

# 'I don't know if they're dead or alive': Missing persons, power, cellphone outages raise anxiety levels after Helene

October 2, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Mike Sunnucks APG Newpapers | Section: State | 441 Words OpenURL Link

Elizabeth Hyder is going through anxieties, stresses and uncertainties shared by many in western North Carolina after Hurricane Helene brought flooding and knocked out power, water and telecommunications systems.

"I'm absolutely in panic mode because I can't get in touch with any of my family," said Hyder, who is from Morganton.

Hyder said Wednesday the Haywood County Emergency Services had reached out to her and told her 10-year-old son and his father in Waynesville were safe.

She had been having trouble reaching them.

Hyder said she's started to have problems the past couple of days reaching her mom and siblings in Hendersonville.

Similar stresses and uncertainty are playing out across the Carolinas and other states in Hurricane Helene's path with family and friends unable to reach loved ones after the storm with power, internet and cellphone outages.

Hurricane Helene brought record storm surge flooding to Florida's west coast including the Big Bend, Tampa Bay and Sarasota areas. The Category 4 storm then rampaged through Georgia, the Carolinas and Appalachia bringing heavy and record rains and deadly floods and mudslides.

More than 180 people have been killed by Helene, according to CNN.

Search and rescue missions continue across western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee and other areas hit by the hurricane.

That hits home across the region.

"There's a ton of people that I don't know if they're dead or alive and I'm terrified," Hyder said of her other friends and loves ones in the southeastern U.S.

The U.S. military has deployed aircraft and other assets to help with those efforts which are hampered by floodwaters, damaged bridges and roadways and down electrical lines.

More than 1.2 million households are without power in the southeastern U.S., according to poweroutage.us, after Helene downed power lines and damaged transformers and other infrastructure across multiple states

President Joe Biden is visiting the Carolinas Wednesday and Florida and Georgia on Thursday.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and relief groups such as Samaritan's Purse are on the ground in North Carolina, Georgia and Florida offering assistance to those displaced and impacted by Helene.

Hyder said she and her friends and relatives face financial hardships with the storm's property damage and outages. She's started a GoFundMe page — https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-north-carolina-no-food-no-water — seeking charitable donations.

"It breaks my heart," she said of the situation.

The storm has flooded out homes, businesses and cars but also memories with family pictures, baby blankets and keepsakes all destroyed.

Hyder said her hometown of Chimney Rock was among the areas decimated by the storm and its floods.

"My hometown was destroyed," she said. "Chimney Rock was where my grandmother raised me and I would go and now it's completely gone and those are just memories now because she passed away in 2021."

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## Officials: Massive effort underway to respond to Helene's devastation

October 2, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Bobby Burns| Section: Local | 1041 Words OpenURL Link

Officials said a massive effort is underway to search for and rescue victims of Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina, assess damage, provide relief and begin the process of recovery and rebuilding.

President Joe Biden visited the state Wednesday and Gov. Roy Cooper and U.S. Rep. Greg Murphy and Sens. Thom Tillis and Ted Budd toured the area earlier in the week, according to reports from their offices and the Associated Press.

First responders and utility crews from across the region have made their way to disaster-stricken communities, and local residents have donated truckloads of water and emergency supplies to be distributed under the guidance of state emergency managers.

Pitt County Sheriff Paula Dance is sending groups of 10-12 deputies over the next two weeks to Buncombe County, where Asheville and neighboring communities have no water and electricity, internet and cell service have been disrupted.

Dance said similar assistance from outside agencies was "invaluable" locally during Hurricane Floyd in 1999 so responding in kind is easy.

"I can't really tell you how much we appreciated for our community as a whole," Dance said Monday. "They stepped up and came from everywhere, and so that's what we are giving back this week and next week and however long it takes to make sure that their community is taken care of as well."

Helene roared ashore in northern Florida late Thursday as a Category 4 hurricane and quickly moved north. The storm upended life throughout the Southeast, where deaths were also reported in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia. Officials warned that rebuilding would be lengthy and difficult.

The storm unleashed the worst flooding in a century in North Carolina. Rainfall estimates in some areas topped more than 2 feet since Wednesday, and scores of roads are blocked by fallen trees, washed away or blocked by mudslides. That includes a 4-mile section of Interstate 40 that was heavily damaged.

Joey Hopkins, North Carolina's secretary of transportation, asked people to stay off the roads.

"The damage is severe, and we're continuing to tell folks if you don't have a reason to be in North Carolina, do not travel on the roads of western North Carolina," Hopkins said Monday. "We do not want you here if you don't live here and you're not helping with the storm."

In addition to torrential, flooding rain, strong winds caused heavy damage to trees, buildings and infrastructure, according to multiple reports. Exhausted emergency workers continue to work around the clock to clear roads, restore power and cellphone service, and reach people who are stranded, the AP reported. The storm has killed at least 130 people and hundreds more were still unaccounted for earlier this week.

Officials in the hard-hit tourism hub of Asheville said their water system suffered "catastrophic" damage that could take weeks to fully repair. Government officials, aid groups and volunteers were working to deliver supplies by air, truck and even mule to the town and surrounding mountain communities. At least 40 people died in the county that includes Asheville.

The North Carolina death toll included one horrific story after another of people who were trapped by floodwaters in their homes and vehicles or were killed by falling trees. A courthouse security officer died after being submerged inside his truck. A couple and a 6-year-old boy waiting to be rescued on a rooftop drowned when part of their home collapsed.

Cooper arrived by plane at the Asheville Regional Airport in Fletcher about 10:30 a.m. on Monday. There he met Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Deanna Criswell, who got updates on storm recovery needs from Cooper and three Cabinet secretaries.

Asked by a reporter later whether he believed enough was done last week to evacuate residents before the storm, Cooper said officials knew it was going to be a significant event, and that local leaders told residents to leave low-lying areas.

"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," Cooper said.

Cooper's office reported that state, federal and local partners are surging resources into the region to provide food, water and critical supplies. "Progress also is being made to improve access and telecommunications in communities damaged by the storm. While the focus remains on emergency response and rescue, the state is simultaneously stepping up recovery services in collaboration with federal and local partners across North Carolina," Cooper's office said.

State Emergency Management Director Will Ray said more than 7,000 North Carolina residents had already registered to receive FEMA assistance, and "there is money already rolling in to these pockets." Almost 800 hundred North Carolina National Guard members have been activated.

Cooper said 92 search and rescue teams were working in the region as of Monday afternoon including 27 teams from as far west as Colorado and as far north as New Hampshire, plus 18 federal teams.

They had rescued more than 500 people with 422 of those rescued by the NC National Guard, Cooper's office reported. Forty-two were critically injured, four were infants and 64 animals. As of Monday the Guard also had also delivered 306 pallets of water and 230 pallets of food since the storm started.

Twenty-nine shelters have been opened in affected areas, housing a total of 1,107 people, Cooper's office reported. President Biden approved an expedited request declaring a major disaster for 25 North Carolina counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The declaration paves the way for public assistance to help hard-hit local governments, as well as access to FEMA's Individual Assistance program. More than 5,000 households have contacted FEMA to apply for assistance by phone and online.

Across the region, more than 450,000 customers remained without power as of Monday, down from a peak of more than 1 million. More than 400 roads remained closed. NCDOT said the focus is on restoring primary roads and access to communities that have been isolated by damage. First responders also want to keep the roads as clear as possible to help ensure they may carry out all response missions.

Cellphone providers are working to fix the damage and coverage issues caused by the storm and get stopgap solutions in place and rapid progress is being made, Cooper's office reported. Restoring communications is critical to saving lives, finding where people are and getting in supplies, according to the governor.

