

Georgia death toll up to 11 from Helene; impact widespread in South

September 27, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Kim Jarrett | The Center Square | Section: State | 219 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said Friday that 11 people died as a result of Hurricane Helene, including a first responder.

The governor did not give details on the deaths. Earlier reports said a couple in Wheeler County died when a tornado struck their mobile home.

The state on Friday morning had 152 roads closed, including portions of 1-16 in Laurens County and 1-20 in McDuffie County, Kemp said.

Helene is causing floods and tornado warnings in other states as its remnant moves north.

"We have a very serious widespread catastrophic flash flooding situation that's playing out on this Friday all the way from North Georgia through upstate South Carolina into western North Carolina and now extending into southwestern Virginia," Dr. Michael Brennan, director of the National Hurricane Center, said in a briefing.

Western North Carolina is at the highest risk of flooding, particularly in the Asheville and Boone areas, Brennan said. Landslides are also a concern and some have been reported in western North Carolina, he said.

Flooding remains an issue in Atlanta, where Fulton County officials are asking residents to avoid travel on Friday afternoon. Several roadways are closed because of downed trees and wires.

Portions of central North Carolina, upstate South Carolina and southwestern Virginia are under a tornado watch until 6 p.m, according to the National Weather Service.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDFEAB25DB5090>



Liberty-Appalachian State game canceled due to Hurricane Helene

September 27, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Field Level Media| Section: National | 112 Words OpenURL Link

Appalachian State's home game against Liberty on Saturday has been canceled due to the impact of Hurricane Helene. The game in Boone, N.C., will not be rescheduled, per a statement on the Mountaineers' official website. Hurricane Helene made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane in Florida late Thursday, but adjacent states were not spared. North Carolina governor Roy Cooper issued a state of emergency in preparation for potential flooding, damaging winds and power outages, and media in the area near Boone reported widespread flooding Friday morning. Liberty (4-0) will return to action against visiting FIU on Oct. 8, while Appalachian State (2-2) will travel to Marshall on Oct. 5. --Field Level Media

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Hurricane leaves millions without power, four dead in southeast US

September 27, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Gerard MARTINEZ| Section: National | 578 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene knocked out power for millions of customers across the southeast United States on Friday and left at least four dead after it slammed into the Florida coast.

As it weakened into a tropical storm, Helene moved inland across Georgia and South Carolina, flooding roads and homes, and officials warned of flash floods and landslides from up to 20 inches (50 centimeters) of rain.

"This rainfall will likely result in catastrophic and potentially life-threatening flash and urban flooding, along with significant and record river flooding," the National Hurricane Centre said.

"Numerous significant landslides are expected in steep terrain across the southern Appalachians."

Four people had died from conditions caused by Helene as of early Friday -- one in Florida, one in North Carolina and two in Georgia.

One person was killed when a sign fell on a highway in coastal Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis said.

Two people were killed in Georgia, according to Governor Brian Kemp, with local media reporting the man and woman were killed when their trailer was picked up by a tornado.

One person also died in Charlotte, North Carolina when a tree fell on a home, the fire department said.

Images on US media showed ripped billboard signs whipping in high winds and sparks flying from power lines.

More than 3.4 million homes and businesses were without power across Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas on Friday, according to tracking site PowerOutage.us.

- Homes submerged -

The storm lost strength rapidly after making landfall on the coast about 30 miles (20 kilometers) south of the Florida state capital Tallahassee as a powerful Category 4 hurricane packing winds of 140 miles per hour.

In the impact zone, residents had been warned of "unsurvivable" storm surge.

Tampa Bay resident Matt Heller told CNN his home had been submerged in four feet (1.2 meters) of water within a half hour of the storm hitting, as he took refuge in a kayak in his flooded living room.

"This is definitely the biggest flood we've ever had," he said.

President Joe Biden and state authorities had urged people to heed official evacuation warnings before Helene hit, though some chose stay in their homes to wait out the storm.

"I am going to hunker down" and ride out the hurricane, said Patrick Riickert, as he did in 2018 when deadly Hurricane Michael, a Category 5 mega storm, blew through the Florida panhandle.

He had refused to budge from his small wooden house in Crawfordville, a town of 5,000 people a few miles inland.

Most residents had bolted, but Riickert, his wife and five grandchildren were "not going anywhere," the 58-year-old told AFP.

Rescue workers were deployed in Lee County on Florida's coast, the sheriff said on X, sharing videos of men in highvis gear battling against high winds to launch a rescue boat.

DeSantis had mobilized the National Guard and ordered thousands of personnel to ready for search and rescue operations, urging residents to take precautions.

"We can't control the track of the hurricane, but what you can control is what you can do to put yourself in the best chance to be able to ride this out in a way that's going to be safe," DeSantis said.

Georgia's Kemp, in a message of condolences for the two killed by the tornado, urged "all Georgians to brace for further impact from Helene, remain vigilant, and pray for all those affected" in a post on X.

Scientists say climate change likely plays a role in the rapid intensification of hurricanes, because there is more energy in warmer oceans for them to feed on.

bur/bgs/md

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Weakening Helene still punching across the South

September 27, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Kim Jarrett | The Center Square | Section: State | 418 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – Hurricane Helene is now a tropical storm but will cause weather woes across the South on Friday, forecasters say.

The storm made landfall in Florida's Big Bend around 11:10 p.m. Thursday and quickly made its way into Georgia spawning tornadoes, wind and heavy rain. The Appalachian mountains were braced for river flooding and images out of the Asheville, N.C., area overnight confirmed significant damage from the very wide storm.

Two Georgians lost their lives when their Wheeler County mobile home was picked up by a tornado, according to Savannah's WTOC.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said two people died in that state. A falling sign killed one person, while another died after a tree fell on their home.

More than 1 million people are without power in Florida, according to PowerOutage.US, which tracks power outages across the country. In Georgia, 936,000 are without power; in South Carolina it's 849,000; and in North Carolina it's 264,000.

The National Weather Service in Peachtree City, Ga., said Friday things may have seemed "quiet" overnight. However, there are still some concerns, including an additional 2 to 4 inches of rain. Flash flooding is causing problems in Atlanta. Emergency personnel evacuated an Atlanta apartment complex by boat early Friday morning, according to WSB-TV.

