

Voting to continue in NC as storm recovery begins

October 1, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Elyse Apel The Center Square | Section: State | 443 Words OpenURL Link

With a little more than a month until Election Day, the N.C. State Board of Elections held an emergency meeting Monday afternoon to decide how to ensure voting will continue after devastating damage from Hurricane Helene in the western part of the state.

In the preliminary meeting, which the board said would be one of many needed in the coming weeks, the board voted unanimously to allow counties affected by the disaster to delay absentee voting board meetings.

Asheville, the most-populous city in western North Carolina at nearly 100,000, and the surrounding mountain towns in the area continue to be largely stranded from the rest of the nation as bridges, roads and highways were rendered impassable. As the meeting commenced at 4 p.m., DriveNC.org reported 432 road closures statewide because of Helene.

The counties allowed to delay the meetings include all those under federal disaster declarations. Many are without power, cell service or water.

"We have been able to reach out to the affected counties, and we know that 14 of the 22 counties that we are in contact with are indicating that they are closed at this time today, and we anticipate several more days of closure," said Karen Brinson Bell, executive director of the state elections board.

Helene, a Category 4 hurricane when it hit Florida on Thursday night, is forecast to leave behind more than \$100 billon in damage and economic loss across multiple states.

"This is a difficult situation for most of our state," said state elections board Chairman Alan Hirsch.

The absentee voting board meetings were meant to be held every Tuesday, beginning on Oct. 1. In these meetings, county elections boards review absentee ballots to determine whether they are eligible for counting.

"What we're recommending is for the board, under its emergency authority, to provide flexibility for those county boards to continue to have those meetings, but to reschedule them as needed," said Paul Cox, general counsel for the state elections board.

Board members all voiced their support for the measure and expressed their concerns for the counties affected. And, even as western North Carolina rebuilds, the elections board promised that voting will go on.

"As we have said many times through other hurricanes, the pandemic and natural disasters, we do not stop an election, we figure out how to proceed," Bell said.

Early voting in the state is slated to begin Oct. 17 and runs through Nov. 2. Election Day is Nov. 5. In addition to the presidential contest, North Carolinians will decide on the state's next governor as well as congressional, legislative and local races.

Gov. Roy Cooper, a Nash County native completing his second term in office, is barrred from seeking a third consecutive term.

• Citation (aglc Style)

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Helene leaves mountain community like no-man's land, firefighter says

October 1, 2024 \mid Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC)

Author: Bobby Burns | Section: News | 536 Words

OpenURL Link

A former photographer for The Daily Reflector who is now a volunteer firefighter in western North Carolina said people need to know about the isolation and devastation brought by Hurricane Helene to rural mountain communities like his.

Will Stricklin moved to Bakersville in Mitchell County in northwest North Carolina in 2022 and joined the Mitchell County Volunteer Fire Department along with his wife about six months later. He has been on duty since the hurricane began pelting the region on Friday and was able to make his first calls out on Monday after an emergency cellular connection was established.

"Our 9-1-1 dispatch went down at 6 p.m. on Friday. The cells went out, too. We had no communications from Friday until today," said Stricklin, who also was able to send a few photos and video he shot during his department's early response in hopes of publicizing the damage. (He hopes to share more in the coming days.)

The small contingent of local first responders based in Bakersville — the Mitchell County seat and a town of 500 between Asheville and Boone — was cut off and worked to reach stranded neighbors with personal vehicles and chainsaws. Stricklin said microbursts from the storm snapped acres of pine trees and nearly 30 inches of rain swelled creeks into raging rivers.

The Iraq War combat veteran who covered news and sports and shot Scene Around party pics for the Reflector from 2011-17 compared the damage to scenes captured in images from World War I.

"It's like no-man's land where all the trees are snapped off at 10 to 15 feet high, where artillery burst above them. It's like that," said Stricklin, who turns 39 on Thursday. "It's like the craziest thing I've ever seen. I've done hurricane duty with the National Guard, I've been to war, and this is the craziest thing I've ever seen."

A dozen or so firefighters worked with sheriff's deputies and a handful of other first responders to check on the welfare of neighbors they knew were at risk since nobody could call for assistance. The firefighters cleared trees from roads so emergency crews could travel from one mountain community to another.

Many homes still remained inaccessible, however, and Monday was too early to guess about the extent of property damage and loss of life, Stricklin said.

State-coordinated search and rescue teams began the work of accounting for lives and damage on Monday when the first heavy vehicles arrived and a large helicopter dropped supplies in the middle of town, Stricklin said. People are missing but no deaths have been confirmed, he said.

Isolation caused tension and worry between Friday and Monday, he said.

"We didn't know what was coming, we had no idea," he said about the help they needed to rescue friends and neighbors, wishing it had been there sooner. When it came on Monday, "it just showed up."

He said he hopes sharing details and images from the disaster will focus state and federal authorities on the dire situation of a community that already struggles with poverty.

"There is help rolling in now, but this help's going to be needed for a long time," he said. "If there is any attention that can be brought, then let's get these people some long-term aid."

• Citation (aglc Style)

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Restaurant manager, local officials upbeat about recovery in tornado-damaged area

October 1, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC)

Author: Bill West | Section: Local | 1027 Words

OpenURL Link

The manager at K&W Cafeteria in the northwestern part of the city expressed optimism that neighboring businesses damaged by a tornado late last week are going to rebuild and reopen.

"I'm pretty sure that they will be," Clarence Furse III said in an interview Monday afternoon in front of K&W, which is off the North Wesleyan Boulevard corridor, an area that saw significant damage Friday afternoon when an EF-3 tornado that was associated with Hurricane Helene touched down.

The K&W was not one of the restaurants damaged by the stormy conditions.

But to the immediate north of the restaurant, a police officer was stationed in a cruiser close to the badly damaged Hing Ta Chinese restaurant building. Furse said that he believed the officer was monitoring the building to make sure no one ventured inside the damaged buildings and ended up injured.

Immediately north of Hing Ta and off North Wesleyan, the Alpha Automotive repair business was badly damaged. Immediately north of Alpha Automotive, the rear of the building of the North Wesleyan El Tapatio Mexican restaurant was damaged.

