

Appalachia's terrain slows recovery - Remote roads and homes in NC are badly damaged

October 4, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Chris Kenning; USA TODAY | Section: News | 1027 Words Page: A10 OpenURL Link

MEAT CAMP, N.C. – Carolyn and Clifford Coffee's home is less than 10 miles from Boone, a North Carolina mountain town popular with tourists and home to a college campus, set between a creek and steep hillsides.

The two-lane road to reach it, which winds past cornfields and cattle farms, heading upwards along Meat Camp Creek, is now dotted with washed-out pavement and bridges, downed power lines and damaged homes.

The couple, Carolyn, 77, and Clifford, 80, have lived here for 40 years. Clifford built their home himself by connecting two trailers. But Hurricane Helene's torrential rains, which caused deadly landslides and floods, left Carolyn terrified. "We just prayed to God," she said.

Their home survived, but getting help into such rural mountain areas has proved difficult. Many lack power, water and cell service. And it's likely to take a long time to rebuild the area or make it safer from floods or landslides.

"I want to move," she said, looking at her husband. "He don't want to."

Days after Hurricane Helene contributed to rainfall totals of up to 30 inches in some parts of North Carolina and left at least 203 people dead across the Southeast, residents of nearby Boone are cleaning up flood damage to homes and infrastructure. Power, cell service and many businesses were back in operation.

But in more rural areas of Watauga County and others nearby, where landslides scarred Appalachian slopes and the storm sent water thundering into narrow valleys, damage to roads, homes and the power grid was more severe. About 200 county roads remained inaccessible. Rescue crews had taken to foot and horseback to reach some residents.

The same factors that made the storm so devastating also make recovery and rebuilding slower and more difficult, according to officials, recovery volunteers and residents.

"There's just so many hollers," said Chris Blanton, who is leading a Baptist volunteer recovery effort in and around Boone this week. "It's going to be years, probably, instead of months, trying to get back to normal."

Lindsey Miller pulled into a drive-through feeding kitchen at a church in Boone this week, thanking volunteers who handed her plastic foam boxes with hot dogs and green beans.

Miller lives in a home built on a hillside near Todd, north of Boone, with her autistic son and baby. The storm washed out her gravel drive, damaged the roads and toppled power lines.

She can still reach her fast food job, but on Tuesday, there was no power, cell service or water. Nearby residents hauled buckets of river water to flush toilets. Neighbors shared food and supplies.

Her mother, who lives next to her, doesn't have insurance. She said the storm was a wake-up call to be better prepared. "I told Mom, 'You need some kind of insurance.'"

William Holt, Watauga County's Emergency Services director, said on Tuesday that the county fielded more than 2,000 calls to 911 the first day of the storm. Two people died in landslides, he said. Several dozen remained sheltered at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and more were staying with family or friends. Many

hotels were renting rooms only to locals or storm recovery workers.

Help has poured into the city from volunteer groups, water rescue teams, the National Guard, power utilities, tree companies, the Red Cross and others. Officials said they were working to add more locations for water, hot meals, showers, restrooms and cellphone charging stations.

He said the storm constituted "the worst natural disaster in modern history" in his county.

In an interview, Holt said recovery would be complicated by the terrain and housing patterns, with homes often scattered along creeks that turned into torrents.

"And it's not quick fixes," he said.

In Boone on Tuesday, restaurant staff were cleaning out mud from floors and parking lots. In one neighborhood, mud coated a street of flooded homes where volunteers helped families. About 200 structures have been deemed unsafe, officials said.

Holt said the storm's fallout may take an economic bite in the area, impacting everyone from small-business owners to those relying on tourism. Right now, officials are asking tourists not to come so that recovery work can proceed.

Further outside of town, people were mucking out homes and putting mattresses and belongings by the road. Some residents and crews worked to temporarily patch washed-out sections of road along Meat Camp Creek to make it navigable.

Roy Dobyns Jr., a Baptist pastor in Boone who lives outside of town, said it has taken a toll on some people's mental health. And it's created long-term struggles for people who will have to wait weeks for power or repairs.

"All the bridges and roads blew up, so they can't get to them. A five-minute drive takes an hour," he said. In Meat Camp, a community thought to be named because hunters once dressed animals there, Clifford sat on his porch sipping tea mixed with orange juice. Across the yard were chickens kept for their grandchildren. Nearby was a tree branch he'd used to prop up a fallen power line, its lines splayed across the yard.

Clifford, in his eighth decade, still works mowing several lawns. When he suggested he sometimes struggled to get it done, Carolyn interjected. "You do good," she told him, arguing that he could still outwork a 30-year-old.

If they could afford to leave, Clifford – unlike his wife – doesn't want to. Even if he had known how bad the storm was going to be, he said he'd have probably chosen to stay put in their place framed by scenic mountains. His wife pointed out that he navigated the broken roads to get to church the day after the storm.

But she worries another, similar storm will take down the hillside or cut them off again: "Like you need to go to the doctor, you can't," she said. "You can't get in touch with anybody."

Whether to move away from an area that people may decide is too risky in Helene's wake, Holt said, is a difficult conversation many may be having in the months to come.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

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Port strike stokes some panic buying - Many likely getting items they don't need to get

October 4, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Betty Lin-Fisher; USA TODAY | Section: News | 981 Words Page: A5 OpenURL Link

During her lunch break Tuesday – the day 45,000 East Coast port workers went on strike – Shayna Turbovsky went to the grocery store to stock up on meat, rice, beans, bananas and toilet paper. She also filled up her gas tank and plans to keep it topped off.

Turbovsky, who lives in Fort Worth, Texas, had not been planning to go to the store, but when a co-worker told her she should stock up since there could be shortages and price increases due to the strike, she decided to go.

"I don't know how bad it's going to get, but the south east just got smacked by a hurricane and now the supply chain is going to be impacted through this strike," Turbovsky posted on X. "I would rather be overprepared than scared."

During lunch hour Wednesday at a Costco in Arlington, Virginia, shelves that are normally stocked to the ceiling with paper towels and toilet paper still had supply, but the amount appeared lower than usual. Meanwhile, at a Los Angeles-area Costco, a worker said there had been an uptick in toilet paper sales, though it was nothing close to the pandemonium that occurred during the COVID-19 lockdown.

But consumers may be stocking up on the wrong things - and panic buying when they don't need to.

Economic effects of strike

On Tuesday, 45,000 union workers went on strike when negotiations for a new contract broke down, shutting down 36 East and Gulf Coast ports. It was the first International Longshoremen's Association strike since 1977.

Half of all U.S. ocean imports flow through the East Coast and Gulf ports, which means consumers may face higher prices and shortages, experts have previously told USA TODAY. But those shortages would be for items like bananas, alcohol, seafood, electronics, pharmaceuticals, cars, auto parts and machinery parts.

Officials for President Joe Biden said in a previously reported USA TODAY story that the strike's impact on consumers would be "limited," including "in the important areas of fuel, food and medicine."

But some economists have told USA TODAY that the strike could cost the economy up to \$5billion each day as imports and exports are blocked.

'PTSD of the pandemic'

Turbovsky said she knows that most of the things she stocked up on may not be affected by the port strike.

"But what I thought in my mind was the pandemic. ... Once people are scared, once this country feels the fear of anything, we will all feel the PTSD of the pandemic, so immediately people think of toilet paper, paper towels, food supply," she told USA TODAY.

"People feel the fear and want to overconsume and buy everything they can," she added.

Turbovsky spent \$280 buying more than 30 pounds of meat to stash in her freezer, along with bananas, which she also froze, and other essentials. Turbovsky said she had a hard time finding meat during the pandemic when there

were supply chain issues.

She felt guilty buying so much meat, "but at the end of the day, I slept better at night knowing that I was prepared for the days to come," Turbovsky said.

Different supply chain issues

The reasons the port strike might cause product shortages differ from those that sparked the shortfalls during the pandemic when there were production shutdowns, said Josh Stillwagon, an associate professor and chair of the economics department at Babson College in Massachusetts.

"If all of the ports in the U.S. closed and we didn't have the West Coast (ports), I think you'd see something more like that (COVID-19 supply chain issues), where you'd have to worry about stockpiling," Stillwagon told USA TODAY.

Instead, Stillwagon thinks any strike-related shortages will mirror what occurred in 2021, when ports became congested as supplies started coming back online, delaying deliveries. Depending on how long the strike lasts, consumers should expect backlogs in goods arriving as shipments will have to be rerouted to the West Coast, he said.

Consumers will also pay more as extra transportation costs to get the goods from the West Coast to the East Coast will have to be built into prices, he said.

Stillwagon said he understands how consumers could feel uncertainty, leading them to stockpile goods.

"People have that ambiguity about what the outcome will be, and so they sort of flock to the necessities that were very inconvenient last time when we didn't have them," he said. Concern may also be exacerbated by the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, which has left many of the people impacted struggling for necessities, "so people are stockpiling, given both of these major news events."