The storm is producing "damaging gusty winds and life-threatening flooding over portions of the Southeast and Southern Appalachians," according to the National Hurricane Center. Residents should prepare for long-term power outages, the agency said.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp called up an additional 1,000 National Guard troops on Friday morning to help with storm cleanup, bringing the total number to 1,500. He declared a state of emergency for all 159 counties earlier this week.

The Augusta Bush Regional Airport in Augusta reported wind gusts of 82 mph, according to the National Weather Service in South Carolina. The storm prompted tornado warnings in the Myrtle Beach area, according to the South Carolina Emergency Management Division.

Central North Carolina and parts of South Carolina are under a tornado watch until 6 p.m. on Friday, according to the National Weather Service in Raleigh. The peak winds across the state were as high as 67 mph in Greensboro, the agency said.

"Conditions will rapidly deteriorate this morning as strong gusty winds, an increasing tornado threat, and scattered heavy downpours overspread central NC through the mid-afternoon hours," according to its Facebook page.

Eastern Tennessee is also experiencing the remnants of the hurricane. Some areas already hit by heavy rains earlier in the week are experiencing flooding, according to the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency.

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Kim Jarrett | The Center Square, 'Weakening Helene still punching across the South', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDC0DB6C924740



Illinois quick hits: Man convicted of murder for shooting police officer; Illinois State University plans for 2% cuts

September 27, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Kevin Bessler | The Center Square | Section: National | 244 Words OpenURL Link

Man convicted of murder for shooting police officer

A man has been convicted of first-degree murder in the 2021 fatal shooting of a police officer and the wounding of another as the two investigated a complaint over barking dogs at an Illinois hotel. Bradley Sgt. Marlene Rittmanic and her partner were responding to dogs barking in an unattended vehicle in a hotel parking lot. They were shot after locating the room where the vehicle's possible owner was staying. Darius Sullivan, who was arrested in Indiana two days following the shooting, will be sentenced at a later date.

Illinois State University plans for 2% cuts

Administrators at Illinois State University are ordering all divisions at the school to immediately cut spending by 2% to avoid a deficit in the general fund by the end of this fiscal year. According to an email sent by the Vice President of Academic Affairs, each division, including the President's Office and Athletics, must cut 2% of the money that comes from general funds, while Auxiliary Facilities Services faces an unspecified lump sum reduction.

Hurricane Helene remnants will affect Illinois

The remnants of Hurricane Helene will affect much of Illinois for the next few days. Heavy rain is falling in southern Illinois after the system was downgraded to a tropical storm. Central Illinois is expected to receive precipitation from Helene as well, and parts of northeast Illinois may also see pop-up thunderstorms this weekend. Helene came ashore in Florida as a category 4 hurricane.

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Kevin Bessler | The Center Square, 'Illinois quick hits: Man convicted of murder for shooting police officer; Illinois State University plans for 2% cuts', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDC0DAD103F118



On remote Greek island, migratory birds offer climate clues

September 27, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Hélène COLLIOPOULOU| Section: National | 558 Words OpenURL Link

Gently holding a blackcap warbler in his palm, ornithologist Christos Barboutis blew on its feathers to reveal the size of its belly: a good indicator of how far the bird can migrate.

Acutely vulnerable to climate change, migratory birds offer valuable clues to scientists about how our warming planet is affecting wildlife: from their shifting migration patterns to their body weight.

"Observing them warns us if something is changing or going wrong," said Barboutis, a researcher at the Hellenic Ornithological Society.

Birds "are among the first to be affected by climate change such as drought, which poses a big problem for their distant travel," he told AFP at an observation station on the small Aegean island of Antikythera.

At the crack of dawn, the researcher and his colleagues lay out nets to capture and ring the birds.

The tiny island in the eastern Mediterranean lies on a popular corridor for birds migrating from northern Europe to Africa in the autumn, and in the opposite direction in springtime.

Barboutis came to the sparsely populated rock between the Peloponnese and the western tip of Crete some 15 years ago.

His team have seen and observed a variety of birds: from turtle doves and warblers to colourful bee-eaters and buzzards.

The rare Eleonora's falcon with its distinctive, elegant wings often nests on the cliffs of the island. Greece becomes host to around 80 percent of the bird's population during their breeding season.

- 'State of nature' -

At sunrise, volunteers Nefeli Marinou, a 21-year-old biology student, and Jennifer Evans, a 25-year-old environmentalist from Canada, scour the deployed nets for trapped birds and carefully place them in small bags.

A metal ring placed on a bird's finger bears a unique identification number.

In a book, Marinou notes the species, age, sex, date and time.

"From this number we deduce how long it took the bird to get here, whether the population is declining or stable," Evans said.

Around 40 birds were ringed in a day's work.

The bird capturing programme began 20 years ago, Barboutis said, although he cautioned it was a scientifically short period to make long-term conclusions about the impacts of climate change.

From the top of a rock, student volunteer Nikolas Promponas, using a telescope and binoculars, watched for falcons and white-headed vultures, a species whose numbers are declining in Europe.

Many species of birds including birds of prey need coastlines and ridges to gain height before taking off, he said, a resource that is abundant on Antikythera.

Unlike the nearby tourist islands of Kythera and Crete, rugged Antikythera has just two restaurant-cafes and can only handle around forty tourists in summer.

Like other islands in the southern Mediterranean, Antikythera serves as a vital stopover point where migratory birds can replenish ahead of their long journey.

It is part of the EU Natura network of nature protection areas due to its biodiversity.

Declining insect populations have made it harder for some species to find food, while human activity, intense droughts and wildfires worsened by climate change have contributed to the loss of their habitat.

Forest fires, the use of pesticides, and urban expansion are also factors that affect their population.

This year, Greece experienced its warmest winter and warmest summer since detailed records began in 1960.

Less greenery means less food.

"If there are fewer birds feeding on insects, it probably means that insects are also in decline," Evans said.

