remnants of Hurricane Helene dropped historic amounts of rain on Western North Carolina. This photo was taken about four miles from the Tennessee line.

• Citation (aglc Style)

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At the Salty Goat Grill in Western North Carolina, residents come in for coffee and community

October 3, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Sara Murphy, The Charlotte Observer | Section: c5_food_drink | 869 Words OpenURL Link

At the Salty Goat Grill in Leicester on Wednesday morning, few things were as in demand as a steaming hot cup of coffee.

"I hadn't had coffee in five days, so I was having a caffeine fix," said Diane Smith, a 76-year-old lifelong resident of the township. Only a few hash browns were left on her otherwise empty plate — a warm meal that was a far cry from the tomato sandwiches and bananas she's been eating at home, which is still without power.

Leicester, an unincorporated community of over 21,000 people according to the 2020 Census, is located approximately 15 miles northwest of Asheville. Compared to much of Western North Carolina, the semi-rural area escaped the worst of the flooding from Hurricane Helene.

Still, power, water and internet are patchy.

Reporter s Road 2.jpegDebris from large trees has blocked roads in Leicester in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

No one interviewed for this story had all three, with the exception of the Salty Goat Grill itself. Located in the heart of the township's main street, New Leicester Highway, the Grill only lost power for two days, co-owner Erin Vazquez told CharlotteFive. And even then, the generators kept the fridges running.

Vazquez and her husband, Rick, who worked at the grill under the previous owners, have owned the former Smokey Mountain Diner for the last two years. Normally, the menu is quintessential diner-style, offering everything from biscuits and gravy in the morning to steak for dinner.

At the Window.jpegWaitresses including Dani Walker, right, wait for orders from the kitchen at Salty Goat Grill, where Western North Carolina residents have gathered in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

But nothing is normal now. Though operating on a limited menu, the Grill is busier than usual, with people coming from devastated places like Swannanoa and Black Mountain just to get a hot meal and a dose of normalcy.

Other options in the area, which unlike Asheville is not chock full of restaurants on every corner, include Shorties BBQ, serving food for free or donations and Grateful Roots Market & Deli. The latter store usually serves Amish meats and cheeses from Ohio but have exhausted their inventory. (On its Facebook page, Grateful Roots said that the restaurant plans to help residents in Marshall, a hard-hit town approximately 12 miles north of the deli.)

461795099_535437439243400_3111006478221952226_n.jpgIn Leicester, Salty Goat Grill is open in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene with a limited menu of three items at breakfast and at lunch.

Food supply challenges in Western North Carolina

The biggest issue for the Salty Goat has been food, but Vazquez said they have been lucky. Rick Vazquez drove to Johnson City, Tennessee to purchase as many groceries as he could fit in his van, and a customer named Calvin drove north to Tennessee to bring them supplies. Their usual food procurer, Mike Doyle, not only helped them with supplies but also volunteered in the kitchen and washed dishes.

"We have three items in the morning and three items at lunch, and then we're trying to do a little bit of dinner for the locals. And then we just do it till we run out,"Vazquez said. That morning, the menu offered biscuits and gravy, pancakes with eggs and bacon, and an egg and cheese biscuit with sausage or bacon.

Despite its relative good fortune, Leicester is not back to normal.

Reporter_s Road.jpegUncleared damage remains in Leicester. While the area mostly escaped flooding, downed trees have hindered access and cut off power.

Smith finally managed to get gas after three days of trying, waking up before 6 a.m. to get in line. Diners came in hoping to charge phones on the diner's few available outlets. And while Keith Curry, who retired here with his wife from upstate New York eight years ago, has power and water, he doesn't have internet — and doesn't expect to have it for at least a week.

Curry is a regular at the Salty Goat, coming in at least twice a week. He lives in the same community as Dani Walker, one of the waitresses. As he finished his coffee, wearing a dark blue cap with the words "Life Is Good" printed on it, he had a to-go bag with a biscuit for his wife, who was at home with a knee injury.

"We love this area. Love the community," he said. "This is a godsend right here, this little restaurant."

Erin Vazquez.jpegSalty Goat Grill co-owner Erin Vazquez rings up a customer's bill.

For Vazquez, though, it's the first responders who are the real heroes, including her brother who is a firefighter. "They're putting their lives at risk for so many people," she said.

Even though the diners are emotional after days without power, water and ways to connect with loved ones, their thoughts are with those who have lost so much more. Including the couple that owned the Salty Goat previously, who went on to open a restaurant in Hot Springs.

Vazquez has heard no news of them yet, though she assumes that their new restaurant, at the very least, is gone.

Anything else people should know? "That we're open," Walker said, coffee pot in hand, searching for an empty mug.

