

## FEMA changes in Senate bill filed before Helene, Milton

October 16, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Alan Wooten | The Center Square | Section: State | 567 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – A proposal senators from Michigan and North Carolina say could be helping victims of natural disasters was already filed before Hurricanes Helene and Milton ruptured lives in the southeastern United States.

On Wednesday of the third week since Helene struck the Blue Ridge Mountains in Sen. Thom Tillis' native North Carolina, FEMA is under attack, the Disaster Survivors Fairness Act of 2024 remains parked in committee since introduction Sept. 17, and another cold night is coming with dozens still missing and 95 dead.

"It's past time we end the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to disaster relief and cut the red tape that prevents many communities from accessing the relief they desperately need," Tillis, second-term Republican, said in a release. "This commonsense legislation provides greater flexibility for communities in need, saves taxpayer dollars and helps communities recover faster."

Sen. Gary Peters, second-term Democrat from Michigan, authored the legislation with Tillis alongside.

"Severe weather and natural disasters are becoming more frequent, more catastrophic and more costly, leaving people across the country in need of swift federal resources to help assist their recovery," Peters said. "My commonsense bipartisan legislation would reform the FEMA disaster assistance process and improve how the agency provides assistance to individuals for home repairs, disaster housing, and mitigation activities."

In Florida, Debby made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane near Steinhatchee on Aug. 5, Helene made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane in Dekle Beach on Sept. 26, and Milton made landfall as a Category 3 hurricane near Siesta Key on Wednesday night.

Helene dissipated over the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee, dumping more than 30 inches of rain in multiiple places. Flooding was catastrophic, arguably the worst storm for North Carolina since Hurricanes Floyd in 1999 and Hazel in 1954 – the latter the only Category 4 hurricane to make landfall on state shores, the former causing a once in 500 years flood.

Estimated to have killed more than 200 and possibly more than 250, only Katrina (2005, deaths 1,392), Audrey (1957, deaths 416) and Camille (1969, deaths 256) killed more people by hurricane since 1950 than Helene.

FEMA, if the bill were to advance into law, would have new authority to "to increase its ability to fund disaster mitigation projects and expand support to homeowners," a release says.

Additionally, "The bill would also enable FEMA to reimburse states that implement their own innovative post-disaster housing solutions and bolster development of post-disaster solutions for renters. The bill requires FEMA and the Government Accountability Office to complete a series of reports and studies that would identify additional challenges regarding the administration of post-disaster assistance for survivors and boost transparency."

Context of FEMA aid is important. For example, it's not insurance to make whole. FEMA programs "are designed to help you move forward in your recovery," its website says. Home repair grants, in another example, don't return homes to predisaster condition but do help make basic repairs for safety, that are sanitary, and that are secure.

FEMA is often a punching bag following disasters. Critics say the help is too slow to arrive, has too much red tape, and often repairs are already done or have to be done before it can help. Among the pros are that it can help fill a gap on under-insured damage, sometimes reimbursement claims can be successful even if filed after repairs are

done, and it provides grants not loans that do not have to be paid back.

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# US Hit With 20 Billion-Dollar Climate Disasters So Far in 2024 | Insurify

October 16, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: National | 560 Words OpenURL Link

Sobering statistics show the U.S. has experienced 396 billion-dollar weather and climate disasters since 1980. Overall insured and uninsured losses from these events exceed \$2.780 trillion.

So far this year, the U.S. has sustained 20 weather events with losses of \$1 billion or more. Hurricane season isn't over yet, and these numbers reflect data from the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) last updated on Sept. 10.

This year's official billion-dollar events — 16 severe storms or tornado outbreaks, two winter storms, one tropical cyclone, and one wildfire — have resulted in 149 deaths. Most of these weather events have occurred in the Southern and Midwestern regions of the country.

The NCEI has cited two more potential billion-dollar events: Midwest flooding in late June and Hurricane Debby, which made landfall in Florida in early August. But NCEI hasn't finalized the total costs associated with damage from these two weather events.

Hurricanes Helene and Milton will likely also join the NCEI's list of catastrophic billion-dollar weather events as well. Hurricane Helene caused between \$30.5 and \$47.5 billion in damages, including uninsured flood loss between \$20 and \$30 billion, according to estimates from data analytics firm CoreLogic. The damage for Hurricane Milton is similar, with Fitch Ratings estimating between \$30 and \$50 billion in damages.

Compared to previous years

The cycle of severe weather events is increasing in frequency.

Between 1980 and 2023, the U.S. experienced an average of 8.5 billion-dollar weather events annually. But that annual average has increased significantly in the last five years, with an average of 20.4 events annually between 2019 and 2023. The average has climbed again in the last three years, at 22 events per year between 2021 and 2023.

In the last five years, the U.S. has had 102 billion-dollar events, which resulted in \$617.5 billion in damage and 1,996 deaths.

In 2023, the NCEI recorded 28 billion-dollar climate events, which resulted in \$95.1 billion in damages and nearly 500 deaths. So far in 2024, the U.S. has experienced \$53 billion in damages as a result of the 20 billion-dollar weather events recorded, according to NCEI data updated on Sept. 10.

What's next? The continual effect on insurance costs and availability

These severe weather events have left a lasting impact on homeowners who face increased insurance costs as insurers cease operations in high-risk areas, making it harder to obtain affordable coverage.

The average annual cost of homeowners insurance increased by 19.8%, from \$1,984 to \$2,377, between 2021 and 2023, according to the Insurify homeowners insurance report, as insurers seek to recoup losses following severe weather events.

In California, for example, State Farm announced in March that it wouldn't renew more than 70,000 property

insurance policies, including 30,000 homeowners insurance policies. Allstate, Farmers, The Hartford, and USAA have also made efforts to pull back in the state.

In July, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) held a summit to address increasing property insurance costs and limited available coverage for the average American. Though HUD has somewhat limited reach to address premium increases and coverage availability, the department has been looking for ways to address the industry's challenges.

HUD recently changed the requirements for wind and named storm coverage for multi-family homes with FHA mortgages, which will decrease owners' costs while ensuring coverage. HUD has also given more than \$610 million to HUD-assisted owners of multi-family properties to promote upgrades geared toward energy efficiency and climate resilience.

#### Related articles

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## Southeast natural disasters could impact Ohio absentee voters

October 16, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: J.D. Davidson | The Center Square | Section: National | 314 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – Secretary of State Frank LaRose has contacted Ohio emergency workers helping with hurricane response in the Southeast to monitor potential issues with absentee ballots.

Dan Lusheck, deputy communications director for LaRose, said the office will also continue to monitor for specific issues following Hurricane Helene that struck the Big Bend area of Florida and unleashed devastating flooding in North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee.

Also, Hurricane Milton struck the Tampa area late last week with massive storm surge and significant damage all across central Florida, including the heavily populated Tampa and Orlando areas.

Hundreds of Ohio-based aid workers are in North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Florida, along with national troops. There countless numbers of college students, and postal service for those in the damaged areas could impact absentee ballot mailings.

With less than three weeks left before Ohio's absentee ballot postmark deadline, it's the time of year thousands of snowbirds leave or have left the state for warming weather in the Southeast.

Lusheck said LaRose is chairman of the National Republican Secretaries of State Committee and he's reached out to secretaries in the southeast to offer assistance.

LaRose's office has also reached out to Ohio emergency workers in the area who are helping with crisis response.