Whether there will be shortages of goods from the strike depends on how long it lasts, said Stillwagon. Inventories are back to pre-pandemic levels, and suppliers are "a little more attuned to disruption in the supply chain after COVID, so you may not notice it if it lasts a week or two," he said.

Not everyone is stocking up

Not all consumers were panic buying.

Shoppers crowded the aisles at Grosvenor Market in Rockville, Maryland, at lunchtime Wednesday. But that was less about hoarding and more about Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, which began Wednesday evening, said Scot Shuck, the store's owner.

By midday on day two of the port strike, Grosvenor customers had barely made a dent in the store's inventory of milk, toilet paper, bread and other staples.

Shuck said he hasn't witnessed any of the panic buying that gripped supermarkets back in 2020, at the height of the pandemic. Nor does he expect many supply-chain shortages to come.

If the strike does drag on, Shuck said, the store may have trouble procuring some of his customers' favorite imports: "Wines, cheeses and, I think, more fruits than vegetables," he said.

And so, Shuck said, "let's hope that it blows over very quickly."

Contributing: Josh Rivera, Medora Lee and Daniel de Visel, USA TODAY

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WEEK 7 - Previews, predictions for Gastonia, Shelby area

October 4, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Joe L Hughes II; Gaston Gazette | Section: Sports | 788 Words Page: B2 OpenURL Link

Here are previews for Week 7 high school football games in Cleveland, Gaston and Lincoln counties, with reporter loe Hughes making a prediction for each.

Games kickoff at 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted.

Pick 3: Area's top games

Crest at South Point

Records: Crest is 4-0 (1-0 Big South 3A). South Point is 3-0 (1-0).

Web/Radio: NFHS Network (\$), WGNC 1450 AM/101.1 FM

The word: This is the sixth meeting between the Big South 3A rivals in four years, with South Point holding a 3-2 advantage. Crest took their last matchup, a wild 61-49 affair. The Chargers are battle tested, already with Burns, Shelby, Charlotte Catholic and Ashbrook on their resume. However, it's been six years since Crest left Belmont with a victory. Doing so will hinge on stopping South Point's vaunted rushing attack, which is averaging 294 yards per game. The Red Raiders have their work cut out for themselves as well, facing a Crest offense trending upward with the backfield of Tanner McSwain and Aiden Carson, as well as junior dynamo Michael Edwards.

Pick: Crest

Lincolnton at Bandys (Saturday, noon)

Records: Lincolnton is 1-3 (1-0 Catawba Valley 2A). Bandys is 4-0 (1-0).

The word: Lincolnton has won the teams' past three meetings. The last two have been particularly high scoring, the Wolves averaging 50 points per game. Led by running back Tanner Stewart, Bandys is off to a hot start. Stewart has 441 yards and three touchdowns, keeping opposing defenses from keying in quarterback Brady Swett (785 pass yards, 8 TD). Lincolnton counters with sophomore quarterback Rashad Lynch (357 pass yards, 2 TD) and senior back Treylen Bost (420 rush yards, 4 TD).

Pick: Bandys

Stuart Cramer at Hunter Huss (Thursday, 7 p.m.)

Records: Stuart Cramer is 1-3 (0-1 Big South 3A). Hunter Huss is 1-2 (0-1).

Web: NFHS Network (\$)

The word: With a limited supply of at-large spots available in the upcoming 3A state playoffs, Hunter Huss and Stuart Cramer look to get a leg up at the expense of a Gaston County foe. Cramer hopes to bounce back following a 44-7 loss to South Point in which its defense allowed 354 rushing yards. Huss is in a similar position, thoroughly dismantled by Kings Mountain in a 39-13 loss. Giving quarterback Javarion Brown room to operate will be key, particularly after getting sacked five times in his last outing.

Pick: Hunter Huss

The rest

Big South 3A

Ashbrook (4-1, 1-1 Big South 3A) at North Gaston (2-2, 0-1): Ashbrook allowed four total yards Tuesday night against Forestview. That isn't good news for North Gaston, which has struggled to create offense at times this season. | Pick: Ashbrook

Kings Mountain (3-1, 1-0) at Forestview (1-4, 1-1): Forestview struggled offensively in Tuesday's 34-0 loss at Ashbrook. It doesn't get much easier against Kings Mountain, which features two of the area's top defensive talents in Antonio Armstrong and Eli Lipscomb. | Pick: Kings Mountain

Southern Piedmont 1A/2A

Bessemer City (4-2, 2-0 Southern Piedmont 1A/2A) at Burns (3-2, 1-0): Bessemer City is off to a 2-0 start in league play following wins over Thomas Jefferson and Highland Tech. Burns is a much taller task, however, the Bulldogs averaging seven yards per carry this season. | Pick: Burns

Cherryville (1-4, 0-1) at East Gaston (1-3, 0-0): East Gaston averaged 14.5 points per game during non-conference play, losing three of four games. The Warriors look to rebound against a Cherryville team which has allowed 51.3 points per game during a four-game losing skid. | Pick: East Gaston

Highland Tech (3-2, 0-2) at Shelby (4-2, 2-0): Shelby has scored 70 points each of the last two weeks. One shouldn't be surprised if the Golden Lions make it three in a row against an improved, albeit overmatched, Highland Tech side. | Pick: Shelby

Western Foothills 3A

North Iredell (3-2, 2-0 Western Foothills 3A) at North Lincoln (4-1, 1-0): North Iredell has won three straight games, the last two by seven points each. North Lincoln's a different beast, though, averaging 332 rushing yards its first four games. | Pick: North Lincoln

West Iredell (2-2, 0-1) at East Lincoln (3-2, 0-2): Its league title hopes all but dashed, East Lincoln looks to start the home stretch on a good note. It faces an equally desperate West Iredell team, hoping to rebound after allowing 56 points Sept. 20 to St. Stephens. | Pick: East Lincoln:

Catawba Valley 2A

Bunker Hill (3-1, 1-0 Catawba Valley 2A) at West Lincoln (3-2, 1-1) (Saturday, 6:30 p.m.): This is West Lincoln's second game in four days following Hurricane Helene. A tough task awaits in Bunker Hill, which averages 242.5 rush yards per game. | Pick: Bunker Hill

Catawba Shores 1A/2A

Mountain Island Charter (1-3, 0-1 Catawba Shores 1A/2A) at Winston-Salem Prep (1-3, 0-2) (Thursday, 7:30 p.m.): MICS has lost three straight, but so has WInston-Salem Prep, which has allowed 36 points per game during its skid. | Pick: MICS

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Fairwinds Aviation continues Helene recovery donations

October 4, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Sam Dietrich| Section: Local | 368 Words OpenURL Link

Fairwinds Aviation has delivered nearly 20,000 pounds of donations this week to western North Carolina to help residents recover from Hurricane Helene.

United Way of Wayne County partnered with Wayne County this week to collect supplies and distribute them to Fairwinds Aviation, at 240 Aviation Drive in Pikeville.

Christina and Justin Sargent, president and vice president of Fairwinds Aviation, have led the team to collect, send and distribute donations by plane to people in need in western North Carolina, as part of Operation Airdrop.

Helene roared ashore on Sept. 26 in Florida's Big Bend region as a Category 4 hurricane, with 140 mph winds. A weakened Helene quickly moved through Georgia, then soaked the Carolinas and Tennessee with torrential rains that flooded waterways. The storm brought catastrophic and deadly flooding and mudslides in western North Carolina.

As of Thursday, between 10 to 14 volunteer pilots have flown at least 18,500 pounds of donations from Wayne County into the western part of the state, said Tom Robare, Fairwinds Aviation maintenance director.

"It truly is amazing what has been accomplished so far," Robare said. "We keep getting donations every single day."

On Thursday, Fairwinds Aviation pilots made about 12 trips from morning to afternoon delivering supplies, Robare said.

The supplies include food, water, clothes, empty gas cans and hygiene products for children and adults.

Robare said the Fairwinds Aviation team initiated the distribution of donations on their own, which others learned about throughout the county.

"Word got out very, very quickly," Robare said. "It just kind of grew into something bigger than we anticipated."

Justin Sargent said on Friday that Fairwinds Aviation staff, along with the Eastern Carolina Academy baseball team from Goldsboro, managed to fill a 53-foot tractor trailer full of donations.

"It's been nonstop," Sargent said. "We still have more donations coming in."

Robare confirmed that Wayne Community College delivered their collected donations to Fairwinds Aviation Friday morning.

He said the goal is to send at least 25,000 pounds of donations by the end of this week.

Fairwinds Aviation will continue to collect and distribute donations to western North Carolina next week, and will even start making trips with trucks and trailers once the roads become more accessible, Robare said.