461513345_535437455910065_1627049748754756392_n.jpgIn Leicester, Salty Goat Grill is open in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene with a limited menu of three items at breakfast and at lunch.

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Pilots fly NC nursing home residents with dementia to safety as medicine runs low

October 3, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Julia Coin, The Charlotte Observer | Section: north_carolina | 530 Words OpenURL Link

More than 100 nursing home residents — most with dementia — were hoisted onto helicopters and flown across 80 miles of North Carolina's damaged interior on Tuesday.

They'd been stuck in Burnsville since Friday, when Helene hit the southeastern United States with a wrath that hasn't been seen in some areas for more than a century.

Volunteer pilots made about 20 trips in their own helicopters — from two-seaters to Black Hawks — flying northwest from Hickory to rescue 76 residents in Yancey House, Mitchell House and a few others nearby.

The U.S. Army — via a Chinook marked by an image of singer Lionel Richie's face, with a troop from Davenport, lowa, inside — made one trip. It was the last trip.

They had 34 seatbelts on board. Luckily, said Capt. Cody Nolan, there were only 34 residents left.

"That's because I prayed," said Lindsey Duch, the vice president of health policy and innovation at ALG Senior, a company with about 30 nursing homes from Charlotte to Asheville. "We had our own pilots going out and getting people."

Nursing home evacuation Staff with the company ALG Senior and volunteer nurses carry a nursing home resident from Burnsville, N.C., out of a rescue helicopter in Hickory on Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024. The helicopters are flown by volunteer pilots.

She worked with Operation Airdrop, a nonprofit that sends volunteer pilots with personal aircraft into disaster zones. The pilots were set to rescue 100 from an orphanage Tuesday, said Matt McSwain, the organization's Hickory coordinator, but when they heard the kids got replenished food and water, they pivoted.

The seniors would soon run out of resources — namely medicine.

Shana Pitts, another ALG Senior executive, said they'd been waiting for government help since Thursday.

"It was a little frustrating," she said.

DSC_0486.JPGStaff with the company ALG Senior and volunteer nurses waited for nursing home residents from Burnsville, N.C., to arrive by helicopter in Hickory on Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024. The helicopters are flown by volunteer pilots.

But the furrowed, concerned look disappeared from her face when residents wheeled up to the sliding airport doors in Hickory. One held a Bible in her lap, atop of a flowery, ankle-length skirt.

The nurses welcomed patients with chipper smiles.

"Hey, sweet lady! How're you?" one asked as a woman in a pink hummingbird shirt with long gray hair rolled up.

"Alright, now go steal some snacks," another said after checking one diabetic man's sugar.

Inside the terminal, on a table with a leafy fake plant, sat an opened pack of Lance peanut butter crackers, the kind grandma might have at the bottom of her big purse.

DSC_0462.JPGTwo women who live at a nursing home in Burnsville, N.C., had arrived in Hickory on Tuesday, Oct. 1, 2024. Their nursing home was getting low on food and water after Helene, so volunteer helicopter pilots made trips to get to them out.

Then McSwain got another call. This one was from the N.C. State Highway Patrol.

"They just gave me a mission," he said. "Why is the highway patrol calling me? I should be calling them."

North Carolina Sens. Thom Tillis and Ted Budd stopped in at the Hickory airport early Tuesday. They offered verbal support, McSwain said, which was more than some parts of the government.

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Recovery efforts underway in NC communities following 'biblical devastation' by Hurricane Helene

October 3, 2024 | Chronicle, The (Duke University) (Durham, NC) Author: Ananya Pinnamaneni| Section: News| 870 Words OpenURL Link

North Carolina suffered "biblical devastation" from Hurricane Helene last week, with western areas of the state seeing intense flooding that put entire communities underwater.

While the full picture of destruction within the region is still being uncovered, dozens of people have been reported dead and hundreds missing in the state as of Monday.

"As the full effects of Helene become more apparent, we are united in our worry and concern for the communities across North Carolina and beyond who bore the brunt of this catastrophic storm," President Vincent Price said in a Saturday DukeToday article. "We hold everyone harmed by this disaster in our hearts."

Duke Athletics announced that it would hold a hurricane relief drive until Oct. 11. Community members can donate non-perishable food, bottled water, first aid and hygiene products and other items at the Duke Athletics Ticket Office in Scott Family Athletics Performance Center on 110 Whitford Dr. from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Participants can also donate online by placing an order on the Amazon list linked on the drive's webpage and setting the shipping destination as Duke Athletics Ticket Office Hurricane Relief. Those who donate in person are eligible for discounted tickets at select Duke Athletics events for every five items donated.

The Chronicle spoke with professors from the Nicholas School of the Environment to learn more about the status of relief efforts and what it will take to build back the impacted communities.