Behind El Tapatio in the Shoppes at Tiffany off Tiffany Boulevard, the building that served as the location of RespraCare home oxygen and medical equipment was obliterated.

And the overall scene was one with many damaged vehicles.

Furse on Monday afternoon made clear that, despite what happened to the buildings, he is confident that the immediate area is going to come back to life.

"In Rocky Mount, we're still standing," Furse said. "We're standing strong."

Tiffany Square Apartments, which is across Tiffany Boulevard from what was RespraCare, had some debris-related damage.

"But I do believe that they are going to come back as strong as well," Furse said of the residential complex.

Interim City Manager Peter Varney, in a phone interview Tuesday morning, said that the municipal infrastructure did not sustain a lot of damage and that it looks like most of the damage is to private properties.

"And I'm hoping and expecting that they have insurance coverage to cover the costs of repairs and replacements ... on their property," Varney said of the locations damaged by last week's storm.

Varney said that the city had a couple of outages in the municipal electrical system, with probably a thousand customers at the peak time without power, but for not more than two hours.

Varney said that mainly resulted from limbs on power lines that needed to be cleared, and he also noted that some debris had to be scraped out of the right of way of Tiffany Boulevard.

Nash County Emergency 911 Director Bryant Fisher has said that his team received a call from the Rocky Mount Fire Department at 1:39 p.m. Friday about the tornado.

Furse recalled in detail what happened that afternoon.

He said that he received a tornado warning via his cell phone and that he planned to leave K&W but decided to remain on site for a bit.

Furse said that he received a second warning via his cell phone and that he heard a loud popping sound, followed by a big booming sound and the loss of electricity.

Furse said that one of the other managers was telling customers and employees to come in the restrooms and that two employees saw the tornado go by.

Of the two employees' reactions to their sightings of the twister, Furse said, "They were scared — and they were crying."

He added that he heard screams when a loud roaring sound like that of a train was heard.

He said that he and a customer began praying and that, after maybe a couple of minutes, he went to the food serving line, saw a couple of employees on the floor and told them to come to the restrooms.

He said that after he walked to the door and went outside, he saw people running out of the rear of Hing Ta and that he told them to come to K&W.

Of his immediate reaction to the sight of the damage, Furse said he was amazed and thanked God.

"I know he put an angel blanket over this building for the tornado just to go around," Furse said. "I've never been through anything like that."

Furse said that he estimates the stormy conditions lasted maybe three to four minutes.

He said that maybe 15-20 people had been dining in K&W and that maybe seven to eight employees had been working in the cafeteria when the tornado touched down.

Nash County Commissioner Gwen Wilkins went on a tour of the damaged area Monday morning with County Emergency Management Director Trip Bunn.

Wilkins, in a phone interview Monday evening, said that she was subsequently invited to join state and other local and area officials on a city of Rocky Mount-led tour of the damaged area later in the afternoon.

"It was just devastating," Wilkins said. "Thank God we had no loss of life, but people's livelihoods are gone."

She noted that businesses in the damaged area are also down, meaning those employees are not working.

City Plans Examiner Luis Ramirez Jr. told officials and news reporters present for the city-led look at the damaged properties that the owner of the obliterated building and another building was supposed to meet with the insurer Tuesday.

After that meeting, the debris removal can begin, Ramirez said via a WRAL news video online.

"So, once the debris is removed and it's no longer unsafe, the vehicles will also be removed — and then we will go unit by unit with the property owner and the business owners to make sure there are not any other issues," Ramirez said.

Wilkins on Monday evening said that she believed Ramirez came across as very thorough and very knowledgeable.

Nash County Communications Director Jonathan Edwards said in email correspondence Monday afternoon that, as far as the county's emergency management team is aware, the only part of the county damaged by the tornado Friday afternoon was in the North Wesleyan and Tiffany boulevards area.

City Fire Chief Darvin Moore said Friday afternoon after the tornado that there were 15 injuries and that four of those people were seriously injured and were taken to UNC Health Nash.

According to information provided Monday afternoon by Nash County officials, all four of the hospital's patients who were injured as a result of the tornado had been treated and released.

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NC price gouging phone line is open

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NC price gouging phone line is open

Published 12:00 am Tuesday, October 1, 2024

By Staff Report

RALEIGH — Attorney General Josh Stein today announced that the North Carolina Department of Justice's Consumer Protection Division phone line is open for people to report price gouging or other Helene-related concerns.

A release from Stein's office is encouraging those who observe price gouging to contact our office at 1-877-5-NO-SCAM or www.ncdoj.gov/pricegouging. The Department of Justice reviews price gouging complaints closely and Stein will hold price gougers accountable for breaking the law.

"North Carolina's law against price gouging, or charging too much in times of a crisis, goes into effect when the governor or the legislature declares a state of emergency," the release said. "In some cases, businesses and industries that are heavily impacted by the incident causing the state of emergency have a reasonable need to increase prices in order to resupply, but they should disclose these increases so people can make informed purchasing decisions. Businesses cannot, however, unreasonably raise the price of goods or services to profit from a state of emergency."

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Gold Hill Founders Day: 'Probably one of the biggest festivals to date'

October 1, 2024 | Salisbury Post (NC) Author: Karen Kistler| Section: Local | 1289 Words OpenURL Link

Gold Hill Founders Day: 'Probably one of the biggest festivals to date'

Published 12:10 am Tuesday, October 1, 2024

By Karen Kistler

1 of 13

GOLD HILL — A large crowd gathered on Sept. 28 for Gold Hill's Founders Day, which featured fun for the entire family to enjoy.

This was the 200th anniversary celebration of the first gold discovery at Gold Hill, which was in 1824, and therefore, the entire year of events have been to commemorate this, said Vivian Hopkins, vice-president of Historic Gold Hill and Mines Foundation, Inc. They began organizing events to celebrate the town's history in 1989, she added.

Serving as host for the day was The Historic Gold Hill and Mines Foundation and sponsors were Carolina Stalite, Compass Woodworks Company, Donny's Western Store, Fisher-Greene Walker-Hill Insurance, Hammill Construction, Rowan Tourism Development Authority, Shulenburger Surveying Company and Vulcan Materials Company.