"Whatever the case, birds are a very good indicator of the state of nature."

hec/jph/cad/gv

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Helene wreaks havoc on Rutherford County, Lake Lure Dam structural supports compromised

September 27, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC)
Author: Victoria McGuinn Young vyoung@thedigitalcourier.com| Section: Archives | 562 Words
OpenURL Link

RUTHERFORD COUNTY — According to a Facebook post from the Rutherford County Emergency Management Friday, Sept. 27, the storm caused by Hurricane Helene has led water to spill over the Lake Lure Dam — and officials fear dam failure is imminent.

As of 4 p.m. Friday, officials said the structural supports of the dam were compromised, but the dam wall is holding.

Highway 64/74 was also made impassable at Lattimore Road. Rutherford County has requested four high-clearance vehicles from the N.C. Emergency Operations Center and as of Friday afternoon was awaiting their arrival.

Emergency management also announced earlier Friday morning that residents living on certain roads below the Lake Lure Dam needed to evacuate. Mass notification sirens were activated.

Initially very early Friday morning, Rutherford County Emergency Management alerted residents through social media that the dam flood gates were operating at approximately 30 feet, saying residents would see water downstream of the dam in the Broad River to be at or above the banks in many areas with water across roadways and bridges in low-lying areas.

Only five hours after that initial warning post, residents were then told to evacuate.

A shelter had initially been set up at the Lake Lure Town Hall, but it was later announced a secondary shelter was opened up at the Rutherfordton Presbyterian Church.

Lake Lure was not the only area in the county to see heavy damage by the storm. Rutherford County was under a State of Emergency as of Wednesday afternoon in preparation of the storm.

Some Rutherfordton residents posted on Facebook late Thursday afternoon, showing video of high wind gusts in the Greenhill area.

Emergency Management alerted residents Friday morning that it was "no longer safe to leave your home."

The message told residents not to attempt traveling the roadways if it was not an emergency.

Multiple roads were blocked by trees, and powerlines downed throughout the county. The county said the number was "too many to list".

Part of the message read: "A large majority of the county is impassable. Trees and powerlines are falling faster than we can clear them. A day at work is not worth your life."

Fire departments suspended road clearing operations due to the amount of trees falling.

Several roads in Rutherfordton amd other municipalities were closed Friday due to damage.

The N.C. Department of Transportation also put out a notice on Facebook saying, all roads in Western North Carolina should be considered closed.

As of Friday afternoon, the power outage tracker from ReadyNC noted 37,879 power outages in Rutherford County.

According to a representive from Duke Energy, crews are already out restoring power. Crews are making damage assessments as they try to asses where they can safely restore power, but the representative assurred that as crews make their way, they are restoring power where they can. But residents in the county should still prepare for multiday outages.

According to the US National Weather Service Greenville-Spartanburg, S.C., the storm was expected to be "one of the most significant weather events to happen in the western portions of the area in the modern era."

A Facebook post from the Weather Service read: "Record flooding is forecasted and has been compared to the floods of 1916 in the Asheville area. The impacts from this event are expected to be greater than Tropical Storm Fred from August 2021, the mountains in 2004 from Frances and Ivan, and in Upstate South Carolina since the Saluda River Basin flooding from 1949."

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Lake Lure Dam failure imminent, Rutherford County Emergency Management says

September 27, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC)
Author: VICTORIA MCGUINN YOUNG vyoung@thedigitalcourier.com| Section: Archives | 175 Words
OpenURL Link

RUTHERFORD COUNTY — According to a Facebook post from the Rutherford County Emergency Management Friday, the storm caused by Hurricane Helene has led water to overtop the Lake Lure Dam — and officials fear dam failure is imminent.

Emergency management also announced earlier Friday morning that residents living on certain roads below the Lake Lure Dam needed to evacuate. Mass notification sirens were activated. Those leaving the area were directed to a shelter set up at the Rutherfordton Presbyterian Church located at 252 N Washington St, Rutherfordton, NC 28139.

Below is a list of the areas needing to evacuate:

1. 396 MEMORIAL HIGHWAY LAKE LURE TO RIVER LANDING/CALHOUN TRAIL
2. JUSTICE DRIVE
3. SILVER TREE LANE
4. 100-341 ISLAND CREEK RD.
5. FINCH ST
6. SWANS WAY WEST
7. RAVEN BLVD.
8. CHICKADEE LANE
9. NIGHTOWLS TERRACE
10. THRASHER LANE

15. RIVER EDGE

11. CHICKADEE AVE

12. SWANS WAY EAST

13. PHESANT WAY

14. WILDCAT BLVD

- 16. RAINBOW CIRCLE
- 17. BLUEGILL DR.
- 18. SPARROWS WAY

21. TEAL LANE		
22. SWANS AVE.		
23. BILLS CREEK RD to EDGERTON RD		
24. PELICAN LANE		
25. ROADRUNNER CIRCLE		
26. COROMANT DR.		
27. BOB WHITE AVE.		
28. RED BIRD DR.		

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29. ROCK BRANCH RD.

19. ADAMS LANE

20. MALLARD RD.

VICTORIA MCGUINN YOUNG vyoung@thedigitalcourier.com, 'Lake Lure Dam failure imminent, Rutherford County Emergency Management says', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 27 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDBF26CB2568A8>



Update: Lake Lure water levels receding, Rutherford County Emergency Management says

September 27, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC)
Author: VICTORIA MCGUINN YOUNG vyoung@thedigitalcourier.com| Section: Archives | 374 Words
OpenURL Link

RUTHERFORD COUNTY — According to a Facebook post from the Rutherford County Emergency Management Friday evening, Sept. 27, Lake Lure water levels are no longer rising and are beginning to recede.

The shelter at Rutherfordton Presbyterian Church is closed, and all individuals have been moved to the R-S Central High School shelter. The EOC is compiling a list of individuals at the shelter for confirmation to friends and family. If you have a missing person, please email: EOC@rutherfordcountync.gov, according to officials.

The National Weathsr Service issued a wind advisory until 8 a.m. Saturday. Additional downed trees are possible tonight.

Emergency personnel have rescued over 25 individuals through swift water rescue, EMS, fire departments, and law enforcement efforts, officials said.