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## Mayberry parade provides respite from storm

October 2, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Tom Joyce Mt. Airy News | Section: Across Carolina | 720 Words OpenURL Link

If ever folks needed an escape from reality, it was this past weekend in storm-battered Mount Airy — where the notion of retreating to the earlier, simpler time of Mayberry proved more than a tourism promotional pitch.

As makeshift signs posted outside downtown businesses communicated a common refrain of "Closed — no power," people sat in lawn chairs just feet away Saturday to enjoy a pleasant diversion: a parade of sights and characters associated with "The Andy Griffith Show."

It was a classic what-a-difference-a-day-makes situation. Just 24 hours before, this area was in the midst of a storm that produced heavy rains and high winds.

That combination was devastating to trees and utility lines, leaving an estimated three-fourths of the city without electrical service and parts of Surry County and Virginia equally battered.

#### Welcome weather

But the fabled new day dawned Saturday as the annual Mayberry Days Parade went on as scheduled to the delight of crowds certainly needing a break.

"You couldn't ask for a brighter day, I suppose," Trey Baucom of Chesterfield, South Carolina, said just before the event while making his way along North Main Street with wife Wendy as sunlight peeked through the clouds.

They were attending Mayberry Days for the first time although the couple had visited Mount Airy previously.

The two rode out the Hurricane Helene-induced storm in a camper while staying at a local campground.

Meanwhile, another couple, Jason and Betsy Helms of Abbottsburg, near Lumberton, had gotten up at 3:30 a.m. Saturday to drive to Mount Airy for the parade with their children Jason III and Staci.

"I'm surprised you can have it," the elder Jason commented in view of the bad weather.

But the annual procession of all things Mayberry always goes on despite whatever climatic conditions are hurled its way, including one year during a vicious rainstorm that drenched streets equally saturated with crowds.

Once here, the Helms family soaked up the Mayberry atmosphere.

"It's got good family values — it gives you that hometown feel," Jason observed. "We're from a small town, too."

Like many attendees, Jason and Betsy were wearing T-shirts paying homage to "The Andy Griffith Show." Jason's fashion choice was one bearing a phrase often emitted by Barney, "Nip it in the bud."

In addition to ones from the Carolinas and Virginia, license plates spotted on parked vehicles lining the central business district were from such states as Arkansas, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Missouri, Illinois and more.

Comments from many locals positioned along the street seemed to be centered on continuing to be without power more than 24 hours after the brunt of the storm hit.

Plentiful parade

The Mayberry Days Parade offered a welcome diversion that was upbeat and full of good cheer, similar to that served up on the long-running television show.

Saturday's procession featured actors who had appeared on the 1960s-era program, along with those dressed as its various characters.

Ronnie Schell, better known as Duke Slater in the "Gomer Pyle.. U.S.M.C." sitcom that spun off from Griffith's show, was among those actors, with Schell occupying his usual perch in local resident Randy Moore's Army Jeep.

Also there were Margaret Teele, who played a character named Agnes Jean Parker, a member of a crime family Barney encounters while in Raleigh. Teele also has "Gomer Pyle" and "Batman" episodes to her credit.

Keith Thibodeaux (aka Richard Keith), who appeared as Opie's pal Johnny Paul in 12 episodes, was another Mayberry notable in the parade.

Daniel Roebuck, a regular on Griffith's later TV series "Matlock," also was a familiar face participating.

Others there were Dreama Denver, wife of Bob Denver, and Don Knotts' daughter Karen.

Those visitors occupied convertibles, generally older-model vehicles befitting the "Andy Griffith Show" period, who waved to admiring onlookers the length of North Main Street.

A group portraying the Darling family rode in a battered truck one might associate with the clan, while golf carts were the preferred means of travel for others.

Mayberry replica squad cars were spotted frequently Saturday.

The procession also was filled with costumed characters walking along the street impersonating Barney, Sheriff Andy, Ernest T. Bass, Floyd the barber, Otis the town drunk and others, who were duplicates in some cases.

Elements of humor further enhanced the much-needed joyous occasion, such as members of the crowd being asked by one of the costumed characters what Otis' favorite part of a baseball game is at one point during the parade.

The answer: The bottom of the fifth.

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## Undefeated Warriors striving to remain consistent

October 2, 2024 | Enquirer-Journal, The (Monroe, NC) Author: Michael Wayne O'Neill mwoneill@theej.com| Section: Enquirer Journal| 502 Words OpenURL Link

WEDDINGTON, N.C. — The Weddington High School football team is hard at work preparing for the second half of the regular season.

The program is going two weeks without seeing any action after a 56-0 shutout win at Chapel Hill on Sept. 20. Still, Weddington remains one of two Union County teams that are undefeated at the midway point in the season.

The Warriors, 5-0, were going to play Westside from Anderson, S.C., but Tropical Storm Helene prevented the game from happening. Weddington tried to find another opponent to play this week, but attempts were unsuccessful.

"Thoughts and prayers are with them," said Weddington coach Andy Capone. "I know they got hit pretty hard with the hurricane. Once we figured out that we weren't going to play, we reshifted our focus to having a good week of practice this week."

Capone said the past couple of practice weeks have been positive trying to get players back to full health.

In the past five games, Weddington's defense met their expectations rushing to the football and playing physical. They have 293 total tackles, 14.5 sacks, and 45 tackles for loss as a team.

Junior twins Drew and Aiden Harris are anchoring the team with 30.5 and 25.5 tackles respectively on defense. They also lead Weddington with 8.5 tackles for loss and 9.5 tackles for loss respectively.

Yet, they are trying to minimize mistakes.

"Our secondaries played well at times," Capone said. "One of the things we focus on and worked on is not blowing coverages when quarterbacks extend the play. We've given up too many long plays and too many explosive plays."

Weddington's offense, however, has scored at least 30 points per game. Senior quarterback Gregory Fee has completed 64-of-97 passes for 675 yards and 10 touchdowns. Fee also connected with Kelson Tate 18 times for four touchdowns.

Weddington senior linebacker Braeden Barger, who has 29 tackles and six tackles for loss, said, "It will have been 20 days since we last played a game next time we step on the field."

"The goal this week is to just get as much work in that we need as possible and take care of any lingering injuries so we can push the conference and playoffs with a full head of steam."

Weddington will play host to Porter Ridge on Thursday, Oct. 10 to start Southern Carolina Conference play. It will be their first home game since Sept. 13.

The Warriors will strive to remain undefeated and win eight straight games against the Pirates, who are 4-1.

"We know they are going to give us their absolute best as we expect everyone," Barger said of Porter Ridge. "The goal is to play fast and as physical as possible. We just need to play our game and be clean and disciplined.

"If we do all of these things and be mentally prepared through film study and recognizing their concepts, we will be ready to go. Our guys are eager to get back on the field whenever the opportunity arises so we will be playing every

# snap as hard as we can."

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October 2, 2024 | Enterprise, The (Martin County, NC) Author: Tom Joyce Mt. Airy News | Section: Across Carolina | 720 Words OpenURL Link

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# Natural disasters 'don't feel natural anymore' - Helene's wrath beyond residents' calculated risk

October 2, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Trevor Hughes; USA TODAY | Section: News | 944 Words Page: A6 OpenURL Link

CEDAR KEY, Fla. – The Cedar Key innkeeper wonders whether it's worth rebuilding this town dotted across a small archipelago – again.

"Natural disasters are natural disasters," said Ian Maki, who has lived through five hurricanes since moving in 2018 to the island community southwest of Gainesville. "But these don't feel natural anymore."