During the kickoff, Hopkins pointed out how beautiful the day was for this milestone event, but expressed concern for those who have been affected by Hurricane Helene. Some of the vendors that were scheduled to attend were from the mountain counties of North Carolina and were therefore unable to be there.

"We keep our prayers going for everybody in the face of this storm and what it brought," Hopkins said.

The event was opened with prayer by Rob Kepley, who likewise remembered those whose lives have been impacted by the hurricane and who are suffering.

"There's a lot of people today that don't even have a community to live in," he said, stressing "how blessed we are."

Gold Hill Mines Historic Park and several surrounding locations were home to the Founders Day activities. There were 116 vendors in the park selling a wide variety of handmade goods ranging from jewelry and wreaths to candles, honey and more.

Hopkins said to commemorate this 200th celebration she had designed a gold coin, which along with T-shirts made for the occasion, were both being sold at the event.

Members of Pack 324 were on hand selling meat sticks to raise money for various scouting needs such as trips, uniforms and badges, said Sawyer Davis, who along with Roman Lee Lozano were manning the booth. Lozano said the money would go for "anything we do in scouts."

Davis also pointed out an upcoming tractor pull, scheduled for Oct. 19 in Gold Hill, that would also help with scouting expenses.

Ginia Gilmore with Bead Happy returned this year selling her handmade jewelry.

Gilmore said she wanted to come back because she "loved interacting with different customers and just seeing what different things they like to wear. This is fun for me and I want to make other people happy by making them stuff."

Dee Connor and Marty Martin had neighboring booths selling wreaths, bows, macrame, wooden card holders and wood-burned items. They both shared how much they enjoyed this event.

Connor said this was her second time to be there and she enjoyed "all the excitement of everyone here making their wares and showing them off. It's great."

Echoing that she loved the excitement of the day, Martin said, "everyone's happy."

Martin said she had been making these items for 15 years and Connor began during COVID.

In addition to craft vendors, eight to 10 food vendors, along with the Gold Hill Fire Department, provided an assortment of food for purchase.

The celebration also offered attendees the opportunity to watch demonstrations and learn some history at some exhibits that were set up near the park.

Todd Coleman with Banshee Metal Works, who is a full time blacksmith and metal fabricator from Statesville, conducted some blacksmith demonstrations of some simple things that are made in a blacksmith shop.

Coleman said he learned the trade from the late Phillip Gaddy, who taught at UNC-Charlotte in their school of architecture. The two became best friends, he said, and Gaddy "spent three years teaching me blacksmithing before he passed away and I carried on the tradition, and started doing it full time about six years after he passed."

When asked what he makes, he said they do architectural items, cooking set up, gates, rails and added that "if it's made of metal, we can usually make it."

Others on site included hit-and-miss engines who had multiple engines on display and Jay Culp who shared information about some of his prize rocks of the Gold Hill area.

One of these was his pyrite and limonite cubes, which, he said, are formed naturally, and have the common name of Indian money.

"When they started finding them here in America, they thought the Indians had sat down and carved them out into these little cubes as money. But it is actually a naturally occurring mineral."

Culp said that in addition to gold being found in the area, they have also had copper ore, silver and galena.

"Gold Hill is really a geologic wonder," he said.

Brian and Tina Murphy were among those listening to him speak and said this was their first time to come for Founders Day. They had been to the park for other events, and learned this was taking place and decided to come.

They enjoy the history of everything in the town. "It's just amazing," Tina said.

Another big draw to the event was the parade, which Tina Peterson of Concord said was her favorite.

The crowd lined both sides of the road to watch the law enforcement vehicles, fire trucks, classic cars, horses and others go by and the children were excited as they were treated to candy from those passing by.

Trish Smith stood waiting for the parade noting that she was there to support her husband who is a sheriff's deputy

and was in the parade.

Spending time with family and friends brought others out for the day. That was the case with Brenda Taylor who said she was looking forward to seeing some people she knows, plus she was glad her daughter was able to come with her.

Marisa Snider said they returned this year and that family time was also what brought them out as members came from Mt. Pleasant, Albemarle and Richfield to enjoy the day. Pointing to a little one in their group, Lisa Chapman said it was "mainly for him."

Jessica Barringer and son Fox were watching the parade and she said they come every year and that they "just love Gold Hill."

Music, hosted by Montgomery General Store, was available throughout the day at the amphitheater beginning at 11 a.m. Jim Burris, coordinator of the Grass Strings Bluegrass Band, served as emcee.

Groups performing included Danny and Eva Casstevens, The Blue Ridge Mtn. Heirs, The Dusty River Band and Catawba Bluegrass Band.

The Edenfield Family performed at a second venue, the Methodist Church, which was also hosted by the general store.

Prior to the first musical performance, Regina Poplin introduced the winners of the Little Miss and Mister Gold Hill pageant. This event, by Elite American Miss, was held the previous evening, Sept. 27, at the amphitheater.

Poplin is CEO and founder of Elite American Miss, and Graci Hudson serves as Elite American's COO.

Winners for the pageant were Little Miss Gold Hill, Olivia Glisson; Little Mister Gold Hill, Eli Parsons; Miss Gold Hill, Lilah Adams; and Mister Gold Hill, Owen Nail.

Three national queens were there for the event and were introduced during the kickoff and also rode in the parade. These were Lilly Wells, Elite American Preteen; Zoei Anderson, Elite American Teen; and Kelly Lowthian, Elite American Ms.

An additional queen who made an appearance in the parade was Reestyn Poplin, who is the regional winner of Royalty USA. She is the Southeast Junior Preteen and will be competing in November for the national title.

"This was a great day," said Hopkins, "well attended and probably one of the biggest festivals we've had to date and a record number of vendors, and my hat's off to all of our events' team members who helped make this possible."

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Praying for our brothers, sisters in WNC

October 1, 2024 | Sampson Independent, The (Clinton, NC) Section: editorial news-main opinion | 587 Words OpenURL Link

Don't take things for granted.

We hear it often, listen to it occassionally and, from time to time, actually put real action behind the admonition.

But after the devastation our neighbors to the West are experiencing in the wake of Hurricane Helene, we all should sit up and take real notice.