On Tuesday, the United States Postal Service said it continues restoring operations to impacted areas where it is safely possible, but a significant backlog of mail and packages remains.

"The full recovery of service to the area may stretch forward for some time," the USPS said in a statement.

According to the postal service, 278 of the 303 postal facilities in Florida are open, and 295 offices have reported 154,540 pieces of delayed mail from Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

Lusheck encouraged Ohio absentee voters, to track their absentee ballot at voteohio.gov/track. He also said the office will monitor the areas for specific issues, and those with concerns should contact the secretary of state's office.

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# Biden Administration Uses Wartime Powers to Help Restart IV Fluid Plant in North Carolina

October 16, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Health | 822 Words OpenURL Link

WEDNESDAY, Oct. 16, 2024 (HealthDay News) -- Following hurricane damage that shuttered a North Carolina plant that makes 60% of the country's IV fluids, U.S. health officials have invoked the Defense Production Act to hasten rebuilding of the factory.

A nationwide shortage of IV fluids has only worsened since Hurricane Helene wrecked the plant run by Baxter International Inc. late last month, and hospitals say they are still postponing surgeries and procedures due to short supply.

"Ensuring people have medical supplies they need is a top priority of the [Biden] Administration. It's exactly why we are working closely with Baxter to support cleanup and restoration of the facility, including invoking the Defense Production Act to help production resume as quickly as possible," an official with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services told CBS News on Tuesday. Last week, the agency detailed its plans to help reopen the factory.

While the North Carolina factory remains closed, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has allowed Baxter to import IV fluids from its other plants around the world. Officials say they are also backing plans to airlift more supplies into the United States.

In recent weeks, U.S. health officials have urged all hospitals to conserve IV fluids, even if they are not facing a supply crunch. Some major health systems have told CBS News that they had avoided a shortfall, but were still carefully managing IV supplies.

Meanwhile, the Veterans Health Administration, which operates the country's largest integrated health system, said it is monitoring the situation.

"VA is closely tracking inventory, shipments, cross-leveling supply between facilities when appropriate, and following general conservation guidance to maximum use of existing supplies," Veterans Affairs Deputy Assistant Secretary Terrence Hayes said in a statement Tuesday.

This is not the first time the Defense Production Act has been deployed to help manage critical medical supply shortages: It was used by both the Trump and Biden administrations to boost manufacturing of test swabs, ventilators and vaccines during the pandemic.

IV fluids are needed for the care of patients such as premature babies, people on dialysis and frail individuals who rely on IV feeding.

Baxter would not say when it expected its North Carolina plant to become fully operational again, but said it hoped to resume production in phases by the end of the year.

A bridge near the plant is being prioritized for repair so that trucks already loaded with Baxter product can leave and distribute supplies not damaged by the storm, the New York Times reported.

"We will spare no resource -- human or financial -- to restart operations and help ensure patients and providers have the products they need," Baxter CEO José Almeida said in an Oct. 9 statement.

Hospitals across the nation need IV fluids to hydrate and feed patients, including those battling a life-threatening blood infection known as sepsis.

"When you're coming in with sepsis, and specifically the septic shock, those one-liter bags are the most immediate form of treatments, and sometimes you're getting two, if not three, of them in rapid succession," Dr. Chris DeRienzo, chief physician executive of the American Hospital Association, explained to the Times. "There are so many special populations impacted by the shortage, what it really leads to is an impact on the whole population."

IV fluids are also essential to the care of people in dialysis, because patients need specially formulated liquids to help clean their blood once kidneys begin to fail.

The North Carolina plant was a major supplier of such fluids, William Poirier, of the Renal Healthcare Association, told the Times.

The suddenness of the IV fluid crisis highlights ongoing concerns about the fragility of the supply chain of essential medical supplies in the United States. Experts have long noted that the manufacture and distribution of certain items is concentrated in only a few companies.

The pandemic revealed many vulnerabilities, as officials scrambled to find essential supplies of masks, gloves and ventilators. In 2023, tornado damage to a Pfizer plant in North Carolina sparked a frenzied search for new supplies of certain generic drugs.

Most of the products involved in these shortages are low-cost, low-profit items with few incentives for new manufacturers to enter into production, experts explained.

Whether government is doing enough to build capacity is uncertain, Tom Cotter, executive director of Healthcare Ready, a nonprofit founded after Hurricane Katrina, told the Times.

"We haven't seen a really big uptick in investment in resiliency from the government to harden our supply chains," Cotter said. "Storms are reaching areas where they've never been before with greater severity. There is an increased need to widen the scope of what we think is vulnerable in our medical supply chain."

More information

Find out more about IV fluids and what they are used for at the Cleveland Clinic.

SOURCES: Statements, Baxter International, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; CBS News; New York Times

What This Means For You

With a manufacturing plant in North Carolina knocked out by Hurricane Helene, U.S. health officials have invoked wartime powers to speed rebuilding of the factory.

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# Nearly 100 in NC may be missing after Helene

October 16, 2024 | Courier-Tribune, The (Asheboro, NC) Author: ALAN WOOTEN THE CENTER SQUARE | Section: News | 358 Words OpenURL Link

In the third week since Hurricane Helene struck the North Carolina mountains, as many as 92 people may still be missing.

Gov. Roy Cooper said Tuesday the number "is not a definitive count because the task for is continuing its work."

"The number will continue to fluctuate as more reports come in and others are resolved," he said.

U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., said last week in an interview with Fox News Radio that in her district in the northwest mountains, "I think there are still many people that we haven't been able to get to because of the washout of the roads."

Recovery efforts have been challenged by arguably the state's worst natural disaster. Tuesday morning, the state reported 579 road that were still closed — three interstate highways, 38 federal highways, 58 state roads, and 480 secondary roads. Early estimates are that about 100 mountain bridges need replacement.

Add in layers of both failed infrastructure like 12,000 without power on a Tuesday morning with temperatures in the 30s, water systems still to be rebuilt, and circulating misinformation, and the task is enormous.

"I have directed the Department of Public Safety to coordinate law enforcement assistance for FEMA and other responders who need it to help ensure their safety and security so people can keep getting the help that they desperately need," Cooper said.

Deanne Criswell, administrator of FEMA and a leader among more than 2,000 from the federal government who are in North Carolina, said operational changes have been made.

"It's heartbreaking to see words or active acts of hatred toward anyone, let alone federal responders who are here to help people in this critical time," she said.

Helene came ashore in the Big Bend of Florida on Sept. 26 as a Category 4 hurricane. It moved swiftly through Georgia and dissipated over the Appalachian Mountains and Tennessee, dumping more than 30 inches of rain in some places.

An exact number of deaths across multiple states is unclear, though it is believed to be between 206 and 251, about half of them in North Carolina.

Only Hurricanes Katrina in 2005 (1,392 deaths), Audrey in 1957 (416) and Camille in 1969 (256) killed more people since 1950.

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## Froma Harrop: Climate change is coming for Florida's economy

October 16, 2024 | Daily Advance, The (Elizabeth City, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 601 Words OpenURL Link

Florida was the future. The weather's balmy in winter, the beaches are divine and there's no personal income tax. All that and a lower cost of living had set off a sizable migration of companies from New York, Chicago and California. Between 2021 and 2023, Florida was the fastest-growing state.