"Oftentimes in disasters, the limelight or media attention will be there for a week or a month, but it takes years for a community to recover after a disaster of this extent," said Betsy Albright, Dan and Bunny Gabel chair of environmental ethics and sustainable environmental management at the Nicholas School. "It's oftentimes hard to get attention, resources, etc. down the road when the fundraisers have stopped, when the media coverage has stopped."

The extensive damages prompted some residents of affected communities to question the response from local governments, arguing that cities could have issued more urgent warnings and brought in more emergency supplies in advance of the storm.

Though, Albright noted that it can be "hard to tell the extent of damage at this point because communities have been so closed off to people getting in and out."

Immediate relief efforts are in full swing to support the suffering communities. Search and rescue teams from across the country and hundreds of National Guard personnel responded, providing temporary shelters and distributing emergency supplies of food and water.

However, more work is needed to ensure that those affected receive the necessary assistance.

"It's critical that communities are supported financially," Albright said. "And second to that, it takes administrative capacity ... to be able to manage those funds, allocate those funds and apply for the funds ... it's hard for communities to navigate, so they need support, and they need their voices elevated."

President Joe Biden visited western North Carolina Wednesday to observe the impact of Hurricane Helene's rampage. In Raleigh, he announced that the federal government would pay for North Carolina's recovery costs for six months.

"The nation has your back," Biden said. "We're not leaving until you're back on your feet completely."

Biden also said that North Carolina will be aided by 1,000 soldiers from Fort Liberty, and that additional Starlink satellites will be deployed to support communication across the state.

"The devastation was beyond belief, and even when you prepare for something like this, this is something that's never happened before in western North Carolina," said N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper Monday.

Martin Doyle, professor of river science and policy at the Nicholas School, challenged the approach of questioning whether communities were prepared for the disaster.

"[Western North Carolina] was prepared as most communities can be and usually are," he said. "I think this was a truly unexpected scale and type of event."

Doyle explained that rising global temperatures increases the amount of moisture the atmosphere can hold, providing for heavier rainfall and more intense storms.

Biden emphasized the importance of considering how climate change contributed to the hurricane's mass destruction during his remarks in Raleigh Wednesday.

"Nobody can deny the impact of the climate crisis anymore," Biden said. "... They must be brain dead if they do."

Doyle and Albright both emphasized the importance of promoting long-term resilience in the affected region, noting that more time is needed to gauge the storm's full impact.

Albright highlighted potential areas of future growth beyond physical infrastructure development, emphasizing a "mix of approaches." As examples, Albright suggested considering the locations of streams relative to buildings, updating flood maps in response to a changing climate and addressing "insurance issues."

The Nicholas School has many scholars who focus on climate resilience in their research, and Albright pointed in particular to a Bass Connections project that aims to develop "innovative new insurance and risk management models" for climate-vulnerable communities.

"Natural disasters happen," Doyle said. "... What we need to be resilient is the ability to adapt quickly after a disaster, not the ability to completely avoid a disaster."

Ananya Pinnamaneni

Ananya Pinnamaneni is a Trinity first-year and a staff reporter for the news department.

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Clay County spared Helene's wrath - Planning, coordination of efforts and services starts early on local level

October 3, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Becky Long; Publisher | Section: News | 1188 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Hope for the best, prepare for the worst may be cliche, but for local officials, law enforcement and emergency workers it was important to get ahead of dangerous scenarios tropical storm Helene might create here. In the end, with the exception of government and business closings, power outages, lack of cellphone service and Internet, for the most part Clay County was spared.

At the onset of warnings of Tropical Storm Helene which carried a forecast of winds of up to 70 mph and flooding to Clay and surrounding counties, an Emergency Operations Center was set up Thursday at the Clay County Sheriffs Office.

Sheriff Mark Buchanan said his department was one of many that participated in what he described as a comprehensive inter-agency response to tropical storm Helene.

The response team included representatives from Clay County's Emergency Medical Services, Emergency Management director. Fire & Rescue, county manager, chairman of the board of commissioners, fire marshall, 911 director, health department, schools. Department of Social Services and senior center. Personnel with the N.C. Department of Transportation, N.C. Highway Patrol and the U.S. Forest Service also participated with the Emergency Operations Center.

The purpose of this Emergency Operations Center was to monitor the developing weather, establish emergency communications, inventory and make ready resources. keep the citizenry informed and advised, issue and make notification of evacuation orders, make ready and activate evacuation shelter (s) and dispatch emergency personnel when needed, etc., said Buchanan.

County Commission Chairman Rob Peck was among coordinators monitoring the weather and its potential impact.