A week ago, people were going about their day-to-day business — vacationers were enjoying warm days meandering little mountain villages like Chimney Rock, Lake Lure, Montreat, Black Mountain, Spruce Pine and Marshall, or enjoying hamburgers on the patio of restaurants in places like Biltmore Village or Antler Hill on the grounds of the Biltmore Estate. Residents were cooking and cleaning, opening and closing businesses, sorting mail, talking to neighbors on the phone and simply doing life as they've always know it.

And then the winds came and the river raged, and life as they had known it stopped.

Most of those small towns are wiped away today, with only remnants of buildings and roads left clinging to what little ground hasn't been swallowed up by the river or been trounced by fallen trees.

It is devastation like most of us have never witnessed, and it is a reminder to cherish what we have, to see life through a brighter lens and to cherish every memory, every moment as if it could be the last one.

The Bible is clear that we are not promised tomorrow or, for that matter, the next breath, but it's just as clear that in the Bible Jesus provides us the comfort of knowing that even in the darkest of times, joy comes in the morning and peace can be found.

From John 16:33, Jesus talking to his disciples: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

For those struggling in western North Carolina — many of them trapped on mountainsides or in houses toppled from their foundation — the trouble is very palpable, the danger real, but the peace is there in the form of help coming in all directions.

Here in Sampson, a plethora of drives are already under way to collect bottled water, non-perishable items, cleaning supplies and other necessities that thousands upon thousands of folks are going to need, and not just today or this week ... for weeks and months to come.

Prayer vigils are being set up and outreach from sources across our state and beyond — the Eastern Baptist Association, NC Baptist Men, the National Guard, the Troopers Association, Samaritan's Purse — is being extended.

Our communities, like so many across North Carolina and beyond, are becoming the hands and feet of Jesus to a hurting area in need of supplies, our love and most especially our prayers.

If you are reading this editorial, we urge you to stop what you are doing and lift a prayer right now — first a prayer of help, healing and comfort to our western North Carolina brothers and sisters, then a prayer of restoration to those areas so greatly devastated and finally a prayer of thanks for the many things we each have and too often take for granted.

All it takes is looking at one photograph of the destruction to realize what happened in western North Carolina could have happened here.

We have much in which to be thankful, and we owe it to those suffering so much right now to show that thanks and, in turn, do what we can to help those less fortunate today than we are.

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Local groups work to provide relief for Western NC hurricane victims

October 1, 2024 | Sanford Herald, The (NC) Author: THE SANFORD HERALD| Section: Archives | 528 Words OpenURL Link

Several organizations in Lee, Chatham and Harnett counties are working to help the North Carolina victims from Hurricane Helene.

The Sanford Tourism Development Authority is coordinating hurricane relief efforts across Lee County in coordination with regional tourism and visitor's bureaus.

In Chatham County, Chatham Cares, a disaster relief ministry out of Community Baptist Church in Siler City, is stepping up to assist those in need. Partnering with the Chatham County Sheriff's Office and local businesses, Chatham Cares is collecting essential supplies for the affected communities

In Sanford on Monday, people began dropping off items to help. For those who want to help, items can be dropped off at the Visit Sanford Welcome Center at 229 Carthage St., along with five other drop-off sites across the county.

These efforts are also in partnership with Pinehurst CVB, Downtown Sanford, Inc., Sanford Area Growth Alliance, Carolina Commercial Contractors and the drop off partners listed below.

Drop Off Locations:

Visit Sanford Welcome Center — 229 Carthage St. — M-F 8 a.m. — 5 p.m. Sat 10 a.m. — 2 p.m.

First Baptist Church — 202 Summit Dr., 8 a.m. — 11 a.m. daily

Deep River Sporting Clays and Shooting School — 284 Cletus Hall Road, seven days a week during business hours.

Town of Broadway Town Hall — 130 N Main St., M-F 8 a.m. — 5 p.m.

Wilkinson Chevrolet, Cadillac, Buick, GMC M-F 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Sat. 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. starting Oct. 1. At the dealership, 3335 NC 87.

CCCC — Marchant Hall — 1105 Kelly Drive, M-F 8 a.m. — 3 p.m.

Sanford Municipal Center — Oct. 1, during the National Night Out event — Fill the fire truck.

Needed items include:

Bottled water

Gallons of water

Sports drink powdered packets

Baby wipes

Diapers—children and adults

Baby formula

Bug spray
Sunscreen
Plastic utensils
Manual can openers
Trash bags
Non- perishable foods
Cleaning supplies
Plastic sheeting/tarps
Toothbrushes
Toothpaste
Toiletries/sanitation items
Pet food—dog and cats
Hand sanitizer and wipes
Heavy duty work gloves
Socks all sizes unopened
The Visit Sanford Welcome Center cannot accept monetary donations; however, Visit NC recommends making relief donations to the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund. For more information, call 919-718-4659.
In Chatham County, donation drop-off locations include:
Chatham County Sheriff's Office: 295 West St., Pittsboro: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.
Piggly Wiggly of Siler City: Sunday-Friday, during store hours
Walmart Parking Lot: (Siler City): Monday-Friday, 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
Chatham Cares is also accepting financial donations to help with relief efforts. For more information or to donate, visit www.chathamcares.org or call 919-770-4736.
"As a community, we understand the importance of coming together in times of crisis," Chatham County Sheriff Mike Roberson said. "We are grateful to partner with Chatham Cares in bringing essential supplies to our western North Carolina neighbors in need."

In Harnett County, Harnett County Agriculture Center is accepting donations to provide essential support to

individuals and families affected by the storm. Harnett County Agriculture Center, located at 126 Alexander Drive,

Lillington, will accept donations until Oct. 4.

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Neighbors pitch in after storm damage - NC, Tenn. towns hit hard by Hurricane Helene

October 1, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Chris Kenning; USA TODAY | Section: News | 976 Words Page: A8 OpenURL Link

"They're learning about life without the internet. My son got to go out and learn about helping the neighbors. He's like, 'Where are we going?' We're going to check on the neighbors. That's what we do. These are good lessons."

James Waters

Red Hill, N.C., resident

RED HILL – James Waters watched Helene's torrential rains and fierce winds decimate his farm in the hilly slopes of Appalachian North Carolina, snapping trees, ripping out fences and causing a landslide.