Now as a second monster hurricane in two weeks smashes the western coast, many Floridians have been turned into serial refugees. Florida is no stranger to the occasional big "blow," but climate change may have completely rewritten the meteorological future, and it's not sunny.

We can't say no one expected this. Nor is the western coast the only area under threat. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration projects that by 2100, more than 30% of Southeast Florida could be underwater, including much of Miami and Fort Lauderdale. Other more extreme scenarios put that figure closer to 70%.

Yet the extent of the threat has been kept under wraps by politicians unwilling to do the hard work.

Former Florida Gov. Rick Scott was said to have banned the use of "climate change" by the state's government agencies. He denies doing that, but employees report being pressured not to use the term, especially in documents related to environmental and coastal policies.

Donald Trump issued a tweet in 2016 that called climate change a "hoax" created by China.

Project 2025, the blueprint for another Trump term, criticizes Joe Biden's climate initiatives as "radical" and "extreme." (Trump called it "the Green New Scam.") The Project says, "The Biden Administration's climate fanaticism will need a whole-of-government unwinding."

The document totally lost it over the Biden administration's promotion of "international partnerships" to address the crisis. The transition to a low-carbon economy must be worldwide.

Project 2025 went so histrionic over Biden's climate law that even Big Oil has been urging Trump not to gut it. The likes of Exxon Mobil, Occidental Petroleum and Phillips 66 oppose the Project's call "to fully repeal recently passed subsidies in the tax code, including the dozens of credits and tax breaks for green energy companies."

Major oil companies have themselves become part green-energy enterprises. They're using the Inflation Reduction Act tax credits to invest in renewable fuel, carbon capture and hydrogen. These are expensive ventures that need government support to get off the ground.

Back in Florida, fierce weather has raised insurance premiums by as much as 400% over five years. As a result, Floridians are having an extra-hard time selling their properties. And those rebuilding homes smashed up by storms are finding that the policies have become a lot tougher, with higher deductibles and stricter limits on what's covered. Few cover flood damage. (Few homeowners have separate flood insurance issued by FEMA.)

Personal wealth goes only so far in protecting people from dislocation. Dynasty Financial Partners was one of the companies that left New York City in 2019 for St. Petersburg, Florida. Its chief executive lost his home in Hurricane Helene. The family moved into a cramped condo downtown. As Hurricane Milton barreled their way, they had to evacuate again.

First Street foundation reports that 3 million Americans became climate migrants between 2000 and 2020 — many

of whom lived far from coastlines. Texas Hill Country, for one, is known as Flash Flood Alley. Entire blocks have been hollowed out of residents. Meanwhile, Progressive says it will join others no longer writing home insurance policies in Texas.

And the world saw how Hurricane Helene visited devastation on lovely Asheville, North Carolina, up there in the mountains, far from landfall in Florida's Big Bend area.

Climate change is coming for Florida and elsewhere. Americans can confront the crisis or not. The weather doesn't care.

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## 1,800 turn out for 10th Dismal Day in Camden

October 16, 2024 | Daily Advance, The (Elizabeth City, NC) Author: Kesha Williams | Section: Local | 693 Words OpenURL Link

SOUTH MILLS — Beneath sunny skies and amid fall-like temperatures, nearly 1,800 people turned out for Dismal Swamp State Park's 10th annual Dismal Day in Camden County on Saturday.

But the event almost didn't happen.

According to Dismal Swamp State Park Superintendent Adam Carver, nearly a third of North Carolina's state parks are currently closed because of the destruction from Tropical Storm Helene across more than 20 western North Carolina counties late last month. As a result, all but three scheduled park programs in the state were canceled last weekend. One of the three was Dismal Day in Camden.

"This event was allowed to go on because it has such an impact on the community and (we had) no major storm damage here," Carver said.

"There are so many vendors from the local community involved in Dismal Day so there was no reason to not (hold the event)," he added. "In times like this, community is what we need."

Carver, who assisted with recovery and relief efforts in western North Carolina in Helene's aftermath, said the storm's impact on western North Carolina was devastating.

"The western part of state has seen a tremendous amount of devastation," he said. "From somebody who has been out there, that's a form of devastation that's never before been seen like this — a hurricane in the western part of the state. It's so sad."

Carver said Saturday's weather in Camden was perfect for this year's Dismal Day event. Besides the 1,800 visitors to Dismal Day, 80 participants took part in the 5K Fun Run/Walk that preceded the event.

"We had a lot of kids here for Dismal Day and that is one of the main reasons parents come: to get them (their kids) outside, so they can see something other than their screens," he said.

Dismal Day featured all sorts of activities for young and old alike: Wagon and canoe rides, nature and cultural exhibits, a scavenger hunt, and kids craft activities were just some of what was available.

"This year we aimed for a more educational event," Carver said. "All vendors had to have an educational component to their presentation instead of a booth simply selling merchandise."

Bethany and Joel Overton said when they saw a Dismal Day notice on Facebook, they were instantly interested in attending. On Saturday, they packed their kids, 5-year-old Isla and 9-month-old River, into the family car and drove the hour and half from Manteo to the state park off U.S. Highway 17 in Camden.

Isla, wearing a pair of rubber gloves provided by Green Saves Green, was busy making a bird feeder out of a pinecone, SunButter and bird feed at the group's booth.

"Isla is very interested in wildlife," Bethany Overton said. "With her being homeschooled, we often look for real-life hands-on experiences to learn from. We had such a fun time at this event and she has learned so much about our native animals."

Green Saves Green is a nonpartisan, all-volunteer group that has been working since 2017 to monitor water quality in the area, plant trees, pick up litter, improve trails, and provide outdoor education to students. Some of the group's members were on hand Saturday showing kids how trees provide wildlife with food, water, shelter, and a place to raise their young.

Ashley Nissen also brought her kids, 4-year-old lvy and 2-year-old Luke, to enjoy a day at the park.

Caitlyn Hilton, 12, was busy contributing a chalk drawing to the collection of other chalk artwork in the park's parking lot. She said her dad was busy under the Big Cypress Native tent giving away Atlantic white cedar trees.

There were also plenty of food options for Dismal Day attendees who got hungry during the four-hour event.

Gates County residents Kelvin and Annette Riddick said they were returning for a second year to operate Jessie Mae's Kitchen, their mobile food truck.

"My wife runs this truck in honor of her mother Jessie Mae who was a good cook," Kelvin Riddick said. "We brought hot dogs, chicken Phillies, chicken salad."

Riddick said the couple's food truck was busy when the event opened at 10 a.m. and customer traffic was "steady after that."

"We enjoyed our day and we look forward to coming back next year," he said.

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## County voters begin casting ballots for Nov. 5th election

October 16, 2024 | Daily Advance, The (Elizabeth City, NC) Author: Julian Eure| Section: News| 661 Words OpenURL Link

As county voters prepared earlier this week to head to the polls for the start of one-stop voting on Thursday, 35 voters in Perquimans had already cast their ballots for the Nov. 5th election.

That's the number of absentee mail-in ballots that had already been returned and approved by election officials as of Wednesday morning, according to the N.C. State Board of Elections' website. Statewide, the number of absentee ballots returned as of Wednesday morning was 65,486.

Of Perquimans' 35 returned ballots thus far, 16 were from GOP voters, 14 from unaffiliated voters, four from Democrats and one from a voter registered with the No Labels Party.

Voters have until Oct. 29 at 5 p.m. to request a mail-in ballot. The deadline for returning a mail-in ballot is 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.