As the forecast continued to develop and the threat of severe weather to the area became more likely, a State of Emergency was declared for Clay County and the Town of Hayesville. The State of Emergency was drafted Thursday morning and went into effect at 12 p.m. that day, Peck explained. The State of Emergency allowed the county to better coordinate with state and federal authorities in the event additional resources became needed both during and after the storm. It also allowed us to fully implement the Clay County Emergency Operations Plan. At the same time an Emergency Operations Center was set up at that Clay County Sheriffs Office. The EOC was fully staffed with Emergency Management and public safety personnel from multiple organizations, including the Clay County Sheriffs Office, Clay County EM/EMS, Clay County 911 and Clay County Fire and Rescue.

Emergency shelter opens Thursday evening, while at the EOC, the decision was made to open an emergency shelter at the Clay County Senior Center which is one of our two American Red Cross certified shelters. The shelter opened at 7 p.m., Peck said. Simultaneously, the Brasstown Community Center, our other approved facility, was put on standby if additional shelter was needed. These decisions were in anticipation of mandatory and voluntary evacuation orders which ultimately soon followed. These decisions were all made out of an abundance of caution and preemptively based on the continued forecast of devastating rain and winds and subsequent flooding.

From the initial planning stages till the execution of our emergency orders, leadership was focused on minimizing the loss of lives and property. Our proactive measures were meant to diminish the need for rescue and recovery of the most flood prone and susceptible areas of the county so resources could be utilized in other areas and

capacities, Peck said. Due to the late more eastward track of the storm. Clay County was spared the devastating effects of Helene. Thankfully, many of the measures put in place did not need to be utilized. Friday morning the decision to close the shelter was made and resources initially requested by Emergency Management were canceled so those assets could be moved east to the areas ravaged by the storm.

911 service down On Friday around 12:30 p.m. Buchanan said Clay County's 911 system went down throughout western North Carolina. All 911 calls to Clay County were subsequently routed directly to Johnston County, which is located just southeast of Raleigh, he said. Once Johnston County received Clay County's 911 calls, they used the statewide VIPER radio system to relay the information to Clay County's 911 to be dispatched out to First Responders.

Impact on grocery store

Ingles distribution center in Black Mountain and store operations in many areas were affected by the storm, according to a post on Ingles corporate Facebook page. Fortunately, in Hayesville supplies have been stable, but customers were not able to use credit or debit card services because the store's server is down.

As soon as the storm hit, it knocked out everything to do with cards, Store Manager Greg Hughes said. Asheville is our main source.

Ingles distribution center was damaged by flood and Hughes said a lot of the trucks were damaged or washed away. That is our only distribution center, he said.

Moving forward, Hughes said, We are reaching out to other companies for other merchandise. We're getting products from local suppliers. Asheville is working tirelessly to get things back to normal as soon as possible.

As far as Ingles gas station, Hughes said so far, there has been no issue with gas supplies.

The aftermath Following the passing of the storm, coordination efforts and planning will be reviewed by county government and emergency personnel.

Currently, an analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to our Emergency Management planning and preparation continues in advance of potential future emergency and public safety events, Peck said. We also are working hard to help address to the extent possible the ongoing lack of telecommunications resulting from the storm and the effect this has on daily operating procedures and activities of county government, local businesses and our residents. Working with partners, we have secured a Verizon Rapid Response Portable Cell Tower and are also waiting the deployment of StarlinkSystems from FEMA.

Peck expressed gratitude to all involved in the efforts and empathy to our neighbors in storm ravaged Asheville and outlying areas for what they are going through. The Clay County Board of Commissioners is extremely thankful and blessed for the cooperation and coordination of all of our departments and other local agencies throughout the course of these events. While no amount of planning could possibly prevent the destruction of Helene, leadership will continue to do our best to ensure the safety of our county, he said. We will continue to look for ways to help our neighbors east of us and encourage you to do- nate if able to one of the local organizations looking to get vital supplies and necessities to the storm victims. Most importantly, we ask that you join us in continuing to pray for all those so deeply affected by Helene as well as all those working tirelessly to help in the rescue and recovery. Through it all, we have witnessed the greatness of our citizens as they come together spreading hope through their kindness and charity to the suffering. For this we thank you.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Becky Long, Publisher, 'Clay County spared Helene's wrath - Planning, coordination of efforts and services starts early on local level', *Clay County Progress* (online), 3 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF95137879DED8>



Many coordinate efforts to help communities in aftermath

October 3, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Becky Long; Publisher | Section: News | 548 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Clay County residents are opening their hearts and pocketbooks to help communities in Asheville and across the South that were heavily damaged during Hurricane Helene. On Monday, the death toll topped 130, according to the Associated Press.