No one had cell service or power. People couldn't find out if their relatives were alive or dead. Waters knew he had a huge recovery ahead himself. But his family had survived. So, like others in the area, he first grabbed his chainsaw to help clear roads and check on neighbors.

On Sunday afternoon, it led him to pull his muddy white Chevy pickup – an 8,000-watt generator in the back – up to a darkened general store in Red Hill, a tiny mountain community set along a road between steep hillsides, 15 miles from the Tennessee border before Helene closed the road.

The store, run by Kacie Smith, 28, and her father, is a community hub. Outside, two soda machines sat near an old diesel pump topped with a sign advertising live bait.

Inside, residents generally come for pickled eggs, aspirin, chewing tobacco, batteries, lottery tickets, snacks and community news – at least until the loss of power.

Since the storm, they'd lost upwards of \$6,000 worth of stock, the ceiling was sagging from water and the gas pumps weren't functioning. After arriving, Waters pointed a flashlight at a fuse box to jury-rig the generator's connection. Smith said such help is just how things are done.

Smith noted that much of the tree removal from roadways in her area by Sunday was completed by local residents, who did not wait for overwhelmed state crews. "It's Red Hill – it's a pretty tight community," she said.

The recovery would likely be long and painful for the region, she warned: "It's been just mass destruction around here."

Searching in anguish, fearing the worst in storm's wake

Across western North Carolina and parts of eastern Tennessee, Helene's destruction continued to emerge on Sunday, having washed away bridges, closed roads, destroyed buildings and cut off power. At least 90 people have died across multiple states since the record-breaking storm hit the U.S. last week.

Southwest of Red Hill, in the North Carolina town of Burnsville, more than 100 people stood in line at a grocery store to purchase food. At another location, people clustered around an emergency relief Wi-Fi site. The roads were choked with utility trucks and emergency vehicles.

At a church shelter run by the Red Cross in Greeneville, Tennessee, just over the state line, volunteers made

pancakes early Sunday for a handful of people still sleeping on cots after being forced from their homes.

Many who were there on the previous night had found housing with friends or hotels, Pat Barraclough, a volunteer, said.

In Erwin, Tennessee, a town of about 6,000, people from the region impacted by the storm streamed into a local high school serving as a shelter to get hot food, bottled water and clothing. Some were still searching in anguish for missing relatives, fearing they were swept away in the floods. Others, having lost access to homes or seen businesses damaged, were grappling with next steps.

Some there had arrived from North Carolina, weaving through treacherous mountainous back roads littered with electric wires and downed trees and avoiding roads cut off by washed-out bridges. Some bought fuel for generators and returned home.

Smith had made a trip to Tennessee, too, where phone service was still operable.

Back in Red Hill on Sunday, she talked to a steady stream of people pulling up to ask for directions as one's phones or maps worked.

"How is the road down to the bridge? Can I get my car to it?" one woman asked. "Can I get over it?"

"They were working on it. You might be able to get through today," Smith replied.

One resident handed a slip of paper, asking Smith to make a call the next time she went to a place with cell service. It was a note with a phone number and the name of his neighbor's family. "He is OK, but we have no power, cell or internet," it read.

Smith said most of her neighbors made it, too. And she has faith they'll be OK, even without power for now.

"Everybody around here's in the same boat. But they'll survive," Smith affirmed. "They've got their grill, their generators."

Waters isn't sure that insurance will cover his losses to his farm, which include cattle and a sawmill. He knows it's a long road. At least his Scottish Highland cows survived, he said.

But he sees a silver lining, too, watching some people who rarely speak suddenly thrust into helping each other. That's heartening in a time of political division, he said.

And that silver lining extends to his kids, too.

"They're learning about life without the internet. My son got to go out and learn about helping the neighbors," Waters recalled. "He's like, 'Where are we going?' We're going to check on the neighbors. That's what we do. These are good lessons."

As Sunday afternoon light waned, Waters – helped by friends who tried to sort out why the generator wasn't working – finally saw the lights flicker back on as the generator roared. The lottery sign lit up. The freezer came back on.

The gas pumps weren't working, but they kept at it.

"They're learning about life without the internet. My son got to go out and learn about helping the neighbors. He's like, 'Where are we going?' We're going to check on the neighbors. That's what we do. These are good lessons."

James Waters

Red Hill, N.C., resident

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Chris Kenning, USA TODAY, 'Neighbors pitch in after storm damage - NC, Tenn. towns hit hard by Hurricane Helene', *Star, The* (online), 1 Oct 2024 A8 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BEF248866D2828>



hurricane helene - Helping neighbors - Community and church come together to help feed community

October 1, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Rebecca Sitzes; Shelby Star | USA TODAY NETWORK Section: News | 614 Words

OpenURL Link

In the midst of widespread power outages, the struggle to find gas and groceries, and the ongoing task of cleaning up debris and fallen trees, there were bright lights shining all around Cleveland County in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Sunday morning, volunteers pulled up in pickup trucks and unloaded grills in the parking lot of Central United Methodist Church off of Marion Street while inside the building, a crew prepared trays of meat and sides for the grill. Evelyn Ribadeneyra worked with a headlamp in the dim interior, directing people where to go, handing out take-out trays and helping carry chicken, hot dog and pork out to the waiting cooks.

The tantalizing aroma of grilling food soon wafted over the parking lot and volunteers, including Mayor Stan Anthony, set up a table under a tent.

By the end of the afternoon, the church had served around 325 people in the community meals for free.

Ribadeneyra said on Friday she was talking with Ann Anthony, another volunteer at the church, about what to do with all the food in the freezers.

"The idea of meat thawing and going to waste is weighing heavy," she said. "We had the idea to gather grills and get cooking and giving out what we could cook."

Jamie Swofford, chef with Old North Farm, prepared sides while another chef from Asheville, Luis Martinez, worked the grill.

Martinez, who said he volunteers to help feed people with World Central Kitchen, said he had just helped cook for and feed around 3,000 people in West Asheville the day before and was waiting to find out where World Central Kitchen would send him next. While he was waiting, he said Swofford, who is a good friend of his, reached out to him about helping out in Cleveland County and he was immediately on board. Martinez said he also has a personal connection to Shelby, because it is where his mother in law lives.