Tens of thousands of residents of Florida's Big Bend region are confronting the same fears in the wake of Hurricane Helene. And those feelings are increasingly shared by coastal residents all the way to Maine and from Alaska to California as stronger, more frequent storms and rising ocean levels upend their lives and livelihoods. Many insurers already have curtailed coverage or withdrawn entirely from some areas, indicating their long-term perspective risk.

Officials have not yet released official damage estimates from Helene, but financial services company CoreLogic initially estimated commercial and residential damage in just Florida and Georgia to be \$3billion to \$5billion. That number is expected to rise substantially with the extensive flood damage across Tennessee and South and North Carolina.

A 2022 USA TODAY investigation warned the United States is facing a climate catastrophe as natural disasters accelerate: Since 1980, the U.S. has typically suffered eight disasters a year with more than \$1billion in economic damage.

Scientists who study the Earth's climate and weather say storms like Helene are more likely to occur in the future. Hurricanes are powered by heat, and the Gulf of Mexico has been unusually warm for years.

"The fact that the storms are so intense when they make landfall because they have rapidly intensified in the Gulf of Mexico almost certainly has a climate-change contribution to it," said Jim Kossin, an atmospheric scientist and science adviser at the nonprofit First Street Foundation.

No more hurricane parties as storms' strength rises

For coastal communities like Cedar Key, Horseshoe Beach, Key West and other geographically isolated areas, quick-moving storms make it harder for residents to board up and leave, potentially raising the likelihood people will choose to stay home and ride out the storm. In years past, many storms were mild enough that people held "hurricane parties" to mark their passage through their communities.

That was the kind of calculation Bill and Debbie Dotson made when they retired in spring 2021 to Horseshoe Beach, a town of about 170 full-time residents. They've now been through five hurricanes, including Helene, which hit on Bill Dotson's 67th birthday.

The Dotson's home sits atop 14-foot-tall concrete pillars, and last year's Hurricane Idalia destroyed one set of stairs and damaged the other. They had just gotten both sets fixed – at a cost of \$15,000 – before Helene swept both away.

Zoning laws across Florida increasingly recognize storm risks, and most new-built houses in danger zones must be set atop tall pillars. Apart from the stairs, the Dotson's house was otherwise undamaged. But a few blocks away,

the concrete pillars of a home closer to the beach were bent flat like grass

"We came out here and saw this beauty and wanted to go fishing in our retirement," Debbie Dotson said. "We had the discussion about hurricanes, but you never imagine something like this. You just don't."

More people are moving to storm-prone coastal areas

Last month, the real estate firm Redfin reported a net increase of 16,000 people moving into high-risk flood areas last year, most of them in Florida, drawn by sunny skies, a lack of snow, great fishing and plentiful beaches. There's also no income tax in Florida.

Because the state is so big, the likelihood of experiencing a damaging hurricane is statistically low.

That's the calculation Maki and his husband, Darrin Newell, made before they bought the Firefly Resort on Cedar Key. Maki had worked in public health for years in the Pacific Northwest, and they wanted a new adventure in Old Florida.

Maki, who has a master's degree in public health, analyzed historic hurricane data and concluded Cedar Key would only suffer a damaging hurricane every seven years on average, giving them plenty of time to recover and rebuild between storms. But hurricanes keep trashing their cottages.

"I've bought more appliances in the past year than I have in my entire life," Maki said. "I'm afraid that decisions are being made for me by consequences of nature, consequences of man's influence on nature, so that now the place that I had chosen to live may be uninhabitable in my lifetime."

Unlike most coastal communities in Florida, Cedar Key depends primarily on aquaculture – commercial clam harvesting – rather than tourism. "Clambassador" Michael Presley Bobbitt, a commercial clam farmer, author and playwright, said he worries Helene has irrevocably altered the island he calls home.

Building resilience to protect the future

Doug Lindhout, 71, considers himself one of the lucky ones: Although there's water damage, his rowhouse on A Street is still standing. Less than 24 hours after Helene moved north, Lindhout and his wife were assessing the destruction and trying to figure out what to do next.

"It feels like we've been kicked in the teeth and punched in the kidney," he said.

As the president of Cedar Key's Chamber of Commerce, Lindhout is deeply committed to the 700-person island community. That means seeking good publicity when they can get it – last year's negative Idalia coverage caused an 18% decline in tourist interest, he said – while strengthening the island's aquaculture and other businesses.

For Cedar Key, he said, resilience can mean making the shorelines better at reducing wave impacts, which helps protect the clam harvests. It could also mean a community effort to relocate the grocery store, which frequently floods even in minor storms.

Contributing: Dinah Voyles Pulver, USA TODAY

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# 1K Fort Liberty soldiers deploying to help with Hurricane Helene relief efforts in NC

October 2, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Rachael Riley, Fayetteville Observer | Section: News | 420 Words OpenURL Link

President Joe Biden has directed the Department of Defense to deploy 1,000 regular Army soldiers as part of a Fort Liberty-based infantry battalion task force to deploy in support of Hurricane Helene relief efforts, the White House announced Wednesday.

These soldiers are under the 18th Airborne Corps and include members of the 82nd Airborne Division and other Fort Liberty units, Pentagon spokesman Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said in a statement Wednesday.

The task force includes a forward support company with support structures like fuel, water and mechanics, a White House news release stated.

The Department of Defense announced Monday that a team for command and control for high water vehicles and air operations support for rotary wing aircraft has been established at Fort Liberty.

Eight Army helicopters and 10 Navy helicopters were at Fort Liberty, while 30 high-water vehicles were staged at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, Ryder said Monday.

The White House news release stated that the infantry battalion task force is deploying in addition to DOD service members already supporting FEMA in response to Hurricane Helene, which includes:

Army and Navy helicopters, soldiers and sailors helping move people and supplies.

Army soldiers and high-wheeled vehicles to move people and supplies over damaged roads

Air Force aircraft and airmen helping with search-and-rescue efforts.

The Army Corps of Engineers supporting temporary power, water and wastewater management, bridge inspections and debris removal.

The North Carolina National Guard also has 700 of its guardsmen supporting with debris removal, airlifts and search and rescue, while more than 6,000 National Guard personnel from 12 states are providing support to those affected by the natural disaster, the White House said.

FEMA and other agencies have more than 1,200 personnel in North Carolina, with more resources and staff arriving daily.

A team of 18 first responders from the Fayetteville Fire Department, Fayetteville Police Department and Cape Fear Valley EMS and deployed to Brevard to assist with rescue missions, the city announced Friday.

During a press briefing Tuesday, Ryder said U.S. Northern Command is providing active duty support efforts to FEMA, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is providing emergency power planning and response teams.

In his statement Wednesday, Ryder said NORTHCOM commander Gen. Gregory Guillot appointed Brig. Gen. Charles Morrison of the North Carolina Army National Guard as the dual-status commander for North Carolina.

A dual-status commander is an officer who is allowed by law to command active duty and National Guard troops and serve in federal and state roles simultaneously, he said.

Staff writer Rachael Riley can be reached at rriley@fayobserver.com or 910-486-3528.

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# Opinion: The Western North Carolina floods hurt all of us. Here's where I find hope.

October 2, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Myron B. Pitts NETWORK | Section: Opinion | 1019 Words OpenURL Link

Note: This story has been edited to correct a misspelling.

It wasn't supposed to happen in the mountains.

They say the deadly floods in western North Carolina caused by Tropical Storm Helene are a 1,000-year flood event. That's why the devastation looks like something we have not seen.

I live hours east of the hardest-hit areas in Buncombe and nearby counties. But like many North Carolinians, I have spent time in the N.C. mountains, our part of the Appalachians. There are few better summer escapes from my part of the state, where we are often the hottest part on the TV news weather map, thanks in part to our Sandhills soil.

How did places I've been to in western North Carolina fare?