"There is more to do and it won't stop now," he said.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Sam Dietrich, 'Fairwinds Aviation continues Helene recovery donations', *Goldsboro News-Argus, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C04B9917469288



WCPS to begin collection drives for western N.C.

October 4, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: News Argus staff| Section: Local | 466 Words OpenURL Link

After Hurricane Matthew, and again after Florence, Wayne County Public Schools received thousands of dollars in donations from schools and communities across the state that provided support to students and staff displaced from flooding and storm damage.

Now, with western North Carolina school districts and communities facing historic devastation and recovery needs as a result of Helene, WCPS school communities are coming together to help return the support, said Ken Derksen, WCPS executive director for community engagement and student and family support.

In addition to various school-level collection drives that have already begun around the district this week, WCPS will be kicking off two district-wide donation and collection initiatives on Monday.

The district will have a "Coins for a Cause" fundraiser. All schools will participate in the Coins for a Cause coin and dollar relief drive. The fundraiser begins Monday and continues through Nov. 6.

Through a partnership with the Mt. Olive Pickle Co., all schools will receive plastic gallon jars to collect the coins. All proceeds collected will go directly to partnered school districts in western North Carolina to purchase gift cards to support students and families displaced or impacted from flooding and storm damage, Derksen said.

The second initiative includes supply donations. WCPS schools will have drop off sites for students, families and others in the community who would like donate items.

The physical collection drive will also begin Monday and continue through Oct. 25.

Once completed, WCPS staff will pick up the items from each school and have them shipped to impacted communities.

"Our hearts go out to neighbors in the west," said Superintendent Marc Whichard. "We recognize that relief can come in waves and will be needed days, weeks, and months out. With that in mind, our district-wide collection efforts are intended to help address the more immediate needs of communities through physical donations.

"Schools can use monetary donations to help address long-term needs by directly assisting those students and staff still in need of relief support in the coming months after their school year is able to resume."

Items that can be donated include toilet paper, bottled water, non-perishable food, contractor size trash bags, first aid supplies, feminine hygiene products, diapers, baby clothes, baby wipes, Gatorade, canned goods, personal hygiene products, cleaning supplies, dog and cat food, hand sanitizer, paper towels, bleach (bottles, spray and wipes, laundry detergent, dish soap, shovels, brooms, gloves, flashlights and batteries.

"We are working with the North Carolina Superintendents Association to identify specific western districts and communities that our school district can partner with for these donations," Whichard said.

"As superintendent, I, along with the Wayne County Board of Education, sincerely appreciate the efforts of our students, families and community partners who are coming together through these efforts to demonstrate an outpouring of compassion and support for communities faced with needs unlike anything they have ever experienced before."

• Citation (aglc Style)

News Argus staff, 'WCPS to begin collection drives for western N.C.', *Goldsboro News-Argus, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C04B9930831140



FIGHTING MISINFORMATION

October 4, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Author: CHAEWON CHUNG Staff Reporter | Section: Main | 1023 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene has not only caused devastating physical damage in Western North Carolina but has also triggered a wave of widespread online misinformation about the storm and its connection to climate change.

While the online claims suggest that the storm was unrelated to climate change, meteorologists in North Carolina assert that the hurricane is "certainly" connected to climate change.

One X user posted on Sunday, referencing the 1916 case when Asheville was significantly impacted by the remnants of Hurricane Charleston, noting that atmospheric CO2 levels were lower at that time than they are today. The post has garnered more than 34,000 likes and has been retweeted 7,800 times.

Corey Davis, assistant state climatologist at the North Carolina State Climate Office, told the Journal that what the post is arguing is essentially implying that "if some extreme events are caused by climate change, then all extreme events historically must have been caused by climate change as well."

"We had a number of events like that across the country throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, but in any given area, they were quite uncommon during that time period. The difference now is that we're seeing events of that magnitude, or even worse, happening much more often than they did historically."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has projected a season of "above-normal" hurricane activity in the Atlantic basin this year, anticipating between 17 and 24 named storms, defined as systems with winds of at least 39 mph.

Among these, NOAA has expected that 8 to 13 could strengthen into hurricanes with winds reaching 74 mph or more, including a potential 4 to 7 major hurricanes, which are categorized as storms with winds of 111 mph or higher.

Scientists and meteorologists have identified warm ocean waters and the La Niña pattern as two significant contributors to this prediction.

When sea surface temperatures exceed 80°F, they create optimal conditions for tropical storms to form and strengthen into hurricanes. The warmer waters supply the necessary heat and moisture that drive hurricanes, enabling them to intensify and sustain their power.

In addition, during a La Niña phase - characterized by cooler-than-average sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific - the strongest upper-level winds shift northward, away from the tropics. This shift reduces wind shear, fostering a more conducive environment for the development and longevity of tropical storms.

"One thing is clear - that the temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico were extraordinarily warm," Charles Konrad, professor of geography at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, told the Journal. "Some of that warmth, maybe a lot of it, had to do with climate change."

In August, the Gulf reached its highest temperatures on record in modern history, with surface averages approaching 90 degrees, according to Brian McNoldy, a climatologist at the University of Miami.

Strong hurricanes, like Hurricane Helene, require specific conditions such as warmer water and low vertical wind

shear, meaning minimal change in wind speed or direction with height.

The confusion about the hurricane's irrelevance to climate change arises from the fact that some of Helene's "ingredients," as Konrad explained, are not linked to the effects that scientists suggest climate change brings.

For example, while climate change is thought to potentially increase vertical wind shear, Hurricane Helene's low vertical wind shear is likely not tied to those climate change effects. As well, the upper-level low pressure system, which exists at higher altitudes and can steer storms and influence their paths, affected Helene's trajectory but is likely not related to climate change.

"What you could say is that there is a mix of ingredients here, a few of which we could certainly associate with climate change, but others that we cannot," Konrad said, adding that what climate change has done is increasing the probabilities of the hurricane.

"In a normal climate without added carbon dioxide, there's a possibility of very strong tropical systems moving north and hitting the mountains and dropping incredible amounts of rainfall ... but what climate change has done is that it's increasing the probabilities of that happening," Konrad added.

Another post, which received more than 1,200 likes and 100 retweets, claimed that the severe flooding in Asheville was caused not by climate change, but heavy rain the city received last week before Hurricane Helene hit. The user argued that the combination of this initial heavy rain and the hurricane's arrival worsened the situation, not climate change.

However, this perspective can also be misleading, according to Davis, as it is "clear" that climate change played a role in increasing the duration and rainfall totals during the event.

"We know the oceans are absorbing the brunt of warming on our planet, and it's showing with those extremely warm water temperatures that provide even more fuel for tropical storms and hurricanes," Davis said.

In addition to the Gulf's record-high temperatures over the past two years, he noted that the atmosphere above the Gulf was exceptionally humid last week, with minimal dry air surrounding the storm. This created favorable conditions for Hurricane Helene to expand and push moist air into North Carolina as a cold front moved through, he explained.

"A warmer and more humid atmosphere is also a known consequence of climate change, so I think that's a natural connection to make with last week's event," Davis added.

Chaewon Chung covers climate change and the environment in the Triad and Northwest North Carolina. Her work is funded by a grant from the Green South Foundation and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.

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ASU ponders moving home games

October 4, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Author: TOM FOREMAN JR. Staff Reporter | Section: Main | 1043 Words

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As athletics director at Appalachian State, Doug Gillin has spent part of the last week trying to help some of his student-athletes find housing after flooding caused by Hurricane Helene displaced them from their apartments. He's also looking to help the football team find a potential home for the rest of the 2024 season, and Wake Forest and Charlotte could provide a solution.

With Boone still in recovery mode from the effects of flooding that has closed the school for at least two more weeks, the football team is looking for alternatives to playing games at Kidd Brewer Stadium. While Gillin said the press box leaked and some of the suites were soaked by rain, the Mountaineers could play there. But he said it's not the stadium that's the problem.

"The thought process is, is it safe to do it here?" Gillin said on Thursday. "And we really don't know the answer yet."

Gillin said he's hesitant to have people come to Boone because he doesn't want fans taking hotel rooms away from people who can't stay in their own homes, or from emergency responders and others addressing the problems associated with Helene's aftermath.

"When you start thinking about playing a football game, there's a lot that goes around it when you're in active recovery and relief operation," he said.

Options

In case Boone isn't an option when the Mountaineers are scheduled to play Georgia State at home on Oct. 26, Gillin said the program has been in talks with Wake Forest and Charlotte about playing home games there.

For example, on that weekend, the Demon Deacons will be playing at Stanford, meaning Allegacy Stadium would be free for a game. Same thing for Nov. 2, when the Mountaineers are scheduled to host Old Dominion and Wake Forest has a bye, and on Nov. 23, when the Mountaineers are to face James Madison and Wake Forest will be at Miami.