Residents were stranded by washed-out roads, lack of power, cell service and fresh water. The 133 deaths were reported from six Southeastern states including North Carolina and Florida.

Churches and civic groups have held supply drives and served as drop-off centers while many emergency personnel, DOT workers and Blue Ridge Mountain EMC workers have been sent to help in the devastated areas. "Clay County was unbelievably fortunate to have been spared from the devastation Helene brought to Counties toward the east. With that, however, came the obligation for Clay County to send as many resources to help them as possible," Sheriff Mark Buchanan said. "On Saturday, two Clay County Sheriff's Officers were sent to help the Black Mountain and Montreat Police Departments. Those communities were destroyed by Helene. On Monday, they were joined by two additional Clay County Officers while another two Officers were sent to assist the Avery County Sheriff's Office."

Buchanan said that since Saturday morning, five and a half pallets of bottled water, approximately 620 gallons of gas, and an abundance of other needed supplies have been delivered to law enforcement agencies in Haywood, Buncombe and Avery counties. Walmart in Murphy, Home Depot in Blairsville and Tractor Supply in Murphy donated this water.

He said local contractor Chris Cotton donated a tanker trailer with 500 gallons of gasoline to be sent to Black Mountain and Montreat for the operation of emergency vehicles. The Clay County Sheriffs Office encouraged anyone wanting to send relief to make sure that any resources sent have been specifically requested and for specific locations.

"Arriving unexpectedly to a location with supplies or personnel can often result in confusion and having resources left where they are less needed," he said.

Here's a few of the local drop-off sites for donations and supplies: • The Wines & Steins event on the Hayesville town square, Saturday, Oct. 5 will be taking donations of cash and checks for victims of Tropical Storm Helene in Asheville.

- · In addition, Michael Plumber at Nocturnal has opened up Nocturnal for people who need WiFi starting on Monday, Sept. 30. Plumber has also taken two loads of water to Asheville and is taking another one Monday and will continue to collect whatever is donated.
- The impacts of Hurricane Helene are being felt intensively in our neighboring counties. Students of Hayesville Middle School JR Beta and JR Civitan are working together to organize a supply drive to provide relief to families and businesses during this difficult time.

All items can be dropped off at the main office of HMS. If a business would like to make a monetary donation, please write checks out to HMS JR Beta!

Supplies needed Sports Drinks (powdered packets) Hydration Packs (powdered form) Baby wipes Diapers (children

and adults) Baby Formula Bug Spray Sunscreen Plastic Utensils Manual Can Openers Trash Bags (13 gallon or contractor) Non-perishable Foods Cleaning Supplies Aspirin Spray Deodorant Toilet Paper C123 Batteries Shaving Cream/Razors Plastic Sheeting/Tarps Toothbrushes Toothpaste Pet Food (Dog&Cat) Hand Sanitizer Sanitizer Wipes Feminine Hygiene Products Heavy Duty Work Gloves Clothes -all sizes (shirts, pants/shorts, underwear, socks, etc) Benedryl

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Becky Long, Publisher, 'Many coordinate efforts to help communities in aftermath', *Clay County Progress* (online), 3 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF951382F79520



Street Talk - How did it make you feel when you saw all the devastation from Hurricane Helene?

October 3, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Debbie Dills | Section: News | 151 Words Page: A5 OpenURL Link

Debbie Accetturo: I go to bed thinking about it and wake up thinking about it. How blessed we are to have been spared. Stephanie Byers: Heartbroken for the devastation they are going through. Thoughts and prayers for everyone during this tragic time. Maria Roane: Absolutely heartbreaking. I can't imagine not being able to reach my family. In times like this we just have to lean on God and our faith. Stefany Reece: My heart goes out to Asheville and surrounding areas during this catastrophic event. I can't imagine what they are going through. Thankful for the people in this area who are able to go help. Sending many prayers. Jason Shook: Heartbroke, worried, devastated. Having family and friends in the midst of all this devastation was very worrisome. My heart breaks for all those affected and prayers for all of them and now the attempts at beginning to heal and recover.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Debbie Dills, 'Street Talk - How did it make you feel when you saw all the devastation from Hurricane Helene?', *Clay County Progress* (online), 3 Oct 2024 A5 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF95139254E2E8>



Local power restored early

October 3, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Lorrie Ross; StaffWriter | Section: News | 244 Words Page: A3 OpenURL Link

While many areas around the southeast are still without power from Hurricane Helene, Clay County and some of its immediate neighbors have had their power restored. Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation had outages throughout the region, according to Kelly Crawford, manager of media and communications for BRMEMC. There were 166 total outages, which affected 11, 668 members in the five counties covered by BRMEMC.