As heartbreaking scenes seeped out of Asheville and surrounding areas, I looked for places I had been to.

There is Boone, where I attended my older brother's graduation from Appalachian State University, where one picture showed rows of cars nearly submerged in brown waters. The campus is closed for several days. UNC-Asheville, its fellow campus in the state school system, is closed at least until Oct. 28, officials say.

Here's how to help people in Western NC

There is leafy Blowing Rock, like a painting in my mind, where I went to French camp as a high-schooler, of all things. A striking image of a house floating away emerged from there, and news accounts are that mudslides and flooded roads have cut off the town from nearby Boone, with which it shares close ties.

There is Lake Junaluska, where my wife and I have spent comfortable days in a conference at the United Methodist Church. There was significant flooding and power outages, but the dam held, officials reported.

Weaverville, where my family traveled a few years ago — where we rented a country cottage near a farm. I read that the National Guard was busily distributing water to people after the water treatment plant flooded.

Bryson City to the west of Asheville was mostly spared, except for some flooding. I remembered the time I went whitewater rafting in area, located to the west of Asheville, and stayed in my first yurt. I saw a social media post on Monday where an outfitter on the Nantahala River wrote the business had been "barely impacted" and called it "truly a miracle." The outfitters invited people in the local area to come get a hot meal and charge devices.

Meanwhile, a post from Asheville showed people gathered near a public library to use its Wi-Fi, one of the few available hot spots.

The little things become big things in times of disaster. We saw the same when our time came in 2016 with Matthew and 2018 with Florence.

Texts with Allison in Asheville: They are OK. That's the important part.

On Tuesday, I talked by text to our friend Allison Sharpe who lives in west Asheville. She was matron of honor at our wedding, and she and her husband, John, were safe. That's the most important part.

They were on a generator and hoping power would be restored by this coming Friday.

We texted because talk was not available at that moment. Soon into it, Allison asked me about the status of a particular bridge in her city, if I had heard anything about it.

A little thing like that showed me how her world was still askew — as I was able to Google information about a place just miles from her house. A USA TODAY Network colleague in Asheville confirmed the bridge was fine.

But most roads there are still closed for travel. At one point all roads were closed and Asheville was an island.

"We cannot get any data — websites, etc — only texting and phone calls when out on a main road," Allison texted.

She said Duke Energy and city and county officials have sent texts with links, but they were not able to get the links to work.

And: "Some people get the texts, others don't. Luckily we can get local news on (a) tv antenna."

No water in Asheville, but a good spirit among her neighbors

There is no water, Allison texted. What a cruel irony of floods.

She said the water system has been weak for decades. She said the water went out in Christmas of 2022 during a cold snap and there had been talk of fixing it but "no action."

"Now this," she texted.

She and John have been told it will be three weeks before they have water again. But their gut tells them more like six.

Later, she texted: "I don't want to knock our leadership too hard because this is unprecedented. But, the water issue is going to cause society to fray a bit, I think."

Allison said: "The devastation is heartbreakingly unbelievable."

But she also said the "esprit de corps amongst neighbors and nearby friends has been a great comfort."

She said the camaraderie among her neighbors reminded her of another difficult period they all went through together — when the COVID-19 pandemic kept people at home, and they would socialize around backyard fire pits.

COVID-19 and climate on my mind

Of course, the dramatic and generational impact of COVID-19 is one thing I've thought about. But also climate change and the environment when it comes to my native state, where I have spent most of my life.

More: NC will get hotter in the next 20 years. Here's what Cumberland County could see

Just a week before the remnants of Helene did what it did to our mountains, we saw video of houses on the North Carolina coast slowly collapsing and floating away into the Atlantic — victims of erosion.

These things can impact your psyche.

Tar Heels are proud of many things about our state, and its physical beauty is one. We know that NC offers some of the best beaches on the eastern end and some of the best hiking, camping and rafting in the mountains on the west

end. These two natural gifts are among many reasons we are one of the fastest-growing states.

That all seems threatened now.

But we are here.

We have esprit de corps. Multiple relief efforts are underway.

The Old North State will recover, and rebuild.

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# Disaster Relief Fund for WNC

October 2, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC) Section: News | 490 Words

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The North Carolina Community Foundation is encouraging donations to groups that are working to address immediate health, humanitarian and safety needs in Western North Carolina in the wake of the devastation left by Hurricane Helene.

A wide range of groups are supporting that effort, including the American Red Cross, Baptists On Mission, The Salvation Army and United Way of North Carolina. You can also donate to emergency response efforts by visiting nc.gov/donate.

The recovery needs in Western North Carolina will remain great in the months and years to come. To support the region, NCCF is accepting donations for our Disaster Relief Fund, which supports mid-to long-term recovery efforts when North Carolina faces a disaster.

The fund will provide grants to nonprofit and charitable organizations working to support communities in western North Carolina affected by Hurricane Helene.

All contributions go directly to disaster relief and donations are tax deductible. No portion of the money raised will be used for NCCF's administrative or operational expenses. NCCF will also encourage this practice among organizations that receive grants from the fund.

Donations can be made by: · Visiting nccommunityfoundation.org/helene. · Mailing a check to NCCF at 3737 Glenwood Ave., Suite 460, Raleigh, NC 27612. Write "Disaster Relief" on the memo line of your check.

Those needing assistance with their donation can call 919-828-4387 or 800-532-1349 or email info@nccommunityfoundation.org.

"The devastation in Western North Carolina due to Hurricane Helene is heartbreaking," said Jennifer Tolle Whiteside, NCCF CEO and President. "Our Disaster Relief Fund will support nonprofits in the west in their response in the months ahead and we will ensure that donations to the Disaster Relief Fund are distributed to charitable organizations that can best help people directly impacted."

The NCCF Disaster Relief Fund's grantmaking strategy focuses on mid-to long-term recovery efforts in affected communities and does not compete with first responders. Approximately \$5 million in grants have been provided by the fund to charitable organizations since it began after Hurricane Fran in 1996.

After Hurricane Florence in 2018, the fund awarded 153 grants to nonprofit organizations totaling \$3.25 million. Learn more about the fund at nccommunityfoundation.org/disaster.

Local recovery donation collections Some local businesses are collecting supplies for hard-hit areas in Western North Carolina · Smoky Mountain Harm Reduction is collecting supplies for local residents who remain without food, water or basic necessities. Location: 3261 Georgia Rd.

- · Love Tap Tea Shop, 115 Georgia Rd. · Carolina Smokies Association of Realtors, Frog Town Lane. Supplies will be delivered to Haywood and Buncombe counties.
- ·First United Methodist Church is collecting supplies to be delivered to Spruce Pine. (No clothing) ·Vecinos is

accepting donations to assist farm workers. (vecinos.org)

Items needed Some of the supplies needed are bottled water, canned and other non-perishable food, contractor size trash bags, clothes (all sizes), blankets, first aid supplies, feminine hygiene products, baby diapers, baby clothes, baby formula, pet food, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, paper towels, bleach (bottles, spray, wipes), shovels, brooms, gloves, coolers, propane, cook stoves, flashlights, batteries, fans, dehumidifiers and generators.

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# Helene disrupts local sports

October 2, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC) Section: News 80 Words

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Franklin's youth, middle and high school sports missed valuable time on the field last week. Due to multiple storms including the remnants of Hurricane Helene, several local leagues and teams were forced to cancel or postpone outdoor games, including Panther football's planned Mountain Seven Conference clash at Tuscola Sept. 27. Above, the Macon County Industrial Park soccer fields remained underwater Friday morning, after Panther men's soccer was forced to postpone their match there with North Henderson Wednesday night. (Photo/Bob Scott)

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# HELENE RECOVERY

October 2, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC)

Section: News 61 Words

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Press photos/Thomas Sherrill The Little Tennessee River as seen around 11:30 a.m. on Friday, Sept. 27, between the two bridges in East Franklin, roughly at its highest point. Double-digit rainfall totals caused by Hurricane Helene and the storm front that proceeded it caused widespread flooding in Macon County, mostly from Franklin and to the south and east in Cullasaja and Highlands.