Earlier Friday, thw storm caused by Hurricane Helene led water to overtop the Lake Lure Dam — and officials feared the dam would fail.

Structural supports were compromised as of 1:30 p.m. Friday, but the dam wall is currently holding as of 4 p.m.

Evacuations have occurred from the dam to Island Creek Road, according to officials. Emergency personnel are working with structural engineers and are going house to house to ensure all citizens have been evacuated. Evacuees are being transported temporarily to Ingles in Lake Lure.

Emergency management also announced earlier Friday morning that residents living on certain roads below the Lake Lure Dam needed to evacuate. Mass notification sirens were activated. Those leaving the area were directed to a shelter set up at the Rutherfordton Presbyterian Church located at 252 N. Washington St., Rutherfordton, NC 28139.

Another shelter later opened at R-S Central High School.

Officials stated that residents not in evacuation zones should continue to remain at home, stating roads are hazardous with an insurmountable number of trees and electrical lines that are down.

Below is a list of the areas needing to evacuate:

- 1. 396 MEMORIAL HIGHWAY LAKE LURE TO RIVER LANDING/CALHOUN TRAIL
- 2. JUSTICE DRIVE
- 3. SILVER TREE LANE
- 4. 100-341 ISLAND CREEK RD.
- 5. FINCH ST
- 6. SWANS WAY WEST

7. RAVEN BLVD.
8. CHICKADEE LANE
9. NIGHTOWLS TERRACE
10. THRASHER LANE
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13. PHESANT WAY
14. WILDCAT BLVD
15. RIVER EDGE
16. RAINBOW CIRCLE
17. BLUEGILL DR.
18. SPARROWS WAY
19. ADAMS LANE
20. MALLARD RD.
21. TEAL LANE
22. SWANS AVE.
23. BILLS CREEK RD to EDGERTON RD
24. PELICAN LANE
25. ROADRUNNER CIRCLE
26. COROMANT DR.
27. BOB WHITE AVE.
28. RED BIRD DR.
29. ROCK BRANCH RD. Copyright 2024, The Daily Courier, All Rights Reserved.

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Emergency Operations Center activated for Tropical Storm Helene

September 27, 2024 | Enquirer-Journal, The (Monroe, NC) Author: Union County Communications | Section: Enquirer Journal | 198 Words OpenURL Link

Union County Emergency Management Director Andrew Ansley has activated the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to monitor the impacts of Tropcial Storm Helene and direct the County's response efforts. The storm has brought heavy rains, strong winds, flash flooding, downed trees, and thousands of power outages. The EOC functions as a command center, bringing together numerous partners across the county to share information, make decisions, monitor developments, and coordinate response efforts.

"We are working to keep our residents safe and informed as Tropical Storm Helene impact Union County," Ansley said. "We are experiencing heavy rain and strong winds, which are causing debris in roads and flash flooding. We urge everyone to use precaution and avoid driving if possible."

Union County's 911 center has been inundated with calls about road conditions, mostly due to fallen trees. Trees and limbs are being moved as quickly as they're being reported. Avoid roads impacted by flooding or storm debris. Please stay home if possible. In the event of an emergency, call 911.

Hurricane Preparedness resources are available on the County's website. Additional updates will be shared on Union County Government's Facebook page. For the latest on Tropical Storm Helene, visit the National Hurricane Center's website.

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDFF4219EB7B98>



Hurricane Helene - Memories of past danger resurface as storm nears - Gulf Coast is no stranger to massive storm surges

September 27, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Dinah Voyles Pulver; USA TODAY | Section: News | 935 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

With catastrophic storm surge expected along Florida's coast from Hurricane Helene, northern Gulf Coast residents Gene and Margaret Taylor understand better than anyone about the tragedy that water can bring.

As Hurricane Katrina approached in August 2005, the Taylor family fled their Gulf front home in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, fleeing miles inland to his brother's home. The now-legendary hurricane pulverized their home and community with a record-breaking 28-foot-storm surge.

Gene Taylor first thought his bare street looked like it did "when the French first arrived" in Mississippi during the late 1600s. "We could never have imagined the house would be gone," he recalled.

Hurricane Helene strengthened to a Category 2 storm Thursday and was forecast to produce another historic surge, this one along the region where Florida's coast wraps around the northeast corner of the Gulf of Mexico. At 8a.m. EDT, maximum sustained winds were 100mph, and Helene was headed north-northeast at 12mph, the National Hurricane Center said.

Throughout the Gulf Coast, but especially here, residents are no stranger to the troubles that flow in with floodwaters.

The "catastrophic and deadly storm surge" could reach 15 to 20 feet above ground somewhere along the coast, the National Hurricane Center warned Wednesday.

Warnings ranging as high as 12feet are in effect elsewhere along almost the entire west coast of Florida, said Jamie Rhome, the center's deputy director.

"The large size of this storm is going to push so much water," Rhome said. "When it comes to storm surge the size of the hurricane is more important than the intensity of the storm, which is hard for some people to digest."

Helene is enormous. On Thursday morning, hurricane-force winds extend outward up to 25miles from the center and tropical storm-force winds extend outward up to 345miles from the center, according to the National Hurricane Center.

What is storm surge?

Storm surge happens when the ocean level rises suddenly as a storm is making landfall. Accompanied by large and battering waves, it can cause extreme flooding, not only along the coast but miles inland along streams and rivers.

Strong winds around the eye of a hurricane cause ocean water to circulate. As a storm arrives in shallower waters along the coast, the ocean bottom disrupts that circulation and forces water upward and inland. Other influencing factors are the timing of high tide, shape of the sea floor and coast, and the angle of the storm's approach.

Florida's northern Gulf Coast is particularly vulnerable. Its wide continental shelf allows water to stack up. When Hurricane Dennis neared the coast some 150miles to the west in 2005, a 6- to 9-foot wall of water surged into the village of St. Marks, shocking residents and meteorologists alike.

A cubic yard of water weighs 1,700pounds. Imagine the force when a storm surge several yards high and miles long, topped by rough waves, batters oceanside structures for hours.