"We experienced outages throughout our entire service territory," she said. "Some of the larger outages occurred in Towns, Union and Fannin counties. The main cause was fallen trees from overly saturated soil and wind played a part in it, too. There was a total of 14 broken poles throughout our system. Power restoration was primarily completed by 12 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 28."

After getting the work done at home, four crews with a total of 16 men, left on Monday, Sept. 30 to assist Altahama EMC. Crawford said that EMC is in Lyons, Ga. where most of the infrastructure was lost. For a while, all of their electric meters were without power, Crawford said.

As another service to the communities, BRMEMC has added Wi-Fi hot-spots to the region. "On Sunday, Sept. 29 we activated Wi-Fi hot-spots throughout Clay and Cherokee counties to assist our communities during the downed cellular service," Crawford said. "Those are still active and free to use."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Lorrie Ross, StaffWriter, 'Local power restored early', *Clay County Progress* (online), 3 Oct 2024 A3 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF9513883E69A0



Weekend brings Folk School's 48th fall festival

October 3, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Morgan Slucher; Guest Writer | Section: News | 742 Words Page: A8 OpenURL Link

The John C. Campbell Folk School's 48th annual Fall Festival returns this year from lo a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 5 and 6. A premiere destination since 1974, the folk school's fall festival attracts thousands from across the region to the school's scenic Brasstown, N.C. campus for an extraordinary celebration of Appalachian craft, culture and heritage.

Festival goers will stroll several wooded paths, visiting a wide variety of fine craft exhibitors showcasing quality works for sale. Talented artisans will demonstrate traditional and contemporary crafts for appreciative audiences throughout the day on our demonstrator's stage and in some studios. Spirited music and dance performances will fill the air with delightful energy continuously over the weekend on two stages. Regional artists will share old-time, bluegrass, folk and roots music and dancers will entertain the crowds with clogging and Morris performances. We will have more than 20 food vendors, including the folk school's famed barbecue, so come hungry. Kids activities, including hands-on crafts and face painting from the Cherokee County Arts Council will also be available.

The Fall Festival Banner, a colorful tradition celebrating the school's rich history and enlivening future, is made by quilter and beloved instructor Dana Bolyard this year. Fall festival commemorative T-shirts and items will be available to purchase from the school's craft shop.

The fall festival offers plentiful free parking along with a free on-campus shuttle bus and handicapped golf carts. The festival can be challenging for pets because of the crowds and the heat. We encourage those who bring their pets to seek out water stations, keep their pet on a leash, clean up after your pet and be respectful of attendees. Handicapped parking is available in the Keith House gravel lot. The John C. Campbell Folk School is only two hours from Asheville, Atlanta, Chattanooga and Knoxville and a day's drive for half of the residents of the United States.

Online tickets are now available for purchase on the folk school's website. Regular admission tickets are \$12 for adults 18 and up; \$10 for ages 12-17; \$10 for seniors 65 and up and veterans and free for children 12 and under. Single-day and multi-day flex passes will be available. Tickets will also be available for purchase at the festival gates with cash or card. ATMs are available on campus.

Interested in volunteering? Visit: www.folkschool.org/fallfestival and fill out a volunteer application. Fall festival volunteers work in approximately 2-2.5 hour time slots based on their availability and preferences. There are many opportunities across the festival and a position for everyone.

For complete event details, visit: www.folkschool.org/fallfestival or call (800) 365-5724. We look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you to our 2024 fall festival sponsors: Harrah's Cherokee Casinos; Cherokee County Tourism; U.S. Foods; Young Harris College; Erlanger -Western Carolina Hospital; United Community Bank; Bankers Insurance; Blue Ridge Mountain EMC; Ameriprise Financial; Nantahala Bank and Trust; McGuires Millrace Farm/Weddings by the Foster Sisters; Blue Ridge Public Radio and Visual Outdoor Advertising.

We will start this weekend with the Folk School donating 10 percent of our own proceeds to organizations serving those in western North Carolina affected by Hurricane Helene. The Cherokee Clay Food Alliance will be on hand to collect donations for immediate food and water needs and the Craft Emergency Relief Fund, which provides financial support to artists facing emergencies, will also offer information and donation opportunities.

Some people have expressed concern about holding a festival while others are hurting. We believe holding the festival is especially important this year. We all need more opportunities to connect. feel normal, and find some joy in the face of adversity. We also need to face the reality that our part of far western NC already is seeing negative economic impacts from the hurricane. Fall Festival has an estimated \$1 million impact in Cherokee and Clay counties alone -it's something our community and local artists count on. We feel we can make it happen while also demonstrating compassion and care for our WNC neighbors.

We hope you will join us, but only if it is safe for you to do so. To help you plan: · Choose the safest route possible. Check out NCDOT's www.drivenc.gov for more information.