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## Sheriff's deputy dies in flooding

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Author: Thomas Sherrill reporter@thefranklinpress.com | Section: News | 387 Words

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A Macon County Sheriff's Office courthouse security deputy died in flooding on Fulton Road following Hurricane Helene's hit to Macon County.

Charles James "Jim" Lau, 75, died Saturday, Sept. 28, after his truck was swept into the Cullasaja River the day before.

"Jim was very liked and respected within our department.

He was known to be a hard worker, dependable, and he jumped in wherever help was needed," the Macon County Sheriff's Office stated. "His absence will truly be felt in our agency."

According to the Macon County Sheriff's Office, on Friday, around 11:30 a.m., a 911 call came in about a truck in the water off Fulton Road.

"It was soon realized that one of our courthouse security officers, Jim Lau, hadn't returned to work from lunch and his truck matched the description of the truck that was seen in the river," MCSO stated.

Multiple emergency service agencies began search operations that afternoon including an on-foot search, drone search and multiple swift-water rescue teams were called in. According to the Sheriff's Office, the search was put on hold when the sun began to set. Lau's body was found and recovered from the river shortly after the search resumed early Saturday morning.

N.C. State Highway Patrol is investigating the incident. "He has been in law enforcement for 40+ years, from Florida to N.C., to Wyoming and back to N.C., and before that he was a member of the US Air Force. My daddy lived to serve," Lau's daughter Desi Andrews posted online in the Hurricane Helene Safety Check-In group.

Macon County Clerk of Court Shawna T. Lamb said Lau's passing is a great loss and that everyone will miss him and his smile.

Lau had retired from the Volusia County Sheriff's Office in Florida.

"He was instrumental in establishing the crime scene program and taught hundreds of new deputies various crime scene skills," the Volusia County (Florida) Sheriff's Office stated. "Thank you for your service, Jim, and may God bless your loved ones who mourn your loss. We send our deepest condolences."

A service to celebrate Jim's life, and to honor his service in the U.S. Air Force and his service in law enforcement, will take place at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 9, in the chapel of Macon Funeral Home. Employees of the Macon County Courthouse and those connected to law enforcement will serve as honorary pallbearers.

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## Macon County deals with storm aftermath

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Author: Thomas Sherrill reporter@thefranklinpress.com | Section: News | 2068 Words

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As Hurricane Helene brought unprecedented rainfall to the region last week, numerous people had to be rescued in Macon County, much of the county was without cell or internet service for several days and many remain without power.

After making landfall on the gulf coast of Florida, Helene eventually crossed six states leaving behind devastation and more than 100 people dead. Some North Carolina mountain towns and communities were completely submerged. Supplies are being delivered by air to areas where roads remain impassable.

After viewing the area from the air on Monday, Congressman Chuck Edwards said, "From the helicopter, it was even clearer just how much devastation Hurricane Helene has wrought across Western North Carolina and the urgency of getting resources to folks, especially for those in more remote areas which are harder to reach. We discussed the path forward and ways we can optimize congressional resources to support Western North Carolina's recovery. Our district is facing a long road ahead but Western North Carolinians are resilient, and I will continue to explore every avenue to bring home the support and resources that are needed in our mountains."

President Joe Biden was expected to fly over the area on Wednesday as the roads were too damaged to accommodate his motorcade.

Rep. Karl Gillespie representing the 120th House District of Macon, Clay, Cherokee and Graham counties said his office is utilizing all available resources to provide assistance the region.

"We are coordinating closely with local, state, and federal officials, as well as the private sector, to ensure a swift and effective response given the challenging road conditions. Other areas in far western North Carolina have experienced significantly more damage than the 120th House District and we will do all we can to assist our fellow citizens in the aftermath of this unprecedented event," Gillespie said. "The primary focus for my district is on restoring communications, clearing debris, and addressing water-related concerns. Portable cell towers are being deployed and the delivery of satellite systems are anticipated. Various nonprofits are setting up relief sites throughout the region."

Helene hits Macon County On Friday, Sept. 27, following a week of rain, Helene's floodwaters hit the Cullasaja community the hardest, flooding several houses and campgrounds. Winds, mostly after the rains subsided midday Friday, significantly impacted the Town of Highlands.

According to the National Weather Service, rainfall totals peaked at 14.86 inches in Highlands. Official rainfall gauges from the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) had the area near the Georgia border receiving nearly 10 inches of rain, while another southeast of Franklin had between 9-10 inches. Rainfall amounts are believed to be lesser in the western part of the county. Amounts further east were much higher, with Hendersonville receiving 21.96 inches. The town of Busick in Yancey County received 30.78 inches, the highest total reported in Western North Carolina.

"The majority of Macon County was actually spared a lot of flooding damage," Macon County Emergency Services Director Warren Cabe said Monday. "The Town of Highlands is still severely impacted by power outages. We do not anticipate any significant improvement for probably at least a week or longer."

Power was restored to the main business district of Highlands Monday evening. Cabe asked people to avoid

traveling to Highlands because of the ongoing utility outages, some of which are expected to last the rest of the week.

Numerous swift water rescues took place in the Cullasaja community, the exact number of which is unknown due to communication outages. As of Monday, there were no known fatalities in that community.

"We've not even been able to slow the responders down long enough to get good data from them on how many folks they did rescue," Cabe said.

A Macon County Sheriff's Deputy, Jim Lau, was found deceased Saturday after his truck was submerged off Fulton Road on Friday. (See related story.)

Cabe said Tuesday at least four residential structures experienced "severe damage," but stressed there's still a lot to uncover. Cabe said the houses yet to be inspected are unoccupied vacation homes in Highlands.

"We've had several that have had moderate flood damage and we have multiple ones that we're just now starting to uncover that have experienced some damage, whether that be roof damage from a fallen tree, electrical service entrance damage, anything similar to that," Cabe said Monday. "This is the third day our damage assessment teams have been working and they're still uncovering stuff as we go along."

Outages and road closures Duke Energy outages dropped on Tuesday to around 1, 500 in Macon County from a peak of around 8, 000 on Friday. Haywood EMC, which serves Highlands, Scaly Mountain and part of Otto, had around 1, 400 outages on Tuesday, down from 1, 500 on Monday. Cabe said some of those with outages won't be remedied until Friday, Oct. 4. Highway 106 through Scaly Mountain was closed Thursday due to a washout prior to Helene hitting the area. Cabe said the N.C. Department of Transportation is trying to reopen one lane of Highway 106, but wasn't sure when that would take place. Highlands Road through the Cullasaja Gorge was closed by law enforcement during the storm, but reopened Sunday. Cabe said due to communication issues, it was hard to tell if smaller local roads, especially in the Highlands area, were passable.

"We're still going to have issues with trees in the roadways. We've got our contract folks, our chainsaw crews are working in the Ellijay community, in the Mountain Grove community today trying to open up some roadways, so there will be hazards that will affect the roadway for a significant period of time," Cabe said Monday.

Cabe said NCDOT resources have been pulled to areas east of Macon County, where entire roads and bridges were gone. Comparably, Macon County made out much better than many of the mountain areas.

During the torrential rains and the rising water levels, the Town of Franklin experienced two sanitary sewer overflows from manholes. One was at the intersection of Lakeside Drive and East Main Street and the other was at the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

"The total spill amount is estimated at 100, 000 gallons," stated Franklin Town Manager Amie Owens. "Neither of the discharges impacted water lines or drinking water sources."