Because of Tropical Storm Helene, the absentee mail-in ballot deadlines are different for 25 counties in western North Carolina affected by the storm. Under new rules approved in emergency legislation adopted last week, voters registered in the 25 counties can request an absentee ballot in person at their county election office up until the day before Election Day. The new law also says absentee ballots received by voters in the 25 counties can be turned in to any early voting site or county election office in the state, as well as to the State Board of Elections office in Raleigh.

For voters choosing to cast their ballot during the state's 17-day one-stop voting period, the Perquimans Board of Election will offer voting through Nov. 2 on the following dates and times:

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Saturday, Nov. 2, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Voting will take place at the Perquimans Board of Elections Office, 333 Winfall Blvd., Hertford.

Eligible residents who have not yet registered to vote may do so during the one-stop voting period. Voters are reminded that this is the first statewide general election where they'll be required to show a photo ID before casting their ballot.

While there are no contested local races on the Perquimans election ballot, voters will find contested races for U.S. President, North Carolina governor, lieutenant governor, Council of State seats, state Supreme Court, state Appeals Court, state House and state Senate.

There also are two referenda on the ballot. The first is a statewide constitutional amendment that's designed to codify in the North Carolina Constitution that only citizens of the U.S. are eligible to vote. The amendment's text states, "Constitutional amendment to provide that only a citizen of the United States who is 18 years of age and otherwise possessing the qualification for voting shall be entitled to vote at any election in this state." Voters have the option of voting for or against the amendment.

The second referendum, which applies only to Perquimans County, would allow sales of mixed beverages countywide. It asks Perquimans voters if they want "to permit the sale of mixed beverages in hotels, restaurants, private clubs, community theatres, and convention centers and the 'on-premises' and 'off-premises' sale of malt beverages and unfortified wine in qualified establishments." Voters have the option of voting for the referendum or against it.

The N.C. Board of Elections gave the following tips for voters casting their ballots at county polling places. First, check your registration to ensure the information is accurate using the voter search tool online at the county elections site, perquimans countync.gov/departments/board-of-elections/. Make sure your address is correct and still valid. Second, obtain and examine a sample ballot, available at the Board of Elections office on online using the voter search profile.

The most recent voter registration figures show unaffiliated voters outnumber registered Republicans and Democrats in all area counties. That's also true in Perquimans where 4,032 of the county's 10,777 registered voters — better than 37% — are unaffiliated. Republicans make up the second-largest party by registration — 3,795. There are also 2,850 Democrats, 64 Libertarians, 29 No Labels party members, three Green party members, three We the People members and one Constitution party member.

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## New food benefits for flood victims; Applications taken now

October 16, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: Daily Courier Staff| Section: Archives | 717 Words OpenURL Link

Residents in 25 western counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians impacted by Hurricane Helene can apply for help buying food through the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) which will begin on Friday, Oct. 18, 2024, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) announced this week. The application period will be for one week only.

D-SNAP is open to individuals and households not currently receiving Food and Nutrition Services benefits who were impacted by Hurricane Helene. NCDHHS estimates more than 150,000 people will apply for up to \$120 million in D-SNAP benefits.

"We are making up to \$120 million available to more than 150,000 individuals to buy food for their families — an essential step on the road to recovery from the devastation of Hurricane Helene," said N.C. Health and Human Services Secretary Kody H. Kinsley. "We are committed to using every tool to support the recovery of our friends, families, and fellow North Carolinians in western NC — now and for the long haul."

NCDHHS received federal approval to begin phase one of the program from the U.S. Department of Agriculture beginning on Oct. 18, 2024. People can start applying for assistance three days before the program starts during online pre-registration beginning Oct. 15 and will have seven days from the start of the program to apply. The application period will close on Oct. 24, 2024.

Eligible households will be notified within three days of completing the application and receive a one-time benefit on a special debit card (called an Electronic Benefits Transfer, or EBT card) to help buy food. The exact amount will depend on household size, income and disaster losses.

While there are income eligibility standards, a number of considerations are taken into account. Individuals above these limits may still be eligible dependent on disaster expenses, so we encourage everyone who needs support to purchase food to begin their application by calling the DSNAP Virtual Call Center at 1-844-453-1117.

The benefits are good for up to nine months. Benefit cards will be available for pick up at the D-SNAP locations in each county or you can get the EBT card mailed to you overnight at the address you specify on your application.

To be eligible, a person must:

Live in Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey Counties.

Be a member of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians living in zip code 28719

Have suffered losses/damages related to Hurricane Helene, such as damage to property or loss of income.

Have proof of identity and proof of residency (if available).

Have income and resources below certain levels.

Not currently be receiving benefits through the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) program. People receiving FNS can also get extra help buying food, but do not need to fill out a D-SNAP application. They can get more information

about how to get the extra help on the FNS webpage.

Residents are encouraged to apply for D-SNAP by phone, when possible, by calling the D-SNAP call center at 1-844-453-1117. The D-SNAP call center will be open at the following hours:

Weekdays (Friday, Oct. 18; Monday, Oct. 21; Tuesday, Oct. 22; Wednesday, Oct. 23; and Thursday, Oct. 24) from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 19, and Sunday, Oct. 20 from 9 a.m. to noon.

Residents are encouraged to apply for D-SNAP by phone on their assigned day by last name but will not be turned away if they apply any time during the application period.

Oct. 18 — A-G

Oct. 19 — H-M

Oct. 20 - N-S

Oct. 21 — T-Z

Oct. 22 — Open to all

Oct. 23 — Open to all

Oct. 24 — Open to all

Residents can also use the online ePASS Pre-Registration Tool, which will open on Tuesday, Oct. 15 and close on Thursday, Oct. 24. Once the pre-registration is completed, applicants will be issued a confirmation number and will need to call 1-844-453-1117 between Oct. 18 and Oct. 24 to complete the interview part of the application.

Residents can also apply for D-SNAP in-person at the Foundation Performing Arts Center, 286 ICC Loop Road, Spindale, during these hours:

Weekdays (Friday, Oct. 18; Monday, Oct. 21; Tuesday, Oct. 22; Wednesday, Oct. 23; and Thursday, Oct. 24) from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 19, and Sunday, Oct. 20 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Daily Courier Staff, 'New food benefits for flood victims; Applications taken now', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 16 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4046F5B8B4CD0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4046F5B8B4CD0</a>



## Disaster unemployment assistance available in North Carolina

October 16, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 284 Words OpenURL Link

Residents in designated areas of North Carolina who lost income due to Tropical Storm Helene may be eligible for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), according to a press release from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

DUA Availability and Eligibility Requirements

DUA is available to individuals in Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yancey counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, according to the press release.

People, including self-employed, or business owners may be eligible for DUA if:

- You lived, worked or were scheduled to work in an area designated under the major disaster declaration.
- You lost employment or had your employment interrupted as a direct result of the disaster; and
- You have exhausted or are not eligible for state unemployment benefits.

To qualify for DUA benefits, you must be out of work as a direct result of Tropical Storm Helene, according to the press release.

How to File a Claim

The fastest way to file a claim is online at the North Carolina Department of Commerce's Division of Employment Security webpage: des.nc.gov. You may also file over the phone by calling 888-737-0259, according to the press release.