- · Check our website and social media for updates on any vendor or performance cancellations.
- · Bring plenty of cash and/or your checkbook, as the ability to process credit card and ATM transactions may be spotty at times. · Check out the 112th Cherokee Indian Fair, October 1-5 in Cherokee, NC (https://visitcherokeenc.com/event/ii2th-cherokee-indianfair/)

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Morgan Slucher, Guest Writer, 'Weekend brings Folk School's 48th fall festival', *Clay County Progress* (online), 3 Oct 2024 A8 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF9513A05B10D8



Clay County Schools after the storm

October 3, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Marcia Barnes; Staff Writer | Section: News | 452 Words Page: A3 OpenURL Link

Clay County Schools Superintendent Melissa Godfrey said that one of the reasons to reopen Hayesville's school doors on Monday was to provide support with school counselors for any kind of emotional toll that the storm had taken on the kids. "We want to resume some normalcy for them being at school and being around friends is good and healthy for them if we can be here," Godfrey said.

The decision to close the schools because of an impending state of emergency which existed before hurricane Helene tracked farther east, closed schools in the county last Thursday and Friday. A decision to reopen school on Monday, Sept. 30 was a decision made by a team.

"On a normal given weather situation whether it be snow, ice, flood, I have a team of people that I converse with," Godfrey said. "That includes representatives from the Clay County Sheriffs Office, the N.C. State Highway Patrol, N.C. Department of Transportation, our own Transportation Director Jimmy Moore who is over our bus fleet and Jeff Ledford who is over Clay County Emergency Management."

Godfrey said in this situation, the reason schools were closed on Thursday, Sept. 26 was because the timing was a little uncertain.

"I felt confident we could get kids here, but one of the weather maps for Thursday showed that our area was in the highest potential for life-threatening flash flooding and that it would happen very quickly."

Godfrey said the concern was not so much for getting students to the school, the concern was about what could happen very quickly and the inability to get them home. The National Weather Service forecast was the main catalyst for closing school on Thursday and Friday.

"It's not a quick thing with buses, some of our bus drivers have other jobs and initially we were in the same weather bubble as the people who did get it," Godfrey said.

On Tuesday morning, Sept. 30 Clay County Schools were the only district open in western North Carolina with fully functioning phone lines with help from Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Management Cooperative. Although there was some "push-back" posted on social media about the decision to reopen, Godfrey said there were several benefits for students and parents.

The decision to reopen school was made by the team and safety of students was the main concern. However, other benefits included that parents could go to the workplace, students who were dependent on food at school were being fed, the obligation to the community that a decision was reached with the safety of students a priority was met and resources for counseling were available to the students if needed. "This is not about a leg-up being the first school to reopen," Godfrey said. "This is about resuming normalcy."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Marcia Barnes, Staff Writer, 'Clay County Schools after the storm', *Clay County Progress* (online), 3 Oct 2024 A3 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF951386F8CA40



Steins & Wine proceeds to help hurricane recovery - Event set for Saturday, Oct. 5

October 3, 2024 | Clay County Progress (NC) Author: Sandy Zimmerman; Guest Writer | Section: News | 378 Words Page: A9 OpenURL Link

The 11th annual Steins & Wine on the Square will be held from 4-7:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 5. The event will have the most beer and wine vendors since the event started in 2013 with representation from western north Carolina and north Georgia.

Recovery for Hurricane Helene victims in WNC are of great concern for all of us but the event can take place with opportunity for connections to help others. Since Clay County was spared negative impacts experienced in other areas, HHI has the ability to use proceeds from the Steins & Wine event for support to other nonprofit organizations involved with a Small Town Main Street location. An additional monetary donation table will be available during the event with support information provided by HHI. Affected areas will have a long recovery but our time to help can start with community participation this weekend.

Steins & Wine tickets are \$10 each in advance and \$15 at the gate on Sanderson Street. Advance tickets are available in Hayesville at Tiger's Store, Clay County Chamber of Commerce, HHI Centennial Exhibit and through PayPal. Everyone is welcome but must be 21 with valid identification to enter the enclosed event area around the square.

Beer vendors will include Buck Bald Brewing, Hiawassee Brew, Hoppy Trout Brewing, Laughing Dogs Brewing, Nocturnal and Snowbird Mountains Brewery. Wine will be available from Cherokee Cellars, Eagle Fork Vineyards, Ferncrest Winery, Hightower Creek Vineyards, Living Water Winery, Shooting Creek Vines and Valley River Vineyards.

HHI will have additional non alcohol drinks and fresh popcorn for snacks along with items from Paris & Company, Hayesville Q, Fat Dog Sports Bar and Town Mountain Farm Cheesery to taste good with any drink choice. With such good selections available, outside drinks, food and backpacks are not allowed but space will be available to enjoy an evening at tables or on the lawn.