Cell, internet service Exact information about storm damage and people impacted remains hard to come by due to the lack of cellular service in the area. Communication for many Macon County citizens was impossible from midday Friday onward, with some services returning over the weekend.

This was caused by multiple incidents impacting fiber-optic lines across Western North Carolina.

Cabe said Macon County's 911 system backup connection through South Carolina and Rabun County was also impacted, meaning 911 calls were routed through Guilford Metro 911 in Guilford County, more than 200 miles away, through the weekend.

"Those folks are transferring the information back to our telecommunicators, so we're still processing 911 voice and

text calls, and to our knowledge, we never lost that capability," Cabe said Monday. "It's not everywhere, and we've been in touch with our technical folks that are working with the fiber connections that supply our center with 911 service, and they don't know yet when some of those repairs are going to begin because of damage."

On Tuesday, Cabe said Verizon was back online, as was Frontier. AT&T crews in Highlands were trying to restore service, but with varying success. He also said there has been some fiber optic line restoration, meaning there's slight network improvements. Service providers brought multiple temporary cell sites to WNC, including in Franklin and Highlands. The Town of Franklin's free public WiFi was available. Over the weekend and into the early week, many cars were parked along Main Street as people attempted to contact loved ones.

The lack of communication and destruction seen in the Asheville/Buncombe area had friends and family of Macon County residents frantically trying to reach them and asking for welfare checks. Cabe said if it's just a communication issue, they can't tie up first responder resources checking on those and are prioritizing those with medical conditions.

"We just want the public to realize, especially the public out of our area, just because you can't reach somebody here right now, it's probably not because there's a problem with them," Cabe said.

The Town of Franklin on Monday requested that neighbors check on neighbors to make sure they are safe due to welfare checks being resource intensive.

Welfare requests can be called into 828-349-2064, and those messages will be relayed to the community fire departments.

With the cell service recovering, Cabe stressed patience as the county tries to discover the full scope of what happened. "Be patient, no kidding, be very patient," Cabe said. "And honestly, we don't have some of the answers."

Cash only Due to internet outages, many local stores lost their ability to accept credit or debit cards. Across Franklin, signs big and small, scribbled or printed read "Cash Only" to customers. The Ingles locations in Franklin all had "Cash Only" signs up and were unsure of when normal service would return. The Ingles at Holly Springs was able to accept some cards but as a credit transaction. The same Ingles also had spotty WiFi service at its in-store Starbucks. The Franklin Food Lion resumed accepting cards on Tuesday, although noting it was internet dependent.

With the "cash only" operations at many local businesses and restaurants, some banks were seeing long lines of customers waiting to get cash. With internet service down, ATM machines were not functional.

Customers lined down Main Street Monday as Wells Fargo was limiting the number of customers in the lobby. A bank representative said they were doing things "the old-school way" to ensure their customers had access to their money. After services come back online the transactions will be entered in the computer systems. Another representative said even with the wait line the "customers were very friendly" and understanding of the situation. They said customers had to show proof of account ownership and identification to make withdrawals and they were accepting deposits as well.

Dogwood State Bank (Community First Bank) on Porter Street was operating pretty much as usual Monday afternoon as they had internet service. One of the tellers said there had been a steady business at the ATM throughout the day as people were getting cash.

Greg Proffitt, CEO of Nantahala Bank, said they were also open with regular hours on Monday. "Things are going as smoothly as I guess we could hope," he said. "We are fully functional today and anticipate that going forward unless we have other issues I'm not aware of."

Friday was another story though. Proffitt said they had delayed opening until about 10:30 a.m. and then had to close early after they lost connectivity around noon.

On Tuesday, Cabe said the partial restoration of fiber optic lines should help local banks be able to process payments.

Grocery supply Local Ingles management said Tuesday that due to their supply coming from the Asheville area, they have not received any food supply trucks since the storm and weren't sure when they would be coming in. A fuel truck arrived for the Ingles gas stations on Tuesday.

Food Lion in Franklin started receiving food supply trucks again on Monday but didn't know if it would be back on a regular schedule. Management expressed concern about a surge in demand there if there's a lack of supply at other stores.

WNC closed Despite Western North Carolina being under a "Do Not Travel" advisory, Cabe said many people from neighboring counties where their normal resources are wiped out are driving into Macon to find fuel and groceries, leading to increased traffic and backups at service stations. The increased demand is drying up local fuel tanks and with many highways leading into Macon County impassable, fuel trucks are having a tough time getting to the area.

"We would encourage folks, just because you're worried about a fuel shortage, don't go out and fill your vehicle up," Cabe said. "Only fill it up when it's necessary. Give the system time to catch up because there are some supply chain issues."

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## Hurricane Helene

October 2, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC)

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Above: Storm waters nearly reached the Main Street bridges over the Little Tennessee River on Friday. Above right: The Cullasaja River carried debris to the Peaceful Cove Road bridge. The bridge received minimal damage was still usable. Right: A truck drives through a flooded section of Sugarfork Road. The driver had just walked out to make sure the road was still there, measuring the flooding up to his knee. (Press photos Thomas Sherrill)

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# Flooded Cullasaja

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Section: News 144 Words

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The Peaceful Cove Road bridge in Cullasaja was closed Friday, Sept. 27 during Hurricane Helene as the Cullasaja River crested at road level, causing several logs and branches to slam into the bridge. The bridge remained intact. (Below left) Cullasaja Park's soccer fields in Franklin were completely flooded on Friday, with the restrooms, playground and much of the parking lot underwater. A damaged pergola, pictured here, ended up lying against the parking lot. (Below right) A power pole along the east side of Georgia Road near the Riverside community snapped due to saturation and winds on Friday afternoon. Cable lines prevented the pole from falling in the road. Several power poles broke Friday afternoon when the winds picked up. Photo/Bob Scott A car attempts to drive through a flooded area on Leonard Lane while people are out walking after the storm.

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## Back to the days of cash and carry

October 2, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC) Section: Opinions | 864 Words

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Macon County was cash and carry Friday, Saturday, Sunday and today (Monday). If you didn't have cash, you were out of luck to buy anything. Including groceries and gas. Your plastic card may have had a million dollars behind it, but it was useless Saturday morning. I hope y'all had something called a blank check around the house or in the glove compartment of your car.

Hurricane Helene had romped over us with a fury - dumping about a foot of rain on us, high winds and tragically taking at least one life. Internet and cell phones were useless. Credit cards do not work without the internet. So, I went to the ATM machine not realizing it too was dependent on the internet.

The reassuring spot in the county was the good old U.S. Post Office. Their trucks and workers were out in force. We can still write letters and receive packages without depending on the internet. We can read books with real covers and printed pages. Although our lives are intimately linked to the internet and cell phones.

I went to Bojangles Saturday morning. A note was taped to the door "Cash Only." Luckily, I had four one-dollar bills and a pocket full of change. I had enough for a ham and egg biscuit and a cup of coffee. \$5.53. They were in a frenzy taking orders of 30-50 biscuits at a time for power, tree crews and firefighters.

There were about a dozen people in yellow reflective vests ahead of me. It was a team of disaster assessment folks from Louisiana and Mississippi. Being an old news hound, I found out they were here checking out the damage from Helene.

People who normally would sit, eat and leave without saying a word, were yakking away. There was something about the mood on Saturday morning that led customers to embrace strangers like long lost cousins. Or ask, "where you from?" When someone was short of cash, those who had cash stepped up to cover them. I can't but help but think why can't we be like this all the time and not just in times of disaster?