"This is awesome," he said. "We don't need government, we just need people helping each other."

Mark Greene, with First Baptist Church, stopped by and unloaded bread, milk and seasonings

Central United Methodist, which runs Open Table, provides free meals to the community each Saturday, but for the first time in many years, they missed their regular Saturday meal.

Ribadeneyra said they typically feed around 200 people each week, and offer them to-go style in the parking lot of the church.

She estimated they had around 100 pounds of meat, which they cooked and prepared Sunday.

By 12:30, the food was ready to be served and a line of people had already gathered to pick up meals.

David Lee, pastor of Central United Methodist, said he had just planned to start a sermon series that day called

"love your neighbor."

That sermon was put into action.

"We want to be able to love on our neighbor and help in any way we can," he said.

Other churches and people came together to prepare and share meals, clean up and lend helping hands.

The New E Church on Eaves Road in Shelby served hotdog plates and Kings City Church on York Road in Kings Mountain served sandwiches and chips and gave out grocery bags with non-perishables Sunday after church.

And all around the county, people shared stories of neighbors helping neighbors.

Drew Mangione said his neighbors on Parkwood banded together with chainsaws and worked on cutting up trees blocking the roads. Other people said their neighbors did the same.

Carolina Workers' Collective on Facebook posted various resources and relief efforts underway in the county and beyond.

More inside

Neighbors pitch in after storm damage. 8A

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Rebecca Sitzes, Shelby Star | USA TODAY NETWORK, 'hurricane helene - Helping neighbors - Community and church come together to help feed community', *Star, The* (online), 1 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BEF24881C6AA88>



Asheville family may have lost everything in Helene

October 1, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Jacob Biba; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 506 Words Page: A9 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE - Kuroe Gray's first step Friday morning was straight into ankle-deep water.

The high school freshman woke up around 8 a.m. to the sound of her father yelling for her to get dressed because their home was flooding. Kuroe, 14, didn't even have time to grab a pair of shoes before boarding a rescue boat, she told the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA TODAY Network.

By the time she evacuated, water was halfway up the family's front door.

Last week, Western North Carolina saw a "predecessor" rainfall event that brought up to 8 inches in many areas. And then on Thursday and Friday, the hurricane-turned-tropical-storm Helene delivered even more rain to the already swollen French Broad and Swannanoa rivers. The storm also brought high winds that knocked down trees and electrical lines across Buncombe County, leaving more than 100,000 Duke Energy customers without power that morning.

On Friday, the French Broad River in Asheville's River Arts District covered Lyman Street, flooding the greenway and partially submerging surrounding buildings. That morning, area residents stood on the bridge that spans the river, watching debris float away atop the rushing water.

At River Ridge Apartments in East Asheville, where Kuroe lives with her father, David Gray, 58, and next door to her grandmother, Sharon Gray, 83, the Swannanoa River forced the family members from their homes.

Sharon Gray told the Citizen Times the water that flooded her apartment washed away her wheelchair and walker. When the rescue crew moved her, it was so painful she thought she might die.

"I haven't walked for over a year," she said. "So, there I was, walking, actually walking so that I could get to the boat."

Her son, David, said the family lost almost everything. All he could save was the family guinea pig, Brown, his mother's cat, Ellie, and medications.

"This morning, when the water was coming up closer and closer, I was like, this looks worse than I thought," he said.

"And before you know it, I guess they opened up the dam and water started coming in."

In the early morning hours on Friday, Buncombe County ordered a mandatory evacuation from the North Fork Reservoir, where water breached the spillway, to Biltmore Village along the Swannanoa River.

Crews working in the area had conducted more than 40 swift-water rescues, according to county spokesperson Lillian Govus. Additional teams from Illinois, New Jersey and other locations in North Carolina were there to support the effort, she said.

An 82-person urban search-and-rescue team from the Federal Emergency Management Agency was also assisting with rescue efforts, the city of Asheville said in a news release. The National Guard was also providing support.

Evacuated from River Ridge, the Gray family was at Harrah's Cherokee Center, where the city set up an emergency shelter in the early morning hours.

Jacob Biba is the county watchdog reporter at the Asheville Citizen Times.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Jacob Biba, Asheville Citizen Times, 'Asheville family may have lost everything in Helene', *Star, The* (online), 1 Oct 2024 A9 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BEF2487332B080



Pest prevention crucial in aftermath of major storms

October 1, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Jim Waymer; Florida Today | Section: News | 505 Words Page: A9 OpenURL Link

A hurricane is bad enough, but who wants uninvited pests after that?

Power goes out. Floodwaters pool up.

And winds bust openings in your home for countless unwanted creepy crawly visitors. Enter the "rafting" fire ants, wily rodents and legions of other urban pests that can add stinging and/or biting insults to whatever injury a storm inflicts.

University of Florida researchers have put out some tips for how home and business owners can reduce the threat of urban pests as the floodwaters clear and we pick up whatever pieces Hurricane Helene leaves behind.

"The summer months of May through November are prime time for both storm activity and pests in Florida," said Johnalyn Gordon, a postdoctoral associate in urban entomology at the University of Florida-Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center, in a release.

Here are Gordon's go-to insights on what to look out for and how to manage pests after Helene or any tropical storm:

Flooding makes breeding grounds for mosquitoes: Several species of mosquitoes in Florida will breed in small containers of very small volumes of standing water: This includes species that spread dengue, chikungunya and Zika viruses. Tip: Before the storm, survey your property for anything that might collect rain (especially spare tires, plant pots and saucers, birdbaths and garbage cans). Dumping water out from such containers can interrupt mosquitoes' life cycle and stop them from breeding.

Flooding makes pests move: Flooding makes insects and vertebrate pests seek higher, drier ground. That means more roaches, spiders and rodents crawl indoors. Red imported fire ants will form floating "rafts." They live in colonies of tens of thousands of ants, nesting in the ground. They form flood "rafts" by interlocking their bodies and floating until they find higher ground. People encounter these ant rafts – and their nasty stings – while cleaning up flooded areas or when rafts come in contact with a structure. Rodents and other vertebrate pests also get displaced by flooding, making it more likely they'll venture indoors.