HHI is the nonprofit fundraising arm of Hayesville's Small Town Main Street program with N.C. Commerce and affiliate of the National Main Street program. Visit www.historichayesvilleinc. com for details, to donate or volunteer for HHI projects.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Sandy Zimmerman, Guest Writer, 'Steins & Wine proceeds to help hurricane recovery - Event set for Saturday, Oct. 5', *Clay County Progress* (online), 3 Oct 2024 A9 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF9513A72E9808>



Helene rescues top 2,100; death toll at 204 and rising

October 3, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Alan Wooten | The Center Square | Section: State | 745 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – More than 2,100 have been rescued in North Carolina, the federal government said Thursday as the death toll from Hurricane Helene reached 204, fifth deadliest in the last three quarters of a century.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency said 38 search and rescue teams are in operation, cellular connectivity is at 62%, and distribution of commodities, feeding and hydration is happening throughout western North Carolina. The Appalachian Mountain region from Virginia to South Carolina and Georgia absorbed 24 inches of rain in many places, and more than 30 in some locations.

Buncombe County, home of the region's largest city of Asheville at just under 100,000, has reported 61 deaths. Thursday marked the seventh day of search and rescue and eighth day since Helene crashed into the Big Bend of Florida as a Category 4 hurricane with sustained winds of 140 mph.

Damage estimates for the Southeast range from \$95 billion to \$160 billion, pending the metrics of inclusion up to and including economic loss. For example, property damage estimates are in the range of \$15 billion to \$26 billion; and published reports say a U.S. Department of Agriculture official estimated \$7 billion in insurance payouts for crop losses alone. AccuWeather estimates total damage and economic loss between \$145 billion and \$160 billion.

"The federal relief and assistance that we have been providing has included FEMA providing \$750 for folks who need immediate needs being met, such as food, baby formula and the like," said Vice President Kamala Harris on a visit to Augusta, Ga., on Wednesday. "You can apply now for anyone who is watching this, who has been affected. There are FEMA personnel who are going door to door to interact personally with folks, especially those who do not have electricity.

"FEMA is also providing tens of thousands more dollars for folks to help them be able to deal with home repair, to be able to cover a deductible when and if they have insurance, and also hotel costs."

Midafternoon Thursday, the Carolinas, Georgia, Virginia and Florida still had more than 933,000 without power. That figure included 356,561 in North Carolina. It had been more than 1 million.

A release from U.S. Rep. Chuck Edwards, R-N.C., says 142 water systems are on a boil advisory, 69 plants have no power and 47 systems are out of water. About 217,000 are without power in the western part of the state, the release says; 93% of substations have been restored online; and 16 CVS pharmacies are closed in his district.

According to DriveNC.org, Helene has caused 540 road closures as of 3 p.m. Thursday. The number has increased steadily over the previous 36 hours. It includes three interstates, 36 federal highways, 51 state roads, and 450 secondary roads. More than 100 roads have been reopened.

The infrastructure collapse has led to some areas only accessible by air, others by foot. Social media has shown a helicopter pilot finding someone who flashed a sun-kissed mirror in a grassy valley, enabling medicine to be delivered; and mules taking supplies to include insulin up the muddied paths once home to vehicles.

Edwards said in the release, "Please do not try to visit or travel through the areas hardest hit by the storm such as Henderson and Buncombe counties. However, I'm here to remind you that Cherokee, Graham and Swain counties are open, and they are desperately in need of visitors to support their economy. These counties have been going above and beyond for their neighbors to get supplies into the hardest hit counties, but could use some support, too.

"Small business owners in far western counties rely on tourism to get by each year."

Edwards said with the blanket "do not drive" to western North Carolina, the businesses in that southwestern-most pocket of the state have had cancellations pile up.

Eight hurricanes since 1950 have killed 100 or more people. Helene is only eclipsed – so far – by Katrina (2005, deaths 1,392), Audrey (1957, deaths 416), Camille (1969, deaths 256) and Sandy (2012, deaths 219). Thursday's reports pushed it past Diane (1955, deaths 184).

Asheville's flood woes are compared to 1916, when in fact mules hauling supplies were more the norm. In July that year, a hurricane made landfall from the Gulf of Mexico and trekked toward northern Alabama and Tennessee to dump rainfall in western North Carolina, and a second hurricane about a week later made landfall at Charleston, S.C., and headed for the mountains.

The sequence came to be known as the Great Flood of 1916.

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Alan Wooten | The Center Square, 'Helene rescues top 2,100; death toll at 204 and rising', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 3 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFF8672983F1E8