As for Charlotte, the 49ers will be at Memphis on Oct. 26 and have a Oct. 31 game against Tulane and won't be in their stadium on Nov. 2. They're also on the road for Florida Atlantic on Nov. 23.

"Had conversations with both athletic directors," Gillin said. "You know, in a lot of darkness, one of the rays of sunshine is people being willing to help. And that includes our colleagues at Wake Forest and Charlotte and across the country.

"Quite frankly, you know the amount of outpouring and checking in, the Sun Belt Conference and other schools helping us raise money for western North Carolina has been really good to see in a really bad situation.

John Currie, the athletics director at Wake Forest, said his door is open.

"Our hearts ache for all whose lives have been disrupted by Hurricane Helene," Currie said in a statement. "I have been in touch with Appalachian State AD Doug Gillin since last weekend to offer our assistance, including the use of Allegacy Federal Credit Union Stadium to host Mountaineer home football games if needed."

Mike Hill, the Charlotte AD, wasn't immediately available for comment on Thursday.

East Carolina's response to Hurricane Floyd

This isn't the first time a North Carolina college football team has had to change venues because of a hurricane.

After Hurricane Floyd ravaged eastern North Carolina with flooding rains in 1999, East Carolina was faced with a dilemma. It had just played at South Carolina, where it pulled off a 21-3 upset. However, because of the floods, the team couldn't return to Greenville. Given the upset, the Gamecocks weren't the least bit generous when ECU asked if it could borrow their facilities to practice ahead of the upcoming game against Miami. That forced the Pirates to gc to a high school field to get ready for their next game.

And because the team couldn't get back to Greenville, the Pirates had to face the Hurricanes at NC State's Carter-Finley Stadium. ECU came back from a 23-3 halftime deficit to take a 27-23 victory in front of approximately 45,900 fans. Eventually, the Pirates returned to Greenville to finish the season, but then-coach Steve Logan said the changes had an impact. Just like what happened at Appalachian State, some players were forced to find alternative housing after they returned to find their apartments had been flooded.

"You just had to adjust your way through it. It took a long time to get back on track, you know, of any kind of rhythm," Logan said this week. "It took well over a month before things were halfway back to manageable."

Logan said he can understand the troubles Appalachian State Head Coach Shawn Clark and his players are going through.

"I don't know what all Appy State is dealing with," he said, "but it ain't going to be fun, I can tell you that much."

App State taking one day at a time

For now, Appalachian State is proceeding with its season. The Mountaineers will bus to Marshall for Saturday's game, then fly to its game at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette on Oct. 12, with an open date on Oct. 19.

"In terms of traveling a football team to an away game, this week is manageable because we're driving east and north," Gillin said. "We feel like the roads going in those directions are safe and that we can find a safe route to go."

Gillin said the team will fly out of Hickory for the Louisiana game.

At some point during the two road trips, Appalachian State will have made a decision on where it will finish the home portion of its 2024 schedule. Right now, playing in Kidd Brewer doesn't appear to be on the table because the town of Boone will still be in recovery mode. But as football coaches might tend to say, it's a day-by-day process.

"We really need to get through Saturday," Gillin said. "The good news is the recovery and relief operations are ongoing. ... And then, maybe, probably once we get through Louisiana, because of some of these places were we could play, they need two to three weeks to get ready, so we'll have to make this (decision) a couple of weeks out."

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Biden visits NC, pledges continued federal aid after Helene

October 4, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Adam Wagner; Staff Writer | Section: News | 677 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

After taking an aerial tour of damage inflicted by Tropical Storm Helene in Western North Carolina on Wednesday, President Joe Biden visited North Carolina's Emergency Operations Center in Raleigh to promise that the federal government will continue to help with the state's recovery.

"The United States, the nation, has your back. The nation has your back. We're not leaving until you get back on your feet completely," Biden said to a roomful of emergency management officials and members of the National Guard.

Gov. Roy Cooper told Biden about challenges ranging from washed-out bridges and roads to damaged water systems and electrical grids to lost homes and businesses.

"An entire region of our state is still in a dangerous situation," Cooper said.

Earlier Wednesday, Biden approved additional federal resources for the response, including up to 1,000 active duty U.S. Army soldiers from Fort Liberty and 22 aircraft.

"Simply put, we've got the capabilities to get the job done and we're going to get it done as fast as possible," Biden said.

Biden also said he'd approved a request Wednesday from Cooper to cover all of the costs of debris removal for the next six months. And 50 StarLink satellite links have been deployed, Biden said, with more on the way..

"Folks, it's going to cost us billions of dollars. It's going to cost billions of dollars to deal with this storm and all the communities affected, and Congress has an obligation to ensure that states have the resources they need," Biden said.

NC Emergency Management Director Will Ray told Biden that North Carolina still has about 350,000 people without power, five days after Helene barreled through.

Ray said 24 North Carolina search-and-rescue teams are working in Western North Carolina, along with 13 from other states and 18 from the federal government. Those teams have had more than 5,000 interactions - from rescues to evacuations to shelter inspections - since Helene response began.

"The teams continue to do really incredible work in some pretty austere conditions," Ray said.

North Carolina is also operating 26 aircraft in Western North Carolina that have airlifted more than 700,000 pounds of supplies, Ray added.

Biden said that since becoming president in 2017, he'd flown over so many downed trees that they would cover an area larger than the state of Maryland, largely from wildfires.

"I've seen a lot, but looking at Asheville and just imagining what it must have been like sitting along those rivers and streams as all of that rain came down ... You could see homes that were removed clearly from one side of the river, down the river, to the other side of the river," Biden said.

Biden thanked Cooper and South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, a Republican, for focusing on the response instead of prioritizing politics. Tuesday, Biden called former President Donald Trump a liar after Trump said he was hearing reports that Cooper and Biden, both Democrats, were not helping parts of the state where large proportions of Republicans live.

"In a moment like this, we put politics aside. Or at least we should put it all aside, and we have here. There are no Democrats or Republicans, only Americans," Biden said.

Biden closed by saying it is clear that the climate crisis is having an impact in the United States, including strengthening storms like Helene. Those storms like Helene are going to get stronger and stronger as oceans continue to warm, he said.

"Nobody can deny the impact of the climate crisis anymore," he said. "At least I hope they don't. They must be brain-dead if they do."

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

October 4, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Danielle Battaglia; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1428 Words

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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."

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."

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.

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.

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.

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."

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."

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."

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.

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."

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In Western NC, a lack of flood insurance deepens the damage

October 4, 2024 \mid Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Ned Barnett | Section: Editorial/Opinion | 672 Words

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For western North Carolina, Hurricane Helene brought a flooding disaster

Next comes an insurance disaster.

Residents in North Carolina's mountains have felt secure from the flooding that increasingly swamps the state's low-lying coastal plain. But when Hurricane Helene - along with a rainstorm that preceded it - dropped more than 40 trillion gallons of water on the region, that security was washed away.

Now, homeowners in the state's mountain counties are learning that their homeowner's insurance doesn't cover flooding, landslides or anything else caused by moving water. Many will wish they had paid for policies through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

State Sen. Natasha Marcus, the Democratic nominee for state insurance commissioner, said there are less than 6,000 NFIP policies in the western North Carolina disaster area. In Buncombe County, home of hard-hit Asheville, she said, less than 1% of the county's 137,000 housing units have flood insurance.

Marcus said the hurricane's destruction "really drives home what is happening with the changes in our climate. It's just a startling reminder that it is real and how exposed we are. Of course, now it's too late to get flood insurance. So I'm very worried about how we are going to rebuild western North Carolina."

It's understandable that homeowners in high elevations didn't regard massive flooding as a likely threat. The last event to approach Helene's magnitude in western North Carolina was more than 100 years ago - the great flood of 1916.

But climate change is making flooding more frequent as storms developing over warming seas carry more moisture inland. The North Carolina State Climate Office blog said the rainfall during Helene and a preceding storm dwarfed historic standards: "In Asheville, the three-day total of almost 14 inches goes well beyond the 1-in-1,000 year total for a 72-hour period. ... Likewise, the 24.41 inches over three days at Mount Mitchell is off the charts compared to the 1-in-1,000 year amount of 16.5 inches."

Lack of flood insurance is a problem even where floods are common. State Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey told me that when Hurricane Florence engulfed parts of eastern North Carolina in 2018, only 2 percent of the damaged homes were covered by flood insurance.

"It is a huge problem," Causey said. "We had flood education classes around the state in 2019. That education effort increased the number of flood policies by 25 percent, but we are still just scratching the surface."

Hurricane Helene has added intensity to the contest between Causey, a Republican, and Marcus in the insurance commissioner's race.

Causey supports adopting a statewide version of a coastal program that serves as a market of last resort for vulnerable properties. He also wants to increase participation in the state fortified roof program

Marcus says North Carolina's insurance commissioner should be a stronger advocate for adopting building code and infrastructure changes and making people more aware when they are buying in flood-prone areas by updating flood

maps.