Life-threatening storm surge

Emergency management officials and meteorologists repeatedly warn that those who live near the ocean and along inland waterways that connect to the sea should evacuate away from the coast when asked.

Florida has planned and drilled for an event of this magnitude for years, Rep. Jared Moskowitz, D-Fla., told USA TODAY on Wednesday. Moskowitz is a former director of Florida's state emergency management division.

"It's going to be a historic storm surge," Moskowitz said. He urged Floridians to heed the warnings of emergency management officials. "If they tell you to evacuate, you need to leave."

Hurricane lan's storm surge in Southwest Florida in 2022 – estimated at a peak of 15feet in Fort Myers Beach – prompted emergency water rescues as the sun set, but still claimed 41 lives.

No storm in recent history caused more deaths in the mainland U.S. than Hurricane Katrina, with many of the more than 500 direct deaths attributed to storm surge. It delivered one of the higher surges in modern records, estimated at 24 to 28feet along about 20miles of the Mississippi coast, according to the hurricane center's final report. Water surged 8 to 12 feet in Mobile Bay in Alabama, and as high as 19 feet in eastern New Orleans and in St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes in Louisiana.

As a result of improved forecasting and messaging, fewer people are dying in storm surge in recent years, while flooding from extreme rainfall claims a greater percentage of lives.

Last year, the peak storm surge forecast for Hurricane Idalia was very close to the level actually produced by the storm on the Florida coast south of Tallahassee, said Cody Fritz, team lead for the hurricane's storm surge unit. The goal is "to present an accurate forecast as early as possible," Fritz told USA TODAY earlier this year.

Every storm is different

Simply because your area hasn't seen a huge storm surge does not mean you won't ever see one, Fritz said. Each storm and its accompanying surge can have different characteristics that contribute to the height of the water and how far inland it extends.

For the Taylors, Katrina served as a deadly reminder that no two storms are the same.

"So many people died because they thought they would be safe in a building that went through Hurricane Camille in 1969," Taylor said. "We know of several people who swam out and said if Katrina had been at night and they couldn't see the debris coming at them, it would have killed them."

Get the latest

Follow coverage of Hurricane Helene at usatoday.com.

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Dinah Voyles Pulver, USA TODAY, 'Hurricane Helene - Memories of past danger resurface as storm nears - Gulf Coast is no stranger to massive storm surges', *Fayetteville Observer*, *The* (online), 27 Sep 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BDA03BF1376938



Tropical Storm Helene: Fayetteville under tornado, flood watches

September 27, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Beth Hutson, Fayetteville Observer | Section: News | 427 Words OpenURL Link

(This story was updated to add new information.)

Tropical Storm Helene, which made landfall in Florida late Thursday as a Category 4 hurricane, is expected to cause severe weather in the Fayetteville area on Friday, and a tornado watch is in effect until 6 p.m.

While Western North Carolina is bearing the brunt of the storm in North Carolina, Cumberland County will likely experience high winds and rain, the worst of which is expected to happen by 2 or 3 p.m. Friday.

A flash flood warning is in effect for Cumberland County until 1:30 p.m. Friday.

The National Weather Service in Raleigh has extended a tornado watch for Cumberland County until 6 p.m. Friday. The watch covers multiple North Carolina counties, including Bladen, Harnett, Hoke, Moore, Robeson and Sampson counties.

In addition to the tornado watch, Cumberland County and the Sandhills are under a wind advisory through 6 p.m. Friday. The National Weather Service in Raleigh said winds of 15 to 20 mph with gusts of 35 to 40 mph can be expected.

Cumberland County and the Sandhills are also under a flood watch through 6 p.m. Friday. Excessive rainfall could lead to flash flooding, according to the NWS.

Closings and delays

Cumberland County Schools reported Thursday that it would shift to remote learning Friday.

Fort Liberty is on a two-hour delay.

Fayetteville Technical Community College is closed today.

Fayetteville State University has canceled classes for Friday. The Early Childhood Learning Center is closed. Campus activities and sporting events remain open, and the dining hall will operate as usual.

The Ann Street Landfill, at 698 Ann St., is closed on Friday. All other Solid Waste sites are open.

Power outages

Check overall Cumberland County outages by clicking on this link.

Check Fayetteville PWC outages by clicking on this link.

Check Duke Energy outages by clicking on this link.

Check Lumbee River outages by clicking on this link.

Check South River EMC outages by clicking on this link.

Warnings and watches
Click this link to see the latest weather warnings and watches for Cumberland County.
Rainfall
See rainfall predictions in the Fayetteville area here.
Storm trackers
Track the storm here.
Check out the storm's "spaghetti models" here.
River levels
Check river levels, including the Cape Fear River, at this link.
Flooding
Enter your address in this FEMA search to see whether you're in a flood-prone area. Check it out here.
Monitor flooding in your area here.
Road closures
The North Carolina Department of Transportation provides updates on road closures and accidents. Click here for the most updated information.
Storm damage
Click this link for damage reports after the storm passes through.
News director Beth Hutson can be reached at bhutson@fayobserver.com or 910-486-3533. Copyright 2024 The Fayetteville (N.C.) Observer

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Fayetteville first responders headed to Western North Carolina

September 27, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Rachael Riley, Fayetteville Observer | Section: News | 214 Words OpenURL Link

Fayetteville first responders have deployed to the western part of the state experiencing flooding from rains associated with Hurricane Helene, which is now a tropical depression, a news release stated Friday.

The team of 18 first responders are from the Fayetteville Fire Department, Fayetteville Police Department and Cape Fear Valley EMS and deployed to Brevard as part of an Urban Search and Rescue team to assist with any rescue missions, the news release stated.

The Fayetteville team, known as N.C. Task Force 9, is joined by the Greensboro Fire Department, known as N.C. Task Force 6.

WNC updates: Helene in North Carolina live updates: 'Active natural disaster' to last for days, avoid travel, officials say

"I couldn't be more proud of the professionalism and dedication of our first responders," Fayetteville Fire Chief Kevin Dove said in the release. "Having undergone extensive training, our team is equipped, well-prepared and ready to assist with rescues including swift water rescues."