Moisture control is key: Flood-induced moisture problems in a structure also can cause future pest problems, Gordon said. Termites will readily feed on water-damaged wood. If termites are discovered, reach out to a professional pest control company as soon as possible.

Trash buildup can be a fly magnet: Post-storm trash and spoiled food buildup due to power outages can lure several different fly species, including houseflies, phorid flies and fruit flies. Tip: Put spoiled food and other organic waste in a bag and secure it tightly. Put it in a trash container with a tightly fitting lid until it can be picked up.

Prevention is the key: Post-storm pest prevention and quick action following the storm is key, Gordon said. "It's important that great care is taken if pesticides are applied and that all label directions are followed, particularly as they relate to applications near water or to rain-soaked areas," Gordon said.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Jim Waymer, Florida Today, 'Pest prevention crucial in aftermath of major storms', *Star, The* (online), 1 Oct 2024 A9 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BEF248704BD888



Where residents can find help in Cleveland County

October 1, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Rebecca Sitzes; Shelby Star | USA TODAY NETWORK Section: News| 230 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

As Cleveland County continues to feel the effects of Hurricane Helene and residents struggle to find resources, the county has established a phone bank to help provide a single source of information to residents.

County government announced in a news release Sunday that the phone bank would be open immediately.

"As we continue to experience extended power outages throughout our community, the resource needs of our community are changing," the release said. "Cleveland County government will be opening a citizens' phone bank to serve as a single source of information for our citizens."

The release said the phone bank will provide information on where to find gas, groceries, medication and other

important resources and can be reached at 980-484-4636 (INFO).

People can call from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday until power has been restored to much of the county.

For those needing shelter, the county opened an emergency shelter at the Cleveland County Health Department, located at 200 S. Post Rd. in Shelby, which will be open as long as people need shelter and will largely be driven by the power outages.

Meals will be provided to residents utilizing the shelter; however, citizens are encouraged to bring nonperishable snacks for personal use. Please bring all medication, a change of clothes, activities or games for children, diapers, formula for infants, as well as pillows and extra blankets. Each cot will be provided with one wool blanket.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Rebecca Sitzes, Shelby Star | USA TODAY NETWORK, 'Where residents can find help in Cleveland County', *Star, The* (online), 1 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BEF2487A103A30



'Profit over people is unacceptable': Port of Wilmington's cargo shuts down as workers strike

October 1, 2024 | StarNews (Wilmington, NC) Author: Madison Lipe, Wilmington StarNews | Section: News | 858 Words OpenURL Link

"Profit over people is unacceptable, support ILA workers," read multiple signs Tuesday at the Port of Wilmington as longshoremen and other workers gathered to strike.

The Master Contract between the International Longshoreman's Association and the United States Maritime Alliance expired, and both parties have not reached a new agreement. Longshoremen across the East Coast and Gulf Coast are fighting for higher pay and fair treatment and at Wilmington's port the situation is no different.

Just days after Helene left widespread devastation in western North Carolina, U.S. Rep. David Rouzer, whose district includes the Port of Wilmington, posted on X that the strike could cripple response and recovery efforts, as well as have disastrous effects on the local economy.

According to USA TODAY, each day of the strikes across the East and Gulf coasts could cost the U.S. economy up to \$5 billion as imports and exports are blocked, some economists estimated.

The strike began Tuesday, and the Port of Wilmington has developed a contingency plan to recognize the strike. The port's South Container Gate will remain closed for pickup or delivery of cargo until an agreement is reached, according to North Carolina Ports.

The North Carolina Ports is not a party to the agreement and therefore is not a participant in the negotiations.

"North Carolina Ports is hopeful that both parties will return to the negotiating table and reach an agreement that allows all the ports of the East and Gulf Coast to resume operations," the statement said.

More: How many ships pass through the Port of Wilmington? | MyReporter

More: As other Southeast ports get deeper, what's the status of Wilmington's expansion project?

According to USA TODAY, Wilmington is just one of the 36 ports that has shut down as 45,000 union workers walked off the job.

The state-run Port of Wilmington is the largest and busiest of the two deepwater ports in North Carolina, the other being in Morehead City. Container traffic makes up a big chunk of the local port's business, with the U.S. Department of Transportation ranking Wilmington the 21st busiest container port in the country.

Sandwiched between the much bigger ports of Norfolk, Virginia, to the north and Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia, to the south, officials with the Wilmington port have aggressively marketed the local port as offering a faster, congestion-free alternative to its larger competitors.

The 284-acre port also has invested significant sums to improve its landside infrastructure to keep up with its neighboring ports and the increased size of the container ships now plying the East Coast. That includes improved berthing areas, additional intermodal rail access to get trucks off local roads and bridges, including the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge, and a new gate complex to make accessing the port faster and easier. According to an economic impact study by the N.C. Department of Transportation and N.C. State University, port activities statewide contribute \$660 million annually in state and local tax revenues and help support more than 88,200 jobs.

Imports will be affected providing less product, cars, auto and machinery parts, clothing, pharmaceuticals, wine

and spirits, holiday goods like toys and seafood, according to USA TODAY. The shutdowns come just days after hurricane Helene caused widespread destruction to Western North Carolina.

Charles Seaton, president of the Local 1766 clerical union for the port, said he wishes the contract would be settled because he knows the impacts that the shutdowns will have.

"I hate that it's impacting the country, but at the end of the day, this is a fight for American jobs," Seaton said.

During the pandemic, Seaton said the workers at the port "never missed a lick. ... We went to work every day, every night, 24/7," and that he's ready for everyone to be compensated the way they deserve.

Seaton, who has been working for the port for over 50 years, was at the port during the last strike in 1977. He said it lasted 103 days over 80 cents. But he said the economy now isn't like it was back then as it's much more dependent upon containerization. Seaton said America works on a one-week or two-week inventory, so this is something that needs to be figured out soon.

He said the port authority has been helpful and has been working to recognize the strike, providing portable bathrooms and closing the container gate, but that he hopes that the contract will be sorted out and the hard work of his colleagues will be recognized.