Apply for Disaster Assistance

Homeowners and renters in the designated counties can apply for FEMA assistance online at disasterassistance.gov, by calling 800-621-3362 or by using the FEMA mobile app. If you use a relay service, such as video relay (VRS), captioned telephone or other service, give FEMA the number for that service.

For the latest information on North Carolina recovery from Tropical Storm Helene please visit Hurricane Helene | NC DPS or fema.gov/disaster/4827. Follow FEMA on X, formerly called Twitter, at twitter.com/femaregion4 and at facebook.com/fema.

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### • Citation (aglc Style)

STAFF REPORTS, 'Disaster unemployment assistance available in North Carolina', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 16 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4046F5F2DA8B0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4046F5F2DA8B0</a>



## Virginia Bass Tate

October 16, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Obituaries | 507 Words OpenURL Link

CEO of the Tate Family and The Boss Lady Virginia Bass Tate died peacefully at age 71 on Friday, October 4, 2024 surrounded by her family. Born on July 1, 1953 to Beaty and Pat Bass in Rutherfordton, NC, she was the youngest of four children, after her brother Beaty and sisters Emily and Patsy Hope.

In her early adulthood, she moved to Chapel Hill, NC. She was a member of the South Orange Rescue Squad in Carrboro, NC, where she met and fell in love with her husband, Michael Noah Tate. They were married on December 17, 1977 in Virginia's childhood home in Rutherfordton, NC. They had their first child, daughter Kathryn Hope in 1981. They moved to Lexington, KY in 1982 where they had their two sons Michael Davis and Peter Noah in 1984 and 1987, respectively. They then moved to Hickory, NC in 1988.

Virginia created beauty and welcome for anyone who knew her. To say Virginia was an avid gardener is an understatement. She was a Master Gardener, briefly ran a landscape company, and expertly ran her own trackhoe and other farm equipment. She was also active at Northminster Presbyterian church, where she served as clerk of session and sang in the choir. In 1994, Virginia and Michael bought their property in Ashe County, NC where Virginia's true life's work began. She dreamed into being a true Eden in the Blue Ridge Mountains. It served as her retreat and sanctuary, but it was also her greatest joy to share it with others. She believed strongly in conserving these natural spaces and Chaired the Board of Directors of the Blue Ridge Land Trust (now Blue Ridge Conservancy). Virginia and Michael also raised grass-fed beef and goats on their property, creating Ripshin Farms. Here as well, Virginia showed her adaptability and curiosity and dove headfirst into learning the ins and outs of the farming business, and earned the moniker from her children of the "Crazy Goat Lady". Michael and Virginia retired to Ashe County in 2014, spending as much time there as they could as they transitioned to Givens Estates in Asheville starting in 2020.

Virginia will be remembered as a tenacious, curious, generous, and joyful person. Where she went, her laughter followed. She had a beautiful alto singing voice that like everything else, she shared plentifully and generously with those that knew her. She is survived by her husband Michael, sister Patsy Hope Mitchell (husband John Mitchell), her daughter Kathryn Stevenson (husband Clint and children Lucille and Walter), and sons Davis (wife Maria and children Charlie and TBD baby Tate) and Peter (family Jessie Tate and Ryan Monk).

All of those who would like to celebrate Virginia's life are invited to a memorial service and reception on Saturday, October 12th at 1pm at First Presbyterian Church in Raleigh, NC. In lieu of flowers, we invite people to donate to organizations near and dear to Virginia and her family:

Four Seasons Hospice — fourseasonsfdn.org/ways-to-give/give-today/

Blue Ridge Conservancy — blueridgeconservancy.org/memorials-and-tributes

Greater Lansing Area Development — glad-Nc.org (funds will support Helene recovery efforts)

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#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Virginia Bass Tate', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 16 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C459573099CD90">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C459573099CD90</a>



# Community speaks out after Moriah Energy Center issued air quality permit

October 16, 2024 | Daily Dispatch, The (Henderson, NC) Author: For the Dispatch | Section: Archives | 790 Words OpenURL Link

ROUGEMONT — On Thursday, Oct. 10, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality's Division of Air Quality approved an air quality permit for the Moriah Energy Center, a proposed liquefied methane gas facility in Rougemont that would consist of two 25-million-gallon storage tanks.

The DAQ received 606 public comments regarding the permit via email, voicemail and postal mail, and 39 individuals gave oral comments at the public hearing on Aug. 1-38 of whom expressed opposition to the facility and issuance of the air permit.

In response to the air permit issuance, community members expressed profound disappointment.

"It is just heartbreaking to see this permit approved — knowing the discrepancies in air pollution reporting, knowing that Dominion, the builder of the plant, is now being sold to Enbridge, a huge Canadian corporation with a long track record of bad environmental accidents, and knowing that the residents of Person County came out in record numbers to beg our leadership to not approve it," said George O'Neal, a farmer in southeastern Person County.

"Despite over 500 comments and months of residents speaking out with legitimate concerns, NC DEQ made no changes to make the project safer for residents nearby," said Katie Moore, a member of Neighbors Opposed to Moriah Energy Center, or NoMEC, a group of concerned residents and allied advocates that has continuously expressed concerns about the facility for over a year now.

"Methane gas infrastructure, like the MEC, is going to worsen climate change and we are simply out of time. At a time when our neighbors in the mountains, and those in Florida, are dealing with catastrophic storms worsened by climate change, this kind of facility is wrong for North Carolina. We stand with our western communities impacted by Helene, and call for Gov. Roy Cooper to make good on Executive Orders 246 and 80 and rescind the air permit for the MEC and other methane gas polluting infrastructure in communities across the state."

The primary change in the air permit is a requirement for the facility to report emissions and operational data quarterly rather than annually. The facility can request to change the reporting frequency back to annual once DAQ receives "sufficient evidence" that certain emissions criteria are reached.

Community members continue to express distrust in the ability of PSNC Energy, MEC's developer, to adhere to emissions limits in the air quality permit given their ongoing violations of sediment and erosion control protocol throughout the pre-construction process. For about six months now, PSNC has been causing sediment pollution and alarmingly elevated turbidity levels in nearby creeks due to land and clearing activities at the site.

In August, employees with the Division of Water Resources verified that activities at the facility site are responsible for sediment pollution in nearby creeks but they said there is little they can do because of loose regulations.

"The approval of PSNC's application for a synthetic minor air permit from NC DAQ is a big disappointment," said Andrea Childers, who lives less than half of a mile away from the proposed Moriah Energy Center site. "Consultants who reviewed the permit both agreed that numbers PSNC were using were conservative. The consultants showed that a Title V air permit should be required for this facility. North Carolina citizens, who live in the Moriah community, lives' and health will be endangered by this bad decision."

The DAQ hearing officer for the Moriah Energy Center put together a report responding to concerns from the public comments. Paul Childers, who lives close to the proposed site, said that he did not see DAQ address his concerns

regarding emissions limits and safety protocols much as the Division of Water Resources and Division of Energy, Mineral and Land Resources did not take action about the sediment runoff into his creek.

"My state government agency tasked with protecting citizens and the environment from corporate polluters is in fact protecting corporate polluters from the valid complaints of state residents," he said.

Residents will continue pushing back against the Moriah Energy Center and working towards improved protections for the community.

"We are very disappointed in DEQ's decision, but the facility is not yet built and the community's fight against it will continue on various fronts," said Kathy Andrews, Executive Director of Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League.