The team is prepared to stay in western North Carolina for up to seven days, working to assist those affected by the storm, according to the release.

Fayetteville spokesman Loren Bymer said that while the team is based in Brevard, it will go wherever needed in the western part of the state.

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

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UPDATE; Fayetteville Public Works Commission lifts boil water advisory

September 27, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Rachael Riley, Fayetteville Observer | Section: News | 929 Words OpenURL Link

(This story was updated to add new information and a photo.)

Fayetteville Public Works Commission announced Friday evening that the boil water advisory has been lifted.

"Tests have confirmed water meets safe drinking water standards and can be used for any purpose," the utility said in a news release Friday. "With the advisory being lifted, customers should flush their water lines for a few minutes before using it. This is especially important for locations that have not been occupied or had low water usage during the advisory period. PWC will continue to flush our lines to limit any cloudiness or discoloration. Any ice made during that time should be discarded. Businesses that serve or prepare food for human consumption should coordinate with their regulatory oversight agency to make sure all requirements are met."

Editor's note: Below is reporting from earlier in the day when the advisory was still in place.

Customers in Fayetteville, Hope Mills, Spring Lake and areas of Cumberland County and Hoke County were affected, PWC spokesman Gavin MacRoberts said.

Customers in Stedman and Fort Liberty are not affected, he said.

PWC made "robocalls" to 7,900 affected customers Thursday, MacRoberts said.

MacRoberts said PWC officials are looking to update a map in the future that shows impacted areas in a "high-pressure zone," but that update won't be made by the time the current boil water notice is lifted.

Q&A: Your questions answered: What to know about Fayetteville PWC's boil water advisory

Water from Tropical Storm Helene should not affect restoring services, which was completed ahead of the storm Thursday, MacRoberts said.

"We have services restored, and pressure returned," he said. "At this point, we're in the testing phase and are working to determine why did this happen. We'll get to the root of it, but our primary concern first and foremost is getting services restored."

MacRoberts said the testing period, which is happening now, should be about 48-72 hours.

"We will do the same notifications (robocalls) that we did yesterday during this weekend, once we get tests back and confirmed that the water is safe," he said.

MacRoberts said PWC will also post an update on its social media pages.

"We encourage customers to conserve water and boil any water for human consumption," he said. "The odds of cross-contamination from groundwater getting into the lines is slim, but there is a possibility, so we're taking the necessary precautions."

MacRoberts said customers may see discoloration in the water because of the change in pressure in the lines.

"If customers see discolored water, we encourage them to run the water in the tap a little bit, stop and come back

to check it to help clear the lines," he said. "Whenever we do have an event like this, water crews will flush the lines following it and help clear out any potential contaminated water from the line. Part of the flushing makes it possible for air bubbles to get in, which can cause cloudiness and any sedimentation build-up in the line to get knocked free."

Restaurant closures and modifications

Panda Express had a sign at its drive-thru Thursday evening telling customers it was closed because of PWC's boil water notice.

Wingstop on Skibo Road was open Thursday evening but handed out bottles of water or cans of soda instead of using its drink machine.

Starbucks in Target on Skibo Road was closed, and the Starbucks at 2120 Skibo Road had a sign on its door notifying patrons that it was closed because of the boil water notice.

Metro Diner on Skibo Road was open Friday morning, as were eateries in nearby Freedom Town Center.

The Fayetteville Observer asked members of its Fayetteville Foodies Facebook group whether they were open Friday and if they were serving a limited menu.

A commenter who said she works at Bahama Breeze said the restaurant was open, but using bottles and cans for customers. Another commenter reported managers buying bags of ice, too.

More water news: Are restaurants still operating during Fayetteville PWC's boil water advisory?

Elizabeth Craft, a franchise owner of Jimmy John's, said Jimmy John's at 1918 Skibo Road and 1391 Walter Reed Road were open but did not have fountain drinks, tea or ice and were using bottled drinks.

"We bought plenty of gallons of water and hand sanitizer for your health safety," Craft wrote.

Chef and owner Nadia Minniti said Gusto Napoletano Italian Restaurant at 2711 Raeford Road was open and serving pizza, sandwiches and fried items, but no pastas.

"We have been boiling water since yesterday morning to have an adequate amount to wash our hands and dishes," Minniti wrote.

Melvin's at Riverside commented that they were open, while "taking all the necessary precautions" based on PWC's boil water advisory and were using bottled water.

Nicole Wittmann, owner of Max & Moritz Bakery & Restaurant, said the business was open and taking precautions to keep customers safe.

David Thomas, an owner of Kusinera Filipino Cuisine, said the eatery was closed because of the boil water notice and employees who had school-aged children unable to go to school because of Hurricane Helene.

Water at grocery stores

Target's shelves for water were mostly empty Friday morning, but a pallet with a few packages of bottled water sat nearby.

Food Lion at Raeford Road and Ireland Drive appeared to have limited flavored water options as did the Food Lion on Skibo Road, which had a pallet with a few packages of bottled water at the front of the store.

Harris-Teeter on Raeford Road appeared to have plenty of water on pallets near the front of the store.

Shelves at Carlie C's IGA also had pallets filled with water in the aisles where water is normally sold. .

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

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Helene brings danger, memories of peril - Gulf Coast is no stranger to massive storm surges

September 27, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Dinah Voyles Pulver; USA TODAY | Section: News | 936 Words Page: A5 OpenURL Link

With catastrophic storm surge expected along Florida's coast from Hurricane Helene, northern Gulf Coast residents Gene and Margaret Taylor understand better than anyone about the tragedy that water can bring.

As Hurricane Katrina approached in August 2005, the Taylor family fled their Gulf front home in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, fleeing miles inland to his brother's home. The now-legendary hurricane pulverized their home and community with a record-breaking 28-foot-storm surge.

Gene Taylor first thought his bare street looked like it did "when the French first arrived" in Mississippi during the late 1600s. "We could never have imagined the house would be gone," he recalled.

Hurricane Helene strengthened to a Category 3 storm Thursday afternoon and was forecast to produce another historic surge, this one along the region where Florida's coast wraps around the northeast corner of the Gulf of Mexico. At 2:25p.m. EDT, maximum sustained winds were 120mph, and Helene was headed north-northeast at 16mph, the National Hurricane Center said.