Everyone seemed to have a story. Trees down in their yards or roads. Lawn furniture blown away. Neighbors had been out checking on elderly neighbors. Wondering how everyone else was doing. Nearly everybody pulled out their cell phone at least once and started to make a call before remembering there was no cell service or internet.

At parking lots across town and along the Highlands Road there were staging areas for power company trucks and equipment. I went through the campgrounds along the gorge. It was sad. Some of the luckier folks got their campers moved and parked on higher ground along the Highlands Road.

I saw folks standing on their porches and in their driveways talking to neighbors. There was an air of near shock as they looked around at the damage.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation was all hands out clearing roads.

I tuned in the Highlands radio station. Highlands was isolated for a time from the rest of the country. Near cut off entirely due to road problems.

I snuck past a barricade and made it up the Highlands Road hoping to get photos of the waterfalls. After seeing where the Highlands Road slid off taking the guard rail with it, I found a place to turn around in haste. What I did see was spectacular. Giving new meaning to the term cascading white water rapids. Along the banks of the

Cullasaja River I saw tons of riverbanks washed away. I guess that dirt is now somewhere close to or in Lake Emory. As if Lake Emory did not already have enough silt. Trees were in rivers everywhere. Making dams that beavers would envy.

I saw a basketball and a beach ball floating in the river. A mattress. I heard a rumor someone was seen paddling a refrigerator down the river. I can believe the refrigerator part. I saw an ice cooler drift by. Lumber, decks, blinds, windows floated from somewhere up stream.

I saw folks surveying crops and gardens I assume were destroyed. Checking on tractors that had been underwater.

With internet service down people flocked downtown where the Town of Franklin's free internet service was working. People were all over the gazebo square making contacts via cell phones thanks to the town. Radio Shack and some other businesses provided internet service.

Macon Media's, Bobby Coggins, was providing updates for those who could get it on Facebook. He was operating from a parking lot on a folding table.

I have covered sundry disasters. This was the worst. I was thinking - why does the worst of weather bring out the best in us?

All in all, we were luckier than areas to the east of us. Horror stories are coming out of Asheville, Spruce Pine and Haywood County. There are counties much worse off than us. The death toll is rising as I write. As bad as it was, there was a sense of comfort knowing that we were not in this mess alone. And that, overall, we were fortunate in many ways. Bob Scott is a Franklin writer and photographer. He can be reached at scoopscott79@gmail.com.

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'Back to the days of cash and carry', Franklin Press, The (online), 2 Oct 2024 5A <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF47E090A8F808">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF47E090A8F808</a>



## Recovery resources

October 2, 2024 | Franklin Press, The (NC)

Section: News 1024 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Internet access Internet access was restored for part of the county by Monday evening. For those still without internet service, free public WiFi is available at the following locations: · Town of Franklin - throughout the Main Street area. The town reported more than 3, 000 people used the service on Monday. To ensure connectivity for everyone, they ask that people not use the service for nonessential uses such as gaming and watching shows or movies. · Macon County Public Library, 149 Siler Farm Rd. · Otto Community Building, 60

Firehouse Rd. Over the weekend the Verizon store on Dowdle Mountain Road provided much-needed internet access with a password posted on the door since the business was closed. FEMA assistance FEMA gave Macon and other WNC counties a Major Disaster Declaration, meaning if you had private property damage due to Hurricane Helene, you may be eligible for Individual Assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Individual Assistance provides financial aid and services to eligible individuals and households that have been affected by a disaster to assist with the recovery process. Individuals can officially begin applying for Individual Assistance online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov, or by calling the application phone number at 1-800-621-3362 (TTY: 800-462-7585) between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. EST. Convenience Centers The Highlands Road convenience center was closed to the public due to a downed powerline and pole on Monday, but reopened to the public on Tuesday. The Buck Creek center opened Monday. As of Tuesday, neither station had power, so the compactors are not working. Macon County Solid Waste Director Chris Stahl said they have open-top containers in place. "There could be some interruption of service due to lingering communication issues that could delay getting full containers switched out. Otherwise, we will be open," Stahl said

Tuesday. "If we do have to close, an attendant will be on site during operating hours to advice the public." The Scaly Mountain site is open for half days for now, Stahl added. At the Highlands transfer station, Stahl called it "hit and miss" since trucks can't take Highway 106 up there. "We're turning away big loads for now from contractors, with the possible exception of brush," Stahl said. "We're trying to keep as much capacity for ma and pop." Storm debris should be taken to the landfill on Lakeside Drive in Franklin. Stahl said Highlands debris can be brought to the landfill since trucks cannot travel from Highlands. Customers will have to pay normal tipping fees. Stahl said people should keep their receipts for potential reimbursement if their waste is storm related. Yard debris collection Town of Franklin residents who are cleaning up yard debris within the town limits are allowed one free pick up annually. The next brush pickup week will begin on Oct. 7. The guidelines for brush preparation and schedule for pick up can be found online at franklinnc.com; on the Departments tab, click on Streets Department. Town Manager Amie Owens said Monday the roads in the town limits are clear and crews are continuing to monitor tree damage and removing any remaining debris from roadways. Later this week, the street sweeper will be used to remove silt/sand debris from certain roadways. Crews are checking storm drains and culverts for blockages. Transit Macon County Transit is running all Franklin routes.

Highlands, Nantahala and outof-county trips are not running. Macon County Transit is asking people to reschedule when they are able. Schools Ahead of Helene, Macon County Schools had scheduled virtual learning days for Thursday and Friday, Sept. 26 and 27. Schools remained closed through today, Wednesday, Oct. 2. Meal pickup will be available today, Oct. 2, from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. at East Franklin Elementary School, lotla Valley Elementary School, Cartoogechaye Elementary School and South Macon Elementary School. School is expected to resume on Thursday. Franklin High School: The PreACT scheduled for Oct. 8 has been moved to Oct. 30. Oct. 8 was originally scheduled as a virtual day, but it will now be a regular school day. The SAT scheduled for Oct. 5 has been moved to Oct. 19. The PSAT scheduled for Oct. 18 will be held as planned. Rabun Gap-Nacoochee school resumed on Monday. The Highlands bus route was canceled due to the Highway 106 closure. Most other bus routes were operating as usual. Western Carolina University has cancelled classes for the remainder of the week. All non-mandatory offices

are closed. Administration, university public safety, dining and residential services will

remain operational. Southwestern Community College is closed through Oct. 4. Court The Macon County Court business (and all other WNC county court business) between the dates of Sept. 26 and Oct. 14 shall be deemed timely if filed by the close of business on Oct. 14, according to an N.C. Supreme Court decree. Local government offices Macon County and Town of Franklin offices are open with regular hours. National Forests As response efforts continue throughout Western North Carolina, all recreation sites will remain closed on the Pisgah and Nantahala until assessments can be safely conducted. "Our first priority is the safety of our staff and visitors, and conditions on both forests are simply too hazardous for crews to begin clean-up efforts. The public can help us in our efforts to reopen both the Pisgah and Nantahala by staying off both forests until our work is complete. Regardless of whether someone is an experienced hiker, camper or off-roader, forest rangers and emergency services won't be able to reach them if something were to happen," stated a release from Public Affairs Officer Adam Rondeau. Pisgah and Nantahala offices, as well as the Supervisor's Office in Asheville, will remain closed until further notice. Cancellations and closings The fundraiser for Appalachian Animal Rescue Center originally scheduled for Sept. 28 was postponed until Saturday, Oct. 5. The Bee Club meeting for Oct. 3 is canceled. The Chamber of Commerce's Eggs & Issues business forum set for Oct. 4 has been cancelled. Operation Christmas Child kick off events scheduled for this week have been cancelled. Mountain Findings in Highlands is closed. They will resume operations once power is restored. Drop-offs can be made, but pickups are on hold.