"Unfortunately, efforts to modernize these maps have been stalled by political gridlock, leaving communities unprepared for the realities of our changing climate," she said.

Days before Hurricane Helene made landfall, three beachfront houses fell into the ocean in Rodanthe. It's a far different place than Asheville, but it's the same phenomenon. The climate is changing. So are the risks.

Yet at a time when climate hazards are rising, more people are moving into areas vulnerable to floods, winds and wildfires. That development drives up the cost - both in human life and in property - of natural disasters.

It's time for sane development and construction laws that acknowledge the threat of climate change. It's past time to reduce the risks by barring development in flood-prone areas, improving building codes to better withstand storms and encouraging the purchase of flood insurance across the state.

Associate opinion editor Ned Barnett can be reached at 919-404-7583, or nbarnett@ newsobserver.com Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

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Starlink reconnects Western NC reeling from Helene

October 4, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Brian Gordon and Emily Vespa, correspondent; Staff Writer Section: News 730 Words

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To reconnect emergency responders and residents after Hurricane Helene, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has shipped dozens of Starlink satellite systems to rural Western North Carolina.

On Monday, FEMA announced 40 Starlink systems were in the region to assist emergency communications, with plans to deploy one system to each county affected by the storm. Another 140 systems will be sent to aid "with communications infrastructure restoration," the White House said in a Sept. 30 statement on relief efforts.

A subsidiary of Elon Musk's SpaceX, Starlink has positioned more than 6,000 satellites in low-Earth orbit to beam broadband internet service to on-the-ground terminals. The first North Carolina households installed Starlink in 2021, and since then, the system has been used in the aftermaths of natural disasters and war worldwide where traditional internet infrastructure faltered. Ukraine fighters, for example, have relied on Starlink in their battle against Russia.

On Tuesday, North Carolina mountain counties reported Starlink enabled emergency responders to receive calls and residents to check in on family. In Ashe County, north of Boone, the emergency management department has established connection at more than a half-dozen fire stations. Residents are advised to turn on Wi-Fi calling on their phones to link to this satellite service.

Many areas across Western North Carolina, from Cherokee to Asheville to the Blue Ridge foothills, have struggled to find consistent internet and cellular connectivity since Friday, after the remnants of Hurricane Helene dumped feet of water and caused destructive flooding. As of Monday, close to 70% of the region's cellphone towers and equipment were out of service, federal communications data showed, as cut fiber-optic cables prompted widespread blackouts, according to the nonprofit news outlet Asheville Watchdog.

Starlink service gets political

Outside the region, the deployment of Starlink to North Carolina became politicized after falseclaims spread that former President Donald Trump had arranged the deployment of Starlink systems to storm-affected areas after the current administration failed or refused to do the same.

Trump said Monday during a speech in Valdosta, Georgia, that he had spoken to Musk about delivering Starlink systems to storm-affected areas. Early the next morning, Musk, who has endorsed Trump's reelection bid, announced his coordination with the Republican candidate. On the platform X, which Musk also owns, the SpaceX founder wrote "Earlier today, @realDonaldTrump alerted me to additional people who need Starlink Internet in North Carolina. We are sending them terminals right away."

On Tuesday, North Carolina state Sen. Danny Britt, a Republican who represents the Sandhills counties of Robeson, Hoke and Scotland across the state from Western North Carolina, posted on X that he had asked Trump "for help restoring communications to Western NC, and he delivered."

"Within hours, President Trump got Elon Musk on the phone and a commitment of as many Starlink devices as we need to help save North Carolinians."

However, the White House says the Starlink systems were on their way before these conversations occurred. FEMA announced Starlink's presence in North Carolina on Sept. 30, the same day Trump spoke in Valdosta.

On X, White House spokesperson Andrew Bates commented on the Starlink deployment chronology, responding to an article about Trump and Musk's conversations by stating, "This is already happening." Trump's daughter, Ivanka, visited Hickory on Wednesday to deliver 300 Starlink systems in a visit coordinated by Medic Corps, a group running relief operations out of the Hickory Regional Airport. Ivanka Trump took photos with pilots, airport staff and volunteers.

What happened to grant funding?

Some on social media claimed that President Joe Biden or the Federal Communications Commission previously revoked from Starlink more than \$900 million in grant funds to expand high-speed internet access in rural North Carolina. That's not accurate.

In fact, the FCC had reviewed the grant applications in a two-phase process. Starlink was one of 379 applicants - called "winning bidders" - that made it past the first phase.

But funds for the winning bidders were contingent on a second-phase, in-depth application. After Starlink filed that application, the FCC determined that it didn't qualify for funding.

According to a letter from the FCC chairperson, the agency found that Starlink:

Couldn't provide internet at the required speed set by the FCC.

Would have imposed "high start-up costs on rural consumers," requiring subscribers to buy a \$600 dish to access internet.

Proposed using some funds to provide internet to places like parking lots and road medians, which are not underserved rural households like the program intended.

Julia Coin of the Charlotte Observer contributed.

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UNC Health offers free virtual visits for Helene storm victims in Western NC

October 4, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Chyna Blackmon; Staff Writer | Section: News | 258 Words Page: 2A OpenURL Link

As recovery efforts continue for thousands of North Carolinians impacted by Hurricane Helene, UNC Health is now stepping up to provide free virtual care for those in need.

The Triangle-based healthcare system announced that any Western North Carolina residents 18 years or older can be treated virtually through UNC Health Virtual Care Now with a smartphone, laptop or other speaker and cameraenabled device at no cost.

"Our patients and teammates in Western North Carolina are dealing with widespread power outages, extreme flooding, mudslides, road closures and more," Dr. Wesley Burks, CEO of UNC Health said in a media release. "We will support our patients, teammates and communities in this time of greatest need. We want to offer free virtual services for those who have stable Internet access - and will continue to provide in-person care at our clinics and hospitals."

How to make a free virtual appointment

Sore throat

Virtual services through UNC Health Virtual Care Now are available everyday from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. If you have a medical emergency, you should call 911, but UNC's virtual care providers assist patients with a wide range of conditions, including:

Seasonal allergies	
Asthma	
Colds, coughs and the flu	
Diarrhea	
Female urinary problems	
Fever	
Insect bites	
Mild headache/migraine	
Mild stomach ache	
Pink eye	
Rash	
Sinus infection	

Appointments are not needed but you must register and have a My UNC Chart account to book a provider. Here's what to do if you need to make an appointment:

Visit unchealth.org/care-services/virtual-care#virtual-care-now

Select "Get in Line"

Enter your information to join the queue and then complete the eCheck-in process.

You can find more information about UNC's virtual care services online at unchealth.org/care-services/virtual-care.

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Chyna Blackmon, Staff Writer, 'UNC Health offers free virtual visits for Helene storm victims in Western NC', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 2A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C0259D5F173E68>



'Incredible': Carolina Hurricanes raise \$300,000 for Western NC storm relief

October 4, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Chip Alexander; Staff Writer | Section: News | 559 Words

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Raleigh Brendan Lemieux of the Carolina Hurricanes was gratified Wednesday to see Canes fans fill the Lenovo Center both to see a preseason hockey game, but more so to help others in need.

The Canes had announced that \$10 tickets would be sold to the preseason exhibition against the Nashville Predators. After Helene struck western counties in North Carolina last weekend, causing so much destruction and loss of life, Wednesday's game took on another meaning.

The Hurricanes said all ticket sales and donations would go to hurricane relief funds. Late in the game, it was announced almost \$280,000 had been raised and team president Doug Warf said after the game - a 6-4 loss to the Preds - that he expected the total to be closer to \$300,000.

Warf said Thursday the total had topped \$300,000.. Some auction items are being offered on the Canes' web site (nhl.com/hurricanes/) the next few weeks to continue to raise funds., he said.

Lemieux, who had a goal in Wednesday's game, called the overflow crowd of 18,700 and the financial support from the game "incredible."

"My mom's from Vilas, just outside of Boone," the forward said. "Our family is from there. My grandpa and my grandmother are buried there. We feel for all the people in Vilas and the surrounding areas.

"Western North Carolina has been hit so hard, and frankly I don't think there has been enough attention around it. It's sad because I was on the phone with a friend today and he said there's still people missing, still hundreds of unaccounted people presumed dead.

"It's mind-blowing to me that in our country something like this can happen. Obviously, I understand how remote and hard it is to access and for people to help. But it's scary and it's something we can all come together, whatever side of the aisle you're on, and get behind and support these people in dire need of help."

Lemieux, the son of former NHL forward Claude Lemieux, said neighbors of his parents had their house swept away by the flooding. He said he hopes to be able to find some time to go up and lend help.