Throughout the Gulf Coast, but especially here, residents are no stranger to the troubles that flow in with floodwaters.

The "catastrophic and deadly storm surge" could reach 15 to 20 feet above ground somewhere along the coast, the National Hurricane Center warned Wednesday.

Warnings ranging as high as 12feet are in effect elsewhere along almost the entire west coast of Florida, said Jamie Rhome, the center's deputy director.

"The large size of this storm is going to push so much water," Rhome said. "When it comes to storm surge the size of the hurricane is more important than the intensity of the storm, which is hard for some people to digest."

Helene is enormous. On Thursday morning, hurricane-force winds extend outward up to 25miles from the center and tropical storm-force winds extend outward up to 345miles from the center, according to the National Hurricane Center.

What is storm surge?

Storm surge happens when the ocean level rises suddenly as a storm is making landfall. Accompanied by large and battering waves, it can cause extreme flooding, not only along the coast but miles inland along streams and rivers.

Strong winds around the eye of a hurricane cause ocean water to circulate. As a storm arrives in shallower waters along the coast, the ocean bottom disrupts that circulation and forces water upward and inland. Other influencing factors are the timing of high tide, shape of the sea floor and coast, and the angle of the storm's approach.

Florida's northern Gulf Coast is particularly vulnerable. Its wide continental shelf allows water to stack up. When Hurricane Dennis neared the coast some 150miles to the west in 2005, a 6- to 9-foot wall of water surged into the village of St. Marks, shocking residents and meteorologists alike.

A cubic yard of water weighs 1,700pounds. Imagine the force when a storm surge several yards high and miles long,

topped by rough waves, batters oceanside structures for hours.

Life-threatening storm surge

Emergency management officials and meteorologists repeatedly warn that those who live near the ocean and along inland waterways that connect to the sea should evacuate away from the coast when asked.

Florida has planned and drilled for an event of this magnitude for years, Rep. Jared Moskowitz, D-Fla., told USA TODAY on Wednesday. Moskowitz is a former director of Florida's state emergency management division.

"It's going to be a historic storm surge," Moskowitz said. He urged Floridians to heed the warnings of emergency management officials. "If they tell you to evacuate, you need to leave."

Hurricane lan's storm surge in Southwest Florida in 2022 – estimated at a peak of 15feet in Fort Myers Beach – prompted emergency water rescues as the sun set, but still claimed 41 lives.

No storm in recent history caused more deaths in the mainland U.S. than Hurricane Katrina, with many of the more than 500 direct deaths attributed to storm surge. It delivered one of the higher surges in modern records, estimated at 24 to 28feet along about 20miles of the Mississippi coast, according to the hurricane center's final report. Water surged 8 to 12 feet in Mobile Bay in Alabama, and as high as 19 feet in eastern New Orleans and in St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes in Louisiana.

As a result of improved forecasting and messaging, fewer people are dying in storm surge in recent years, while flooding from extreme rainfall claims a greater percentage of lives.

Last year, the peak storm surge forecast for Hurricane Idalia was very close to the level actually produced by the storm on the Florida coast south of Tallahassee, said Cody Fritz, team lead for the hurricane's storm surge unit. The goal is "to present an accurate forecast as early as possible," Fritz told USA TODAY earlier this year.

Every storm is different

Simply because your area hasn't seen a huge storm surge does not mean you won't ever see one, Fritz said. Each storm and its accompanying surge can have different characteristics that contribute to the height of the water and how far inland it extends.

For the Taylors, Katrina served as a deadly reminder that no two storms are the same.

"So many people died because they thought they would be safe in a building that went through Hurricane Camille in 1969," Taylor said. "We know of several people who swam out and said if Katrina had been at night and they couldn't see the debris coming at them, it would have killed them."

Get the latest

Follow coverage of Hurricane Helene at usatoday.com.

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Schools closed as Helene threatens

September 27, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Author: KEVIN GRIFFIN and JOHN HINTON Staff Reporters | Section: Main | 590 Words

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To receive emergency updates on weather events in Guilford County, visit readyguilford.org and sign up for the Guilford Emergency Alert Notification and Information system (GEANI).

State and local officials continued to make preparations for the impact of Hurricane Helene Thursday as parts of the state began to feel the effects of the storm.

Guilford County Schools will be closed for students and staff on Friday because of the potential for extreme weather, officials said Thursday afternoon.

The district said schools would be closed "due to the potential for severe weather tonight and tomorrow morning, and out of an abundance of caution."

Friday will not be a remote learning day. Officials said the district will operate under Emergency Closing Plan C, and staff members should work with their supervisors for specific plans.

Hurricane Helene could bring between 1½ inches and 8 inches of rain the Triad.

Sustained winds will range from 15 mph to 25 mph Friday in Guilford and Forsyth counties, said Nick Luchetti, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Raleigh. Wind gusts could reach 30 mph to 40 mph, Luchetti said.

"It's an incredible storm," Luchetti said.

Gov. Roy Cooper issued a statewide state of emergency for the storm on Wednesday. On Thursday, President Joe Biden also declared a federal state of emergency for North Carolina, a move that provides federal resources for handling disaster response.

During a storm update briefing Thursday morning, Cooper and other state officials emphasized that the worst effects of the storms are expected in the western part of the state but also noted the potential threat to the Piedmont as well.

"Though the primary impacts will be to the mountains and foothills, central and eastern North Carolina can expect heavy rainfall, severe thunderstorms and possible severe weather such as tornadoes," N.C. Emergency Management Director William Ray said.

Guilford County Emergency Services Public Information Officer Scott Muthersbaugh said in an email that projections from the National Weather Service showed the storm moving into the area Friday morning. The worst of the storm was expected from sunrise through 3 p.m.

"The primary threats that we are watching for from this system are flash flooding, downed trees and scattered power outages," Muthersbaugh said. "There is the potential for isolated tornadoes with this system, so we ask that all Guilford County residents remain weather aware throughout the day."