"It is well within the DEQ's power to place additional restrictions on a facility of this kind, and they have refused to do so. Not only will approval of this permit move us farther away from the state of North Carolina's own climate goals, but we also believe the people of Person, Durham and Granville counties were not given an adequate opportunity to contribute to this process. It is time for Gov. Cooper's office to review this decision and the entire process by which this facility came to be."

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For the Dispatch, 'Community speaks out after Moriah Energy Center issued air quality permit', *Daily Dispatch, The* (online), 16 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C456FA58F13160">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C456FA58F13160</a>



# Central Baptist hosting Candy N Cars Saturday

October 16, 2024 | Daily Record, The (Dunn, NC) Author: For the Record | Section: News | 202 Words OpenURL Link

Central Baptist Church's annual Candy N Cars event will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 20.

This free trunk-or-treat celebration is all about having a blast without all the scary stuff. Bring your family for a night filled with lots of fun and plenty of candy. Children are encouraged to dress up in their favorite costumes as they explore creative trunks filled with sweet treats.

In the spirit of giving, members of the church are also hosting a donation drive for schools in Asheville. They are collecting tri-fold nap mats, disinfecting wipes, Amazon gift cards, composition notebooks, quart freezer bags, and loose-leaf notebook paper.

"Your generous contributions will help ensure that every child has the supplies they need to replace what was lost in Hurricane Helene," stated a press release about the event. "Whether you stay for the fun or simply drop off your donations, we welcome you to be part of this fun evening. Let's come together as a community to celebrate kindness and generosity, all while enjoying a night filled with laughter and candy."

For more information, call 910-892-7914. Central Baptist Church is located at 6050 Plain View Highway (U.S. Highway 421), outside of Dunn in the Plain View community.

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### Hurricane Helene creates 'severe environmental disaster'

October 16, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Nick Fogleman The Watauga Democrat | Section: Across Carolina | 889 Words OpenURL Link

BOONE — Rivers swelled, trees fell and landslides engulfed mountainsides as the landscape of Watauga County radically changed when Hurricane Helene brought historic rain and wind to the area.

As support and recovery efforts continue across the region, assessments of the environmental damage have yet to account for the devastating effects Helene has had on the ecosystem.

"It is my personal perspective that this is going to be the most severe environmental disaster in the recorded history of this area. We've experienced nothing like this before," said New River Conservancy Executive Director Andrew Downs.

The rivers and streams that run through the mountains are vital to the economy, recreation and identity of Watauga County. Throughout the storm, unprecedented water and debris swept through these areas, leaving a trail of environmental destruction.

Environmental organizations are just beginning to inspect the damage to the ecosystem.

"We're just getting our minds around the human toll of this hurricane and the flooding, but the environmental toll is also staggering. We've seen drowned wildlife and habitat destruction along the rivers and watersheds, and widespread erosion and sedimentation," Blue Ridge Conservancy's Director of Communications Leila Jackson said.

Days before Helene, Boone and surrounding communities were struck with storms that filled up the natural sponges that typically absorb water before the full brunt of the storm made its way to the Appalachian Mountains.

"That set the stage for when the real part of the storm arrived," said Dr. Bill Anderson, an App State hydrogeology professor. "There's no storage or anywhere for that water to go but rush down our mountain valleys and get into the major streams and try to get out of here as quickly as possible."

With nowhere to go, rainwater made its way into Watauga County's rivers and streams, along with the houses, trees, asphalt, cars, and sediments that were destroyed and swept into the river.

"There's all the materials, from tires to construction debris, that are in the river that are going to have a long-term impact," Downs said.

On Sept. 27, the USGS sensor on the Watauga River measured a discharge rate of 32,300 ft3/s, about 1000x more than what was recorded just days before, and a height of 25 ft. Both readings were still climbing upward when the sensor broke during the storm.

As flood waters and materials made their way through river beds, they caused significant damage to the river banks, or riparian zones.

"Those natural filters that protected the river were wiped out, eradicated in many places, and those are going to need to be rebuilt," Downs said.

These natural protection systems have been crippled by physical damage, and this has left the environment more susceptible to chemical and biological damage.

Along with the wreckage of buildings and roads, water likely picked up the toxic materials, pesticides and sewage it came in contact with.

"Who knows what kind of contaminants that we all have in our households for cleaning and so forth. Those are all in the streams now," Anderson said. "When you're out in the non-municipal areas, people have septic tanks, and I would guess that a number of those have been compromised or maybe completely inundated."

Large amounts of pollution, toxicants and waste can cause a variety of problems for mountain ecosystems.

They can influence water and habitat quality, food availability, wildlife behavior and aquatic oxygen levels and disrupt natural cycles within an ecosystem. This can reduce wildlife's overall rates of survival and affect systems that rely on healthy waterways.

"All other systems rely on water, you don't have to overthink it," Downs said. "Water isn't a building block, it's the building block."

Contaminants can also cause dangerous algae blooms making it even more difficult for ecosystems to recover.

Over time, the rivers and streams will move some of these contaminants downstream and out of the region, but Helene's timing means the scars left behind will take more time to heal and make natural and human communities more vulnerable as the ecosystem repairs.

With winter around the corner, areas where trees fell and landslides ripped apart soil and vegetation have little time for secondary succession, when new plants and grass recolonize disrupted ecosystems.

"We're going to have a lot of barren areas throughout the winter," Anderson said. "So when we do get rain, and we get quite a bit of rain throughout the winter, I think we're going to be more prone to landslides and see more sediment in our streams."

As the wreckage and debris from our communities begins to be cleared, unnatural levels of sediment in the water ways remain an issue.

Studies show that while sediment is a vital component of ecological functions when it exceeds natural limits, it can have a range of negative effects on aquatic ecosystems and act as a sink for contaminants.

"That's going to compromise the environment and anything trying to live in those streams," Anderson said. "Our mountain streams are cool and clear environments. That is what the animals that live in those environments have adapted to."

In some areas, the rushing water created new pathways for runoff and altered the natural floodplain. Depending on the severity, this could cause increased erosion and flooding in areas where it was not typical.

"This is what streams do; that's how they wear down our mountains, and they've been doing this for a very long time," Anderson said.

The assessment of the environmental destruction caused by Hurricane Helene will only add to the total account of devastation.

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## Froma Harrop: Climate change is coming for Florida's economy

October 16, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 601 Words OpenURL Link

Florida was the future. The weather's balmy in winter, the beaches are divine and there's no personal income tax. All that and a lower cost of living had set off a sizable migration of companies from New York, Chicago and California. Between 2021 and 2023, Florida was the fastest-growing state.

Now as a second monster hurricane in two weeks smashes the western coast, many Floridians have been turned into serial refugees. Florida is no stranger to the occasional big "blow," but climate change may have completely rewritten the meteorological future, and it's not sunny.

We can't say no one expected this. Nor is the western coast the only area under threat. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration projects that by 2100, more than 30% of Southeast Florida could be underwater, including much of Miami and Fort Lauderdale. Other more extreme scenarios put that figure closer to 70%.

Yet the extent of the threat has been kept under wraps by politicians unwilling to do the hard work.

Former Florida Gov. Rick Scott was said to have banned the use of "climate change" by the state's government agencies. He denies doing that, but employees report being pressured not to use the term, especially in documents related to environmental and coastal policies.

Donald Trump issued a tweet in 2016 that called climate change a "hoax" created by China.