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## Helene affects Gastonia, Shelby area football schedule

October 2, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Joe L Hughes II; Gaston Gazette | Section: Sports | 311 Words Page: B1 OpenURL Link

Extracurricular activities, including athletic events, have taken a back seat as power restoration and cleanup efforts intensify in the wake of Hurricane Helene.

Between four to eight inches of rain fell in Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln counties, causing flooding of streams, creeks and rivers. Trees also draped across homes, roadways and power lines, forcing a host of customers in the tricounty area to lose electric service.

With conditions still less than favorable, school districts in Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln counties announced they will remain closed on Monday. Cleveland County Schools will also be closed on Tuesday.

With school not in session, high school sports activities have again been postponed. Such includes Week 6 high school football games for Friday night rescheduled ahead of Helene's approach.

Here are the Week 6 games awaiting completion:

Bessemer City at Highland Tech; Tuesday, 7 p.m.

Cherryville at East Gaston; Friday, 7:30 p.m. (schedule altered with Thomas Jefferson unable to return to campus — much less athletic events — for an extended period).

Crest at Stuart Cramer; Wednesday, 7 p.m. Stuart Cramer's Week 7 matchup with Hunter Huss will be played Monday, Oct. 7.

Community School of Davidson at Mountain Island Charter

Forestview at Ashbrook; Tuesday, 7 p.m.

Hunter Huss at South Point; Wednesday, 7 p.m. Red Raiders' matchup with Crest previously set for Friday will be rescheduled.

Kings Mountain at North Gaston; Monday, Oct. 7 at 7 p.m.

Newton-Conover at Lincolnton; Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.

North Lincoln at Hickory; Wednesday, 7 p.m.

West Lincoln at Maiden; Wednesday, 7 p.m. West Lincoln's Week 7 matchup with Bunker Hill has also been rescheduled to Saturday, Oct. 5 at 6:30 p.m.

Shelby and East Lincoln are the only teams who have completed Week 6. Shelby defeated Thomas Jefferson 70-0 last Wednesday, while East Lincoln lost 34-21 to Statesville on Saturday afternoon.

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Joe L Hughes II, Gaston Gazette, 'Helene affects Gastonia, Shelby area football schedule', *Gaston Gazette, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 B1 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF47E428799668">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF47E428799668</a>



## NHC tracking 3 tropical disturbances in Atlantic

October 2, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Gabe Hauari; USA TODAY | Section: News | 465 Words Page: A7 OpenURL Link

The 2024 Atlantic hurricane season continues to be active as the calendar flips to October, which is historically the busiest month for hurricanes for Florida.

Although the only named storm out there is distant Tropical Storm Kirk, the National Hurricane Center is also monitoring two other tropical disturbances, including one in the Caribbean Sea.

And it's that developing system in the Caribbean that most concerns people in the U.S., as it could become a named storm in the Gulf of Mexico by next week, forecasters said.

The storm activity is on the heels of the deadly and devastating Hurricane Helene, which made landfall last week in Florida and dumped heavy, flooding rains across the Appalachian Mountains. More than 1million were still without power Tuesday morning.

NHC tracking Tropical Storm Kirk

The hurricane center said Tuesday morning Kirk was located about 935 miles west of the Cabo Verde Islands and had maximum sustained winds around 60 mph. The system was forecast to continue moving to the west-northwest through Tuesday night before gradually taking a northwest course Wednesday and Thursday.

"Kirk is forecast to strengthen into a hurricane by tonight and could become a major hurricane on Thursday," the NHC said Tuesday morning.

Current forecast models show the system curving north into the middle of the Atlantic, well away from the U.S.

Caribbean system could develop

The first of the other two tropical disturbances is currently a "trough of low pressure" that is producing disorganized showers and thunderstorms in the northwestern Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico.

The hurricane center said Tuesday morning environmental conditions could support some gradual development of this system and that a tropical depression could form in the next several days as the system moves northwestward over the northwestern Caribbean and the southern Gulf of Mexico.

"Interests along the U.S. Gulf Coast should continue to monitor the progress of this system," the NHC said Tuesday morning, giving the system a 40% chance of formation through the next seven days.

System 'very likely' to form

The second system, currently designated as Invest 91L, was located a few hundred miles south of the Cabo Verde Islands. The system is producing showers and thunderstorms that show "some signs of organization in association with a broad area of low pressure," the NHC said Tuesday morning.

The hurricane center said environmental conditions appear conducive for further development of this system, and a tropical depression is "very likely" to form during the next few days while it moves slowly westward over the eastern tropical Atlantic.

The NHC said Tuesday morning the system had a 60% chance of formation by Wednesday or Thursday and a 90% chance within seven days.

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## Mount Holly teacher loses everything in flood

October 2, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Kara Fohner; Gaston Gazette | Section: News | 618 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Early Sunday morning, Macie Lambert kayaked to her house.

Her home, located on Lake Drive in Mount Holly, flooded after Hurricane Helene swept through the area. Until the storm, Lambert lived next to the Catawba River in a house her grandfather left to her. All around her lived her relatives, and they all lost everything.

"It's our community. Our family. My parents, uncles, cousins, brother. We have a compound down here. We all grew up here," Lambert said.

Mount Holly experienced significant flooding after Duke Energy crews opened the flood gates Friday to the Cowans Ford Dam. The water flowed downstream, and the Catawba River reached record heights.

Lambert didn't expect the flooding to be so severe.

"There's been floods here in the past, but we never thought it would be this bad. I inherited this house from my grandfather, who built it in '68. Since that, it's never affected the house," she said. "When we heard about the water coming and them opening up the dams, we just had no idea it would be this traumatic."

She said that her power was turned off because of the expected flooding, and she packed a bag for several nights and went to stay on a camper, which was located on family property, but on higher ground. She and her husband, Caleb, left with their 1-year-old daughter, Kinley Ray, Friday night around 9 p.m., around the time the water reached their front yard.

On Saturday, the water reached the threshold to their front door and began seeping in the house.

On Sunday morning at around 3:30 a.m., the house was largely underwater.

"And sadly, we're a young couple starting a family, and we just couldn't afford flood insurance. When I say we are at a total loss, we are at a total loss," Lambert said.

Sunday morning at around 8, Lambert took a kayak to her house, paddling through the floodwaters. Furniture had been moved by the floodwaters and was blocking doors, so they had to break in.

"This is all I've ever known, and I'm 30. Never in my 30 years have I ever seen anything like this," Lambert said.

Lambert, who teaches children with intellectual disabilities at Mount Holly Middle School, said people have messaged offering her clothes and toys for her daughter, but she has nowhere but her car to store what's left of her belongings. Right now, she's temporarily staying in an AirBnb, but she and her husband are now looking for a new home.

"We were in the camper the first couple nights, but that's just not feasible with a one year old. There's just no room for her to play," she said.

"Right now we're homeless," she added. "Currently we have an AirBnb, but that's just temporary. We're just looking to see where we can go next that accepts dogs. We're trying to find something that can rent probably for a little bit

that accepts dogs, with a fenced in yard."

She said that right now, what they need most are monetary donations.

"We don't know where we're going next. We don't have anywhere to put anything. We have our cars for storage. Everybody is like, 'I'll bring this. I'll bring that,' but we don't have a place that's permanent yet," she said.

There is a page on the website Go Fund Me set up to help Lambert and her family.

"Mainly our next step is trying to find a permanent living situation. We're not going to be back in this house anytime soon. It'll probably be years before we get back. We're hurry up and waiting pretty much down here on the river. In the meantime, we're trying to find a permanent place to live," she said.

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