Some former Hurricanes players, including defenseman Aaron Ward and goalie Cam Ward, joined the relief effort, gathering to help raise donations, food and other necessities. The group, Carolina NHL Hockey Alum, said Wednesday they would truck supplies to Hendersonville.

"I've been praying for these people," Lemieux said. "My family is very lucky to be safe. But the videos we got from our own porch, it's scary.

"I've never seen anything like it. I've never been around a hurricane of that magnitude or flooding like that. It's very scary."

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour also tried to put things in perspective after the game. Carolina, with a youthful lineup, played a Preds team packed with veterans and it showed in the play on the ice and the final score. But Brind'Amour, like Lemieux, praised the turnout and the financial support it provided.

"That's obviously the most important thing coming out of tonight," Brind'Amour said. "It's everyone coming together and anything can help,." Brind'Amour said. "What's going on down there ... This is having fun. They're dealing with real stuff. Anything we can do to help is great."

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Pilots get needed supplies to battered Western NC and beyond, one delivery at a time

October 4, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Rebecca Noel; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1088 Words Page: 6A OpenURL Link

From above, Gatlinburg, Tennessee, looks almost serene - the hills' jagged edges in fog, creeks and rivers twisting through the green like capillaries. From there, you wouldn't know Gatlinburg's babies don't have formula.

But there's been no running water in the area since remnants of Hurricane Helene tore through the mountain community on Thursday. Many residents still don't have power.

Gatlinburg's airport reopened Tuesday for the first time since Helene struck, and JillianGorrell was there to greet the seventh plane to touch down there that morning - a small CJ2+ from Concord, North Carolina. It was carrying over 1,000 pounds of diapers, baby formula, clothes and first aid supplies with eight more planes expected to follow.

"We desperately need medical supplies, baby supplies, cleaning supplies, trash bags," said Gorrell, a resident of the area and lecturer in the school of natural resources at the University of Tennessee in nearby Knoxville.

With roads and bridges in the area devoured and mangled in Helene's wake, it was the first assistance many in the area were able to get, she said.

"Roads are gone, landmarks are gone...," Gorrell said, teary-eyed, with her voice beginning to break. "Our area is hurting, but we're pulling together, and we really appreciate everything people are doing for us."

The pilots making the delivery were volunteers with Operation Airdrop, a disaster relief nonprofit, that has mobilized to deliver thousands of pounds of donated goods to western North Carolina, southern Appalachia, and other hard hit areas. Some, including Byron MacRae and Owen Williams, take off from Concord-Padgett Regional Airport, just northeast of Charlotte.

"We got to Asheville about 2:45 p.m. on Sunday, and they had just gotten power back about 10 minutes before we were landing," Williams said of the first trip he took after the storm, delivering 1,500 pounds of goods to the hard-hit Buncombe County city. "The mission has evolved with every trip we take as we learn more about what people need, what areas need us the most and how to spread the word to people that can help."

'Look for the helpers'

Operation Airdrop pilots have carried canned food, utensils, cleaning supplies, diapers, bottled water, feminine hygiene products, first aid supplies and more to small airfields in the North Carolina mountains, including Ashe County, Wilkes County and Banner Elk, in addition to parts of Tennessee and South Carolina.

With help from the Experimental Aircraft Association and the Carolina Aviators Network, Operation Airdrop and affiliated volunteers delivered eight tons of supplies from Concord, Statesville and Hickory to western North Carolina on Sunday alone. On Monday, 50,000 pounds of supplies left Concord aboard 75 flights.

Getting crucial supplies to those in storm-battered Western North Carolina remains one of the top Helene-recovery priorities. It's a massive effort involving federal, state and local governments, along with volunteers with groups like Operation Airdrop.

The organization started in 2017 after Hurricane Harvey dumped over 27 trillion gallons of rain in southeast Texas. Its founders, Doug Jackson and Robert Johnson from Dallas, flew supplies to the greater Houston area.

After Harvey, they launched Operation Airdrop, with the mission of delivering supplies in times of disaster to small communities cut off by storm damage that the Federal Emergency Management Agency couldn't immediately reach.

"We keep an eye on the weather as soon as hurricane season starts, and when we saw this one coming, we immediately reached out to pilots to see if they could get ready to help," said Shaun Carroll, a Durham resident who's been volunteering with Operation Airdrop since 2018.

Carroll weaved through rows of supplies in an airplane hangar in Concord Monday, as around 100 volunteers sorted donations into neat stacks to be weighed and loaded onto waiting planes.

The whole place was humming with purpose. Volunteers loaded supplies onto pallets donated from a Walmart down the street. Pilots from around the country filtered in and announced they had a few hours to spare, as Operation Airdrop organizers huddled around a table in the back of the room, monitoring weather conditions and dispatching pilots to areas they knew they could reach.

"That's the beautiful thing about Airdrop," Carroll said. "It's kind of like what Mr. Rogers used to say: 'Look for the helpers.' You'll find them everywhere."

On Tuesday, the Concord-Padgett Airport operation had reached its capacity for volunteers by 10 a.m. even as people continued to come in to offer help.

Challenges to the mission

Ben Spells is a local organizer for another airlift effort in Statesville, which a group of local individuals put together in collaboration with Operation Airdrop. Water remains one of the most high-need items in communities impacted by Helene, he said.

"We've heard from several people that there's either no water or there's a boil advisory or water treatment plants are just completely destroyed,"he said.

However, water can requirelarger planes to transport it, since it tends to be heavy and planes have a limit on the weight they can move at a time.

"While water is really heavy, we're trying to make sure we can get water to as many people as possible," Carroll said. "Water purification is a really big thing we're trying to get out there: LifeStraws, tablets, filters, that kind of thing, just because there's a big water issue right now."

Collecting donations is the easy part, Spells said. They get them from local individuals as well as corporations.

To distribute them, they reach out to organizations inhard-hit areas that can help, and, with communication severely limited in the region, it's no simple task.

"We try to connect with verified people out there, like churches, nonprofits, food banks, fire departments, just folks that can meet the planes when they get there and tell them where to go. It depends on the location," Spells said.

"We've honestly had a hard time finding people with a lot of people lacking electricity and cell service, but it's getting easier as more people come back online,"he added.

In Gatlinburg, MacRae and Williams unloaded supplies from the CJ2+into waiting pickup trucks ready to head to two local churches for distribution. Then, they fueled up, strapped back in and watched the green beneath them turn to white as they rose above clouds.

Time for another delivery.

Operation Airdrop will continue collecting donations of household necessities throughout the week, as long as roads in and out of western North Carolina remain blocked. Supplies can be delivered to the drop-off center in the parking lot of Walmart at 5825 Thunder Road NW in Concord.

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Still no cell service in much of battered western NC. Why is it so tough to fix?

October 4, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Ames Alexander and Nora O'Neill; Staff Writer | Section: News | 738 Words

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Time and again over the past several days, Canton mayor Zeb Smathers has heard desperate pleas.

"I've had tears fill my eyes (because) of random people reaching out to me, looking for their loved ones, because they cannot communicate," said Smathers, whose town of 4,400 was among many in western North Carolina ravaged by Tropical Storm Helene.

"I pray that the inability to reach people didn't cost any lives," he said.

In the hours and days after the storm, widespread cellphone and internet blackouts made a devastating situation worse. Thousands of people couldn't contact loved ones in western North Carolina. The blackouts also hurt efforts to help during a historic crisis, Smathers said.

"If I need to say, 'Hey, you come get water at the police department,' and I can't do that... it makes every other problem worse," said Smathers, who spoke with Charlotte Observer reporters by satellite phone because he didn't have a cell signal.

Nearly half of cell sites - locations with antennas and other electronic communications equipment vital to cell phone communication - were still out Tuesday in western North Carolina counties affected by the storm, the Federal Communications Commission says. In Buncombe County, more than 60% of cell sites weren't working. And in Yancey County, more than 90% were out.

Getting things working again is a huge challenge, one slowed by power outages, flooding, blocked roads and downed power lines, according to Verizon, AT&T and Spectrum. And companies have not predicted when the work would be completed.

"Access into the region, as well as moving within the area, have been an insurmountable challenge the last few days," Verizon said in a Sept. 29 update about their repair work.

AT&T said Tuesday it restored more than 60 percent of the cell sites in areas impacted by the storm.

Smathers said he knows cellphone companies are working hard to repair the damage. But he wonders whether they did enough before the storm to prevent widespread outages.

"There are going to be a lot of questions," he said.

Storm damaged fiber cables

Officials in Buncombe County say they've received more than 11,000 requests from people trying to reach loved ones. And many people outside the hardest hit areas have turned to social media to express their worry and desperation.

"!!Urgent message from a family member re Tropical Storm Helene: Hendersonville NC folks need help with network satellite service," one person said on X Saturday. "This little town is under water from Helene and they have no contact to the outside world."