Project 2025, the blueprint for another Trump term, criticizes Joe Biden's climate initiatives as "radical" and "extreme." (Trump called it "the Green New Scam.") The Project says, "The Biden Administration's climate fanaticism will need a whole-of-government unwinding."

The document totally lost it over the Biden administration's promotion of "international partnerships" to address the crisis. The transition to a low-carbon economy must be worldwide.

Project 2025 went so histrionic over Biden's climate law that even Big Oil has been urging Trump not to gut it. The likes of Exxon Mobil, Occidental Petroleum and Phillips 66 oppose the Project's call "to fully repeal recently passed subsidies in the tax code, including the dozens of credits and tax breaks for green energy companies."

Major oil companies have themselves become part green-energy enterprises. They're using the Inflation Reduction Act tax credits to invest in renewable fuel, carbon capture and hydrogen. These are expensive ventures that need government support to get off the ground.

Back in Florida, fierce weather has raised insurance premiums by as much as 400% over five years. As a result, Floridians are having an extra-hard time selling their properties. And those rebuilding homes smashed up by storms are finding that the policies have become a lot tougher, with higher deductibles and stricter limits on what's covered. Few cover flood damage. (Few homeowners have separate flood insurance issued by FEMA.)

Personal wealth goes only so far in protecting people from dislocation. Dynasty Financial Partners was one of the companies that left New York City in 2019 for St. Petersburg, Florida. Its chief executive lost his home in Hurricane Helene. The family moved into a cramped condo downtown. As Hurricane Milton barreled their way, they had to evacuate again.

First Street foundation reports that 3 million Americans became climate migrants between 2000 and 2020 — many

of whom lived far from coastlines. Texas Hill Country, for one, is known as Flash Flood Alley. Entire blocks have been hollowed out of residents. Meanwhile, Progressive says it will join others no longer writing home insurance policies in Texas.

And the world saw how Hurricane Helene visited devastation on lovely Asheville, North Carolina, up there in the mountains, far from landfall in Florida's Big Bend area.

Climate change is coming for Florida and elsewhere. Americans can confront the crisis or not. The weather doesn't care.

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## 10 Tips for NC vters as Early Voting begins this week

October 16, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: N.C. Board of Elections | Section: Local | 743 Words OpenURL Link

In-person early voting for the 2024 general election begins Thursday and ends at 3 p.m. on Nov. 2 in all 100 counties.

Statewide, 419 early voting sites will open on Thursday across North Carolina.

"In-person early voting has been the most popular method of voting in recent general elections, and we expect that will continue in 2024," said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the State Board of Elections.

In 2020, 65 percent of North Carolina voters chose in-person early voting as their voting method. And in the presidential election of 2016, 62 percent of NC voters cast their ballot early.

The following are 10 tips for voters as early voting begins:

1. Early voting locations. Eligible voters may cast a ballot at any early voting site in their county. For sites and hours in all 100 counties, use the Early Voting Sites Search tool.

Also see Early Voting Sites for the Nov. 5, 2024 General Election (PDF). The busiest days for early voting are often the first day and the last couple of days.

2. Candidate info. Sample ballots are available through the Voter Search tool. For information on candidates for the state Supreme Court and Court of Appeals, see the State Board's Judicial Voter Guide: 2024 General Election.

The Guide is also being mailed to all North Carolina households. Election officials do not provide information about candidates for other contests, but some media outlets and advocacy groups do. Many candidates also have websites and social media accounts. Being familiar with your ballot choices will help your voting experience go more smoothly.

3. Bring A Photo ID. Voters will be asked to show photo ID when they check in to vote. Most voters will show their driver's license, but many other forms of photo ID will be accepted.

Voters who do not have photo ID can meet the photo ID requirement by either (1) filling out a form explaining why they are unable to show ID, or (2) showing their ID at the county board of elections office by 5 p.m. on Nov. 14. More information about the photo ID requirement is available at BringltNC.gov.

- 4. Free Photo IDs. Any registered voter who needs a photo ID can get one for free from their county board of elections office during the early voting period, which ends on Nov. 2. For details, go to Get a Free Voter Photo ID.
- 5. Register to Vote. The regular voter registration deadline was Oct. 11. But any North Carolinian who is eligible to vote may still register and vote during the early voting period.

Registrants must provide proof of their residence address, which can be a driver's license or other government document, paycheck, utility bill, or bank statement.

For more information, visit Register in Person During Early Voting.

6. Updating Registration. During early voting, registered voters may update their name or address within the same

county, if necessary.

7. Absentee Ballot Drop-off. Voters who vote by absentee ballot can return it by mail or hand it to an election official at an early voting site in their county. They can also drop it off in person to their county board of elections office.

Voters registered in the 25 counties in the Helene disaster area in Western North Carolina may return their absentee ballot to any early voting site in the state during early voting hours. Ballots will be kept secure and delivered to the voter's county board of elections for processing.

For more information on returning absentee-by-mail ballots, see Detailed Instructions to Vote By Mail.

8. Voting in Person Instead of Absentee. Voters who requested an absentee ballot but have not yet returned it may choose instead to vote in person during the early voting period or on Election Day, Nov. 5.

Voters may discard the absentee ballot and do not need to bring it to a voting site.

- 9. Peace at the Polls. All voters should respect the rights of others to participate in the election. Election officials are trained to quickly address incidents that might interfere with a voter's ability to cast their ballot. Intimidating any voter is a crime. Voters who feel harassed or intimidated should notify an election official immediately.
- 10. Voters in Need of Assistance. Voters in need of assistance may bring an eligible person to help them enter and exit the polling place or to help them complete their ballot according to the voter's instructions.

Election officials are also available to help voters. Curbside voting is also available for voters unable to enter the voting site. For more information, visit Curbside Voting.

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N.C. Board of Elections, '10 Tips for NC vters as Early Voting begins this week', *Daily Reflector, The* (online), 16 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3F0072A947B70">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C3F0072A947B70</a>



# 10 tips for N.C. early voters

October 16, 2024 | Enquirer-Journal, The (Monroe, NC) Author: N.C. State Board of Elections | Section: Enquirer Journal | 762 Words OpenURL Link

RALEIGH, N.C. — In-person early voting for the 2024 general election started Thursday, Oct. 17, and ends at 3 p.m. Nov. 2 in all 100 counties.

Statewide, 419 early voting sites opened Thursday across North Carolina.

"In-person early voting has been the most popular method of voting in recent general elections, and we expect that will continue in 2024," said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the N.C. State Board of Elections.

In 2020, 65% of North Carolina voters chose in-person early voting as their voting method. And in the presidential election of 2016, 62% of N.C. voters cast their ballot early.

The following are 10 tips for voters as early voting begins:

Early voting locations — Eligible voters may cast a ballot at any early voting site in their county. For sites and hours in all 100 counties, use the Early Voting Sites Search tool at www.ncsbe.gov. Also see Early Voting Sites for the Nov. 5, 2024 General Election (PDF). The busiest days for early voting are often the first day and the last couple of days.

Candidate info — Sample ballots are available through the Voter Search tool. For information on candidates for the state Supreme Court and Court of Appeals, see the State Board's Judicial Voter Guide: 2024 General Election. The guide is also being mailed to all N.C. households. Election officials do not provide information about candidates for other contests, but some media outlets and advocacy groups do. Many candidates also have websites and social media accounts. Being familiar with your ballot choices will help your voting experience go more smoothly.