Officials in Greensboro have been taking steps to respond to any adverse effects from the storm, including making preparations for potential road closures and other disruptions. The Greensboro Fire Department is sending 18

members of its Search and Rescue Team to the mountains to assist with disaster response as part of a deployment coordinated by state officials, according to a post on the city's Facebook page.

"The safety of North Carolina's residents is our top priority, and we are proud to assist in any way we can during this critical time," said Greensboro Fire Chief Jim Robinson said via a statement in the Facebook post. "Our SAR team is well-trained and prepared to respond to the challenging conditions that come with hurricane-related disasters."

City personnel have compiled a list of roads they will be paying special attention to for flooding concerns.

These roads include Latham Drive near West Wendover and other locations along North Buffalo Creek, Meadowbrook Terrace at Elm Street, Yanceyville Street near Revolution Mill and East Cone Boulevard, Cone Boulevard at Church Street, Cornwallis Avenue at Maple Street and South Elm Eugene Street just south of Interstate 40.

Duke Energy said it has more than 10,000 line-workers, tree trimmers and other employees in the Carolinas to restore outages caused by the storm.

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Schools shuffle more games

September 27, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Author: BRYANT ROCHE Staff Reporter | Section: Life | 353 Words

Page: 1B OpenURL Link

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

For the second time this season, Dudley is facing a postponement because of inclement weather.

The Panthers (4-0, 1-0) were scheduled to play Atkins (1-3, 1-0) on Friday at 7 p.m. in a Mid-State 3A Conference game, but the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools has canceled activities due to the threat from Hurricane Helene. Atkins athletics director Leslie Long confirmed that the Camels will not be permitted to play Friday, even with the game being hosted by a school outside the WS/FC district, with school not being in session.

The game has been rescheduled for 1 p.m. Saturday.

Dudley's home game against Southeast Guilford scheduled for Friday, Aug. 30 was moved to Labor Day. The Panthers won, 49-0.

Several games have been rescheduled due to Helene, which was upgraded to a Category 2 storm Thursday morning but is projected to be a Category 3 by the time it makes expected landfall on Florida's northwestern coast on Thursday evening, The Associated Press reported.

Prior to Thursday, the following Guilford County high school football games were moved from Friday to Thursday: Eastern Guilford at High Point Central (7 p.m.), Northeast Guilford at Southern Guilford (7 p.m.), Northern Guilford at Southeast Guilford (7 p.m.) and Northwest Guilford at Grimsley (7 p.m.).

Bishop McGuinness announced Thursday that its home game against Carver, another Winston-Salem/Forsyth County public school, would be moved from Friday to Monday at 6:30 p.m. High Point Christian announced on Tuesday that its home game against Harrells Christian would be moved from Friday to Thursday at 6 p.m., with its previously planned homecoming festivities to take place at a later date.

Area contests McMichael at North Forsyth (7:30 p.m.) and West Stokes at Morehead (6:30 p.m.) games initially were announced as Thursday games.

Walkertown-TW Andrews remains scheduled for 4 p.m. Saturday as planned.

The following football games involving Greensboro area schools remain slated for Friday: Ragsdale at Page (7:30 p.m.), Smith at Rockingham County (7 p.m.) and Western Guilford at Southwest Guilford (7:30 p.m.).

Reidsville is off this week.

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Main

September 27, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Section: Main | 502 Words

Page: 2A OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene is on the way, with a forecast of rain and wind for the Triad and surrounding areas.

That means we should all be ready when the storm strikes.

Duke Energy recommends keeping a portable battery-operated radio, television, or NOAA weather radio. Make sure your cellphones and other electronic devices are charged.

Also, Duke Energy says to stay away from any lines that are down and consider any fallen lines to be energized and dangerous.

Here are some tips from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about what items should be included in an emergency kit:

*Food and water: The CDC recommends you have at least a three-day supply, including one gallon of water per person per day; non-perishable foods that are easy to make and can be eaten unheated

*A manual can opener

*Basic utensils to prepare and serve meals. Disposable plates, forks, and spoons work well and don't have to be washed.

*Health supplies: You should have at least a three-day supply on hand of all medicines, as well as medical supplies that you may need such as syringes, canes or batteries for hearing aids. In addition, masks and hand sanitizer should be included.

*Personal-care items: That includes soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste, baby wipes, glasses and contact lenses. Also pack clothes, underwear, socks, and sturdy shoes.

*Safety supplies: Should include a first-aid kit, an emergency blanket, a multipurpose tool (preferably one that can act as a knife, file, pliers and screwdriver) and a whistle.

*Important documents: Identification, insurance cards, and paperwork about any serious medical conditions. Also, be sure to have credit and debit cards. Picking up some cash may be a good idea.

*Other Items: The CDC also recommends keeping extra cash, an extra set of your car and house keys, and maps of the area.

*For children: Baby supplies, and games and activities for older kids.

*For pets: A three-day supply of food and water, plus bowls, cleaning supplies, a sturdy leash for dogs or pet carrier for cats and smaller dogs, plus current vaccination documentation. Include photos to help identify them as your pets if you become separated. They recommend taking pet toys and, if you can easily bring it, the pet's bed to help reduce stress.

*For cats, include a portable litter pan and extra cat litter. Aluminum roasting pans work well for a portable,

disposal litter pan.

Whether you are staying at home or going to a shelter, make your emergency-supply kit easy to move. Clearly label containers and store them where you can reach them easily, and remember that certain items, including medication and paper documents, need to be kept in waterproof containers.

Once you have put together an emergency kit, be sure to check expiration dates on food, water, medicine and batteries at least twice a year.

Find out where your gas, electric and water shut-off locations are, and make sure you know how to turn them off if needed.

For more information, go to emergency.cdc.gov.

Be safe and if you don't have to go out, stay home.

Email: AskSAM@wsjournal.comWrite: Ask SAM, 418 N. Marshall St., #100, Winston-Salem, NC 27101 Copyright (c) 2024 Greensboro News & Record

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What Triangle area can expect from Hurricane Helene

September 27, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

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

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

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

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

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

More rain for NC mountains

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prep for a potentially 'devastating' hurricane

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Short-term funding patch ready for Biden's signature

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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