Many communication blackouts in western North Carolina were caused by power outages and damage to the fiber cables that connect cell sites to other parts of the network, Verizon says. Debris, flooding and high winds damaged the fiber cables, according to the company.

"We're getting reports from AT&T and Verizon," Gov. Roy Cooper said during a press conference on Monday. "Their initial problems were significant in that landslides cut major fiber lines for them."

Repairs - and questions - continue

Verizon and AT&T said their teams are working around the clock to make repairs. At the same time, they've set up equipment to provide alternative connections.

Dozens of Starlink satellite systems have been shipped to North Carolina in recent days to provide high-speed internet access, FEMA said. Starlink, developed by Elon Musk's SpaceX company, uses a network of satellites to provide internet access globally.

Spectrum says it has opened more than 33,800 "access points" in the Carolinas where the public can connect to WiFi. (The locations are detailed in Spectrum's out-of-home WifFi page.)

Verizon and AT&T said they've also brought mobile equipment to western North Carolina to restore cellphone service. Both companies have even launched drones to provide cellphone coverage from the sky.

Before the storm, Verizon says it did take steps to prepare. The company put portable communications equipment - including drones and generator-powered cell sites - in places where it could be deployed rapidly if service was interrupted.

But many still struggle to get a phone signal.

Last weekend, an Ingles supermarket on Asheville's Patton Ave. was closed. But the parking lot was jammed. The reason: It was one of the few sites in that part of town where many could get reliable cellphone service.

And on Tuesday, Mayor Smathers said he saw people in his Haywood County town holding their cellphones in the air as they walked, hoping to find a cell signal.

"It is unacceptable and disgusting that in our time of need, cellular service for the entire region is blocked out," he said.

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Chef José Andrés and World Central Kitchen distribute thousands of meals in Western NC

October 4, 2024 \mid Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Drew Jackson; Staff Writer | Section: News | 688 Words

Page: 2A OpenURL Link

Two thousand meals were on their way to Banner Elk Wednesday when a closed road rerouted them to Boone.

"The most amazing thing happened - 2,000 meals were just dropped off from Raleigh," said Emily Brinker, who coowns the Rhode's Motor Lodge in Boone.

The meals were part of World Central Kitchen's massive feeding mission in Western North Carolina in response to the region's devastation from Hurricane Helene. Prepped in the Raleigh kitchen by Rocky Top Catering and driven across the state, the trays of pork barbecue, mac and cheese and baked beans will later be airlifted and possibly driven or walked into the hands of someone in need of a warm meal.

As the region continues reconnecting the broken wires and pipes that have unmoored the western mountains from normalcy, a meal remains the most essential need and can mean the first step forward.

"I think this is all you can do, to try and understand why you're okay," Brinker said. "We're okay so we can help everyone who's not okay."

Rhode's Motor Lodge was expecting World Central Kitchen on Thursday, but the detour meant a helicopter was on its way to her boutique hotel in Boone and the meals would be air-lifted to a hospital site in Banner Elk. This is an expansion of the feeding operation the group had already set up in downtown Asheville.

Comparatively unscathed by the storm, Brinker said once her family was able to get from their house to the hotel she had a better sense of the storm's toll on the region and what it might take to recover.

"It's complete and total destruction," she said. "You can't get many places, most roads are collapsed, most people have zero cell phone service....Everybody who can wants something to do, something to contribute. It's the only thing that makes you feel okay - to help."

World Central Kitchen has become a global leader in humanitarian aid, a stabilizing symbol in the midst of disaster. The group, founded and led by world-famous chef José Andrés, was last in North Carolina in 2018, responding to Hurricane Florence with about 150,000 meals in and around a flooded Wilmington area.

Operations for World Central Kitchen typically look to the restaurant kitchens in impacted areas as sites to prepare and distribute meals.

This week the group has a presence in North Carolina, Georgia and Florida, where Hurricane Helene made landfall before weakening into a still-punishing tropical storm.

Andrés in Asheville

In the early morning hours on Monday, Andrés posted a video from a Waffle House in Abingdon, Va., saying that he was on his way to Asheville.

The video has been seen 1.7 million times that, along with others he's shared since landing in Asheville, speak to the chef's role in shining a light on a crisis as much as lending a helping hand. Since he's been on the ground in the mountains, he's surveyed flooding from a helicopter, delivered meals to fire departments working the disaster and

sent food to cut-off communities.

The World Central Kitchen site in Asheville has been set up at Bear's Smokehouse downtown. On Wednesday, a line of tanker trucks sat parked on the street with 100,000 gallons of potable water to hand out.

Bear's co-owner Cheryl Antoncic said that with the power out Saturday, but the restaurant unharmed, workers made the decision to start cooking what was in the walk-ins for anyone who might need a meal. When World Central Kitchen landed later that weekend, operations escalated.

Antoncic said World Central Kitchen isn't the sort of help you want your community to need.

"It's been very surreal; honestly there aren't really words for it," she said. "There's this sense of gratitude that World Central Kitchen brings, but also, 'Oh my gosh,' I don't want you here because I know what that means. It means mass devastation."

By Tuesday night, more than 60,000 meals had been served by WCK between North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Florida.

Beyond World Central Kitchen, numerous groups and restaurants in the Triangle have collected donations and supplies, prepared meals and shopped for groceries to deliver to the Western mountains. For a complete list of aid groups you can help, follow this link.

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Triangle emergency crews, police help with recovery

October 4, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Tammy Grubb, Lexi Solomon and Mary Helen Moore; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1981 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Hundreds of law enforcement officers, firefighters and emergency workers from the Triangle fanned out this week, packing in food and supplies to their emotionally fatigued counterparts in the Western North Carolina mountains.

A group of Henderson County 911 telecommunicators had been on duty three days without a break when Orange County Sheriff Charles Blackwood said he and Chatham County Sheriff Mike Roberson checked in on them Sunday.

The average person may experience the kind of "critical incident exposure" those workers have been under a few times in a lifetime, he said. The typical emergency worker sees it daily, and it can leave them emotionally and physically drained.

"The devastation and anguish in those deputies and those telecommunicators' voices and in their hearts are much like those who've been at war," Blackwood said.

The sheriffs drove in from the south through Kings Mountain and Shelby, where they saw piles of trees along the road, ones from atop the mountain uprooting others as they cascaded to the bottom.

Even the rooftops were covered in mud and silt. Where the water had receded, a muddy line marked where the floodwaters had reached 13 to 14 feet above the aptly named Mud Creek, downhill from the Henderson County Sheriff's Office in Hendersonville.

They urged Sheriff Lowell Griffin, whose own house was flooded, to eat some food and asked what he needed.

"I don't know," Griffin responded.

As they sat, a team of deputies came in covered in mud from their knees down, Blackwood said.

They had just pulled the bodies of a family from their home, where they all had drowned, he said.

"They all looked as if they had been pushing a rock up a hill," he said.

In the county's 911 center, the staff tried to remain hopeful, but exhaustion was in their eyes, Blackwood said.

"I listened to some of the stories about hearing people take their last breaths on the phone call, where they were calling them for help, and all they could tell them was that nobody was coming to help ... that they couldn't get to them," he said.

As they returned home, Roberson, the president of the N.C. Sheriff's Association, activated the Sheriffs Helping Sheriffs network to round up even more deputies and equipment from across the state.

The response was swift, marshaling nearly 400 public safety personnel from Durham, Wake, Orange and Chatham counties.

"In times like these, it's important for communities to come together and support one another," Roberson said. "I want the people of Western North Carolina to know that help is on the way."

Durham County

The Durham County Sheriff's Office sent 10 employees and multiple vehicles Tuesday to help with search and recovery, as well as security. Deputies also drove a week's worth of food to sheriff's offices in the region over the weekend.

Durham County sent a handful of staff to Asheville, plus a heavy-duty truck and driver to make deliveries. Other staff may rotate in over the next few weeks.

Two volunteer fire departments also sent resources:

- * Bahama Volunteer Fire Department sent a three-person crew and a brush truck.
- * Lebanon Volunteer Fire Department sent a fire engine and three firefighters to Bakersville for two weeks on Wednesday.

City of Durham

- * The Durham Fire Department sent 12 people. Eight traveled to Haywood County before the storm hit, helping evacuate people and pets. Four were sent to Asheville on Monday.
- * The Durham Police Department is working with the Avery County Sheriff's Office to collect aid for the region. The most needed items are shelf-stable boxed milk, manual can openers, canned foods and bottled water, the agency said in an email. Drop off donations at the Police Department headquarters, at 602 E. Main St.

Duke hospitals

Duke Health deployed 25 team members to Shelby and is assembling a second team. Duke hospitals are ready to take patients from Western North Carolina as needed.

Wake County

More than 200 personnel from North Carolina's most populated county have been deployed. That includes at least 56 police officers, 179 firefighters and 13 utilities employees.

In the Triangle, that means adjusted shifts and additional costs to maintain normal service, Holly Springs Police Chief Paul Liquorie said.