Bring your photo ID — Voters will be asked to show photo ID when they check in to vote. Most voters will show their driver's license, but many other forms of photo ID will be accepted. Voters who do not have photo ID can meet the photo ID requirement by either filling out a form explaining why they are unable to show ID, or showing their ID at the county board of elections office by 5 p.m. Nov. 14. More information about the photo ID requirement is available at BringltNC.gov.

Free photo IDs — Any registered voter who needs a photo ID can get one for free from their county board of elections office during the early voting period, which ends Nov. 2. For details, go to Get a Free Voter Photo ID.

Register to vote — The regular voter registration deadline was Oct. 11. But any North Carolinian who is eligible to vote may still register and vote during the early voting period. Registrants must provide proof of their residence address, which can be a driver's license or other government document, paycheck, utility bill or bank statement. For more information, visit Register in Person During Early Voting.

Updating registration — During early voting, registered voters may update their name or address within the same county, if necessary.

Absentee ballot drop-off — Voters who vote by absentee ballot can return it by mail or hand it to an election official at an early voting site in their county. They can also drop it off in person to their county board of elections office. Voters registered in the 25 counties in the Helene disaster area in western North Carolina may return their absentee ballot to any early voting site in the state during early voting hours. Ballots will be kept secure and delivered to the voter's county board of elections for processing. For more information on returning absentee-by-mail ballots, see Detailed Instructions to Vote By Mail.

Voting in person instead of absentee — Voters who requested an absentee ballot, but have not yet returned it may choose instead to vote in person during the early voting period or on Election Day, Nov. 5. Voters may discard the absentee ballot and do not need to bring it to a voting site.

Peace at the polls — All voters should respect the rights of others to participate in the election. Election officials are trained to quickly address incidents that might interfere with a voter's ability to cast their ballot. Intimidating any voter is a crime. Voters who feel harassed or intimidated should notify an election official immediately.

Voters in need of assistance — Voters in need of assistance may bring an eligible person to help them enter and exit the polling place or to help them complete their ballot according to the voter's instructions. Election officials are also available to help voters. Curbside voting is also available for voters unable to enter the voting site. For more information, visit Curbside Voting.

For more information about early voting, visit Vote Early in Person at www.ncsbe.gov.

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### Hurricane Helene creates 'severe environmental disaster'

October 16, 2024 | Enterprise, The (Martin County, NC) Author: Nick Fogleman The Watauga Democrat | Section: Across Carolina | 889 Words OpenURL Link

BOONE — Rivers swelled, trees fell and landslides engulfed mountainsides as the landscape of Watauga County radically changed when Hurricane Helene brought historic rain and wind to the area.

As support and recovery efforts continue across the region, assessments of the environmental damage have yet to account for the devastating effects Helene has had on the ecosystem.

"It is my personal perspective that this is going to be the most severe environmental disaster in the recorded history of this area. We've experienced nothing like this before," said New River Conservancy Executive Director Andrew Downs.

The rivers and streams that run through the mountains are vital to the economy, recreation and identity of Watauga County. Throughout the storm, unprecedented water and debris swept through these areas, leaving a trail of environmental destruction.

Environmental organizations are just beginning to inspect the damage to the ecosystem.

"We're just getting our minds around the human toll of this hurricane and the flooding, but the environmental toll is also staggering. We've seen drowned wildlife and habitat destruction along the rivers and watersheds, and widespread erosion and sedimentation," Blue Ridge Conservancy's Director of Communications Leila Jackson said.

Days before Helene, Boone and surrounding communities were struck with storms that filled up the natural sponges that typically absorb water before the full brunt of the storm made its way to the Appalachian Mountains.

"That set the stage for when the real part of the storm arrived," said Dr. Bill Anderson, an App State hydrogeology professor. "There's no storage or anywhere for that water to go but rush down our mountain valleys and get into the major streams and try to get out of here as quickly as possible."

With nowhere to go, rainwater made its way into Watauga County's rivers and streams, along with the houses, trees, asphalt, cars, and sediments that were destroyed and swept into the river.

"There's all the materials, from tires to construction debris, that are in the river that are going to have a long-term impact," Downs said.

On Sept. 27, the USGS sensor on the Watauga River measured a discharge rate of 32,300 ft3/s, about 1000x more than what was recorded just days before, and a height of 25 ft. Both readings were still climbing upward when the sensor broke during the storm.

As flood waters and materials made their way through river beds, they caused significant damage to the river banks, or riparian zones.

"Those natural filters that protected the river were wiped out, eradicated in many places, and those are going to need to be rebuilt," Downs said.

These natural protection systems have been crippled by physical damage, and this has left the environment more susceptible to chemical and biological damage.

Along with the wreckage of buildings and roads, water likely picked up the toxic materials, pesticides and sewage it came in contact with.

"Who knows what kind of contaminants that we all have in our households for cleaning and so forth. Those are all in the streams now," Anderson said. "When you're out in the non-municipal areas, people have septic tanks, and I would guess that a number of those have been compromised or maybe completely inundated."

Large amounts of pollution, toxicants and waste can cause a variety of problems for mountain ecosystems.

They can influence water and habitat quality, food availability, wildlife behavior and aquatic oxygen levels and disrupt natural cycles within an ecosystem. This can reduce wildlife's overall rates of survival and affect systems that rely on healthy waterways.

"All other systems rely on water, you don't have to overthink it," Downs said. "Water isn't a building block, it's the building block."

Contaminants can also cause dangerous algae blooms making it even more difficult for ecosystems to recover.

Over time, the rivers and streams will move some of these contaminants downstream and out of the region, but Helene's timing means the scars left behind will take more time to heal and make natural and human communities more vulnerable as the ecosystem repairs.

With winter around the corner, areas where trees fell and landslides ripped apart soil and vegetation have little time for secondary succession, when new plants and grass recolonize disrupted ecosystems.

"We're going to have a lot of barren areas throughout the winter," Anderson said. "So when we do get rain, and we get quite a bit of rain throughout the winter, I think we're going to be more prone to landslides and see more sediment in our streams."

As the wreckage and debris from our communities begins to be cleared, unnatural levels of sediment in the water ways remain an issue.

Studies show that while sediment is a vital component of ecological functions when it exceeds natural limits, it can have a range of negative effects on aquatic ecosystems and act as a sink for contaminants.

"That's going to compromise the environment and anything trying to live in those streams," Anderson said. "Our mountain streams are cool and clear environments. That is what the animals that live in those environments have adapted to."

In some areas, the rushing water created new pathways for runoff and altered the natural floodplain. Depending on the severity, this could cause increased erosion and flooding in areas where it was not typical.

"This is what streams do; that's how they wear down our mountains, and they've been doing this for a very long time," Anderson said.

The assessment of the environmental destruction caused by Hurricane Helene will only add to the total account of devastation.

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## 10 Tips for NC vters as Early Voting begins this week

October 16, 2024 | Enterprise, The (Martin County, NC) Author: N.C. Board of Elections | Section: Local | 743 Words OpenURL Link

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## Fort Liberty soldiers to assist with hurricane relief efforts

October 16, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Rachael Riley; Fayetteville Observer | Section: News | 442 Words Page: F1 OpenURL Link

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A dual-status commander is an officer who is allowed by law to command active duty and National Guard troops

and serve in federal and state roles simultaneously, he said.

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

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