While FEMA could reimburse those costs, "municipalities now will have to incur the immediate cost, because that will be somewhat of a lengthy and sometimes bureaucratic process to go through the federal government," he said.

Liquorie will lead a caravan of 47 officers from five towns on Friday to Ashevilley, where they'll assist with policing duties and disaster response. Zebulon Police Chief Jacqui Boykin, who sent three officers Sunday to Hendersonville, urged civilians to stay home.

"People want to go, they want to volunteer, they want to donate, and I would say, try to connect with a well-defined program that you're familiar with," she said. "As great as it is that everybody wants to fill their car and drive up there, now you're adding to the issues that they're having with traffic congestion and crashes, and maybe causing more issues."

- * Wake County EMS: Three staff members as part of an Urban Search and Rescue team, four crew members and an ambulance.
- * Wake Fire Services and Emergency Management: A logistics team will spend two weeks in Buncombe County.

- * Wake County Sheriff's Office and Wake County EMS sent therapy dogs to support State Emergency Operations Center personnel and affected residents.
- * Zebulon: Three police officers, three firefighters.
- * Apex: Six utility personnel; four firefighters sent to McDowell County
- * Raleigh: Five water personnel sent to Asheville, 14 firefighters sent to Haywood County, eight firefighters sent to help the Asheville Fire Department.
- * Raleigh: Sent three dump trucks and a pickup truck loaded with supplies, including 50 tons of pipes to repair water systems; a fire engine, a high-water rescue vehicle; and a logistics vehicle from the fire department
- * Wake Forest: At least 12 firefighters sent to Bakersville
- * Cary: Eight firefighters from the swiftwater rescue team sent to Lenoir; nine firefighters sent to the Asheville Fire Department. Two utility managers and a deputy police chief sent to support State Emergency Operations Center in Hickory. Twelve police officers sent to Asheville.
- * Garner: Eight police officers sent to Asheville, four fire and rescue personnel sent to Mitchell County.
- * Rolesville: Five police officers sent to Hendersonville.
- * Fuquay-Varina: Two firefighters sent to the Columbus Fire Department in Polk County.
- * Holly Springs: IT Director Jeff Wilson was sent to the State Emergency Operations Center as part of an IT Strike Team programming radios for those in the field, coordinating dispatchers and setting up Starlink satellite dishes in areas without cell service. Four firefighters were sent to Mitchell County, and 12 police officers will head out Friday morning.
- * N.C. State University: Nine staff members sent to UNC Asheville.
- * UNC System Office: An unspecified number of IT experts were sent to UNC Asheville to restore internet service.

UNC Health

- * Over 1,000 UNC Health employees from hospitals and clinics in Eastern North Carolina signed up to help their peers in Western North Carolina, at UNC Health Appalachian, UNC Health Pardee, UNC Health Blue Ridge and UNC Health Caldwell.
- * Hundreds of medical workers are already there and more will join them. "Their goal is to relieve some of the strain at those hospitals, and let employees who need to deal with their own storm-related issues at home get a break," UNC Health spokesman Alan Wolf said..
- * The group includes physicians, nurses and respiratory therapists. Another group of nurses drove up with an emergency department nurse from UNC Health Rex to help in the Blue Ridge hospital emergency department in Morganton.
- * IT experts were sent Friday to help restore power, phones and Internet at health facilities.
- * UNC Health is collecting supplies for the hospitals and surrounding communities, including water and nonperishable food.

Orange County

Crews from across Orange County left Monday with cots, ready-to-eat meals and water, said Sarah Pickhardt, Division Chief of Emergency Management for Orange County Emergency Services.

Cash and supplies are needed, Pickhardt said, but people should donate through agencies already working in those communities, to avoid draining the limited resources available there.

It took Carrboro's fire crew seven hours to get to Transylvania County - normally a four-hour drive - because of closed roads and other people crowding the highway west, she said.

- "I know the Orange County community is really, really gracious and giving, and there are a lot of supply drives going on, but right now, they're still very much in the response and trying to find people," she said. We really need to keep roads clear for critical commodities and first responders."
- * Orange County sent two emergency managers and 11 EMS personnel to Buncombe County this week. They were joined by four Orange Rural Fire Department firefighters and a brush fire truck that can cover narrow roads, rough terrain and tight spaces.
- * The Orange County Sheriff's Office sent eight deputies to Haywood County, west of Buncombe County.
- * Emergency Services Director Kirby Saunders, his team and the Sheriff's Office deputies are filling in so "completely exhausted" local folks can rest, Pickhardt said. EMS crews are helping out at the shelters, and firefighters are clearing roads with chainsaws and also covering fire department shifts.
- * The key mission for Orange County deputies is to boost public safety, Blackwood said. Local officials have already reported a murder and a "vicious assault" at the gas pumps in town, he said.
- "I expected bad, but I didn't realize it was going to be as bad as it was. It was just heartbreaking, and you're coming back trying to think about and analyze and try to make some sense of it all, but you're just kind of lost," he said.

Chapel Hill

- * Five Chapel Hill police officers went to Buncombe County on Monday to help the Asheville Police Department with traffic control and emergency calls. When they return home later this week, a fresh team could be dispatched.
- * Chapel Hill Police Department's Crisis Unit and an emergency management staff member are supporting first responders and staff at the state Emergency Operations Center. Another emergency management employee was sent to shelters in Asheville and Fletcher.
- * Chapel Hill Fire Department dispatched three firefighters to Haywood County, along with members of the N.C. Task Force 8 Regional Urban Search and Rescue Team, which includes firefighters from Chapel Hill, Durham and Raleigh. The rescue team moved out Sept. 26 to provide swift water rescue and help with structural rescues.

Carrboro

* Four Carrboro firefighters and a fire engine headed out to Transylvania County, a remote area in the state's far west.

Hillsborough

* Five public works and utilities equipment operators, a fleet mechanic with a truck and tools, a safety officer, two dump trucks and a backhoe, a skid steer and two pickup trucks, plus a chainsaw and other tools to help clear roads, are being prepped.

* Town Manager Eric Peterson is meeting virtually twice a week with other N.C. town managers experienced in managing disasters to assist colleagues in affected areas. At least one town communications employee could also go.

Chatham County

- * Five deputies and a captain from the Chatham County Sheriff's Office left Monday for Yancey County. The team took generators, bottled water and ready-to-eat meals with them.
- * Chatham County Emergency Management sent two staff members to help re-establish internet connectivity in emergency operations centers, and the Chatham County Department of Social Services is also helping where needed, a spokesman said.
- * North Chatham Fire Department sent firefighters with an engine truck.

"It's a statewide effort," Emergency Management Director Steve Newton said. "Every county that's not impacted is waiting to send equipment and personnel over. We'll have more personnel going west for the next several weeks."

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Benefit events for western NC in Catawba, Iredell counties

October 4, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Sarah Johnson | Section: Events | 328 Words OpenURL Link

In the wake of disaster, organizations across North Carolina are fundraising and accepting donations to support communities in western North Carolina that were ravaged by Hurricane Helene.

Several municipalities and business in Catawba County and surrounding counties are holding benefit events in the coming week.

Hickory concert

Hickory event venue the hum is hosting a benefit concert on Saturday in partnership with Catawba Valley Engineering & Testing.

All ticket sales will be donated to the American Red Cross. All donated items, such as toiletries, will be donated to the Catawba County United Way.

The concert will be at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$20. Attendees who donate goods can purchase tickets for \$10. Tickets for students are \$10. Children 12 and younger receive free admission. Tickets can be purchased at thehum.live.

Pepper Lewis and The Big Chiefs from Union Grove and the Krystal King Band from Hickory will be performing. Big Byrd's Smokehouse food truck will be on site.

The hum is located at 227 Second Ave. SW in Hickory.

Mooresville festival

The Mooresville Fire-Rescue and Mooresville Professional Firefighters Association will be collecting donations for western North Carolina during a food truck festival in downtown Mooresville on Saturday.

The festival will feature more than 15 food trucks and live music from 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The festival will be along Broad Street from Center Avenue to Moore Avenue and along Main Street from Center Avenue to Iredell Avenue.

A donation trailer will be parked at 128 North Broad St. from 2 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Wayneo's Silver Bullet

Wayneo's Silver Bullet is hosting an eight-hour special fundraiser on Oct. 13.

The Rockin' Love for Western NC event will run from noon to 8 p.m. The day will feature the bands Doesn't Madder, Tagg, Zeveride, Patchwork, Mike Default and The Rhythm Kings, Deacon Black, Teal Tomorrow, The Brothers Pruitt, Tonya Wood and Haley Michal & Eric Biter.

Donations of food, water, toiletries and money will be accepted at the events. Wayneo's Silver Bullet is located at 5172 South N.C. Hwy. 127 in Hickory.

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