One longshoreman said that during the pandemic, he and his coworkers were in harm's way handling imports from across the world, but their pay still wasn't raised. He said that needs to change. He also said that prices keep increasing to ship containers, but even though they are working to unload, they haven't gotten the increase in pay.

According to CNBC, the ILA is seeking a 61.5% increase over six years. It also wants protections against automation.

"They (USMX) don't care about us," said ILA President Harold Daggett in an online post Monday. "They would love to see automation up and down the whole East and Gulf Coast, trust me when I tell you that if it was up to them, we would have no jobs."

StarNews reporter Gareth McGrath contributed to this story.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Madison Lipe, Wilmington StarNews, "Profit over people is unacceptable": Port of Wilmington's cargo shuts down as workers strike', *StarNews* (online), 1 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF1CE193B22510>



Town Tavern destroyed by Hurricane Helene flooding from Catawba River

October 1, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Sharon McBrayer smcbrayer@morganton.com| Section: Business | 575 Words OpenURL Link

Justin Davis summed the damage caused by Tropical Storm Helene to his Morganton restaurant in one word Monday afternoon: "Heartbreaking."

Davis is one of the owners of Town Tavern in the River Village shopping center on Sanford Drive in Morganton. He said flooding from the adjacent Catawba River rose about 5 feet into the restaurant.

"It's devastating. It's pretty sad to see," Davis said.

He said the damage to the restaurant is substantial.

"I guess they call it a hundred-year flood," Davis said. "I hope I never see nothing like it again in my lifetime."

He said he hopes to rebuild but the owners, like everyone else, are taking it day by day. He said the restaurant will have to be gutted and renovated from scratch.

"Build back bigger, better," Davis said of starting over.

The restaurant opened in its River Village location in March 2021, Davis said.

He said it was a beautiful restaurant that people seemed to enjoy. Other locations of Town Tavern are in Blowing Rock and Banner Elk. Even though those two towns suffered devastating destruction, the Town Taverns in those locations faired much better than the Morganton location, Davis said.

"We were real fortunate that all of our locations are good, but all around us is just so much destruction everywhere," Davis said. "Roads washed out, trees, roads, homes destroyed and flooding. It's just so much to process. All the office buildings in that strip (in Morganton) all washed out, all destroyed."

Lisa Rector, owner of Salon 337 in the same shopping center, didn't think the water would get above the greenway behind River Village.

But when she made it to the salon to check out the damage, the inside was ruined. Almost everything needs to be thrown out. Water made it all the way to the roof.

"I just imagined it would be just a little bit of flooding, maybe halfway up," Rector said. "I didn't realize it would go to the ceiling, to the gutters. It's just heartbreaking because we're a family, and I don't want everybody to be out of a job, so we're sticking together."

She was headed to check out a building the salon could rent moving forward while her friends and family cleaned out the building. She said other salons have already offered temporary spaces for their staff to work until the salon is back up and running.

"I don't want everybody out of a job, so we're sticking together," Rector said. "It's just devastating. We're going to rebuild and hang in there together. ... This is a salon that's going to come back again."

Her husband, Rob, said Lisa had asked if they should pack up some of the stuff and take it home to keep it safe from flooding.

"I said, 'It'll never get that high,'" Rob said. "But it fooled us all."

He worked for Rutherford Electric for more than 30 years, but he'd never seen flooding that bad.

Davis said he is thankful none of the Town Tavern employees were hurt, and said things can be replaced.

"It is sad for the staff," Davis said. "We have so many key employees. Great and wonderful employees."

He hopes there are some programs they can get in place for the restaurant's staff to help them out until the restaurant can rebuild.

"It's just going to take some time," Davis said. "But we look forward to getting back open and seeing all of our family and friends and people in the community come back in and pick up right where we left off.

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Sharon McBrayer smcbrayer@morganton.com, 'Town Tavern destroyed by Hurricane Helene flooding from Catawba River', Statesville Record & Landmark (online), 1 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF17E864F2B5B0>



Statesville National Night Out canceled due to Hurricane Helene aftermath

October 1, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Sarah Johnson | Section: Events | 64 Words OpenURL Link

The Statesville Police Department canceled its National Night Out event that would have been held on Thursday.

Statesville police said it chose to cancel the event "due to the conditions in Western N.C. resulting from the effects of Hurricane Helene and the deployment of our personnel to assist in the affected areas."

The Statesville Police Department is located at 330 South Tradd St. in Statesville.

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Sarah Johnson, 'Statesville National Night Out canceled due to Hurricane Helene aftermath', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 1 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF00B32022A388



How damage from Hurricane Helene could affect NC high school playoff schedule

October 1, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Langston Wertz Jr., The Charlotte Observer | Section: Football | 536 Words OpenURL Link

Eight years ago, the N.C. High School Athletic Association pushed back the start of its football playoffs due to Hurricane Matthew.

NCHSAA commissioner Que Tucker said that could be a possibility again this year after the devastation brought to the western part of the state by Hurricane Helene.

Tucker said any decisions about the playoffs would come from the NCHSAA Board of Directors, which she expects will meet via Zoom sometime later this week.

"With the devastation they have had," Tucker said Monday. "I'm not sure one week would do it. But that's a decision that has to be made by our board members. As a staff we want to huddle up and look at what we have found and see what we can come up with to present to the board, but we want to make sure our board members (from the regions most affected) can be on the Zoom with us because they have boots-on-the-ground knowledge, and we need to get their perspective."

Tucker said in her talks with coaches and athletic officials in the mountains that the damage is excessive and that schools in all four of the NCHSAA's classes have been affected.

So the association will not be able to delay one or two classifications in the playoffs, she said.

Tucker also doesn't expect that many football games, or any sports, will be played in that region this week. She noted she saw a photograph of the football field at Morganton's Freedom High School showing it almost completely submerged.

"Even if we thought one school could play, well, who would they be playing?" Tucker asked. "How can they get there? That's the crazy part. We talked to a coach at Mountain Heritage and he had been out with a chainsaw trying to help. He stopped long enough and found a spot with cell service and said it may be two months before they can get back to school; that they are using the school building to house the workers and everybody."

The NCHSAA playoffs are scheduled to begin in about two weeks, with girls' tennis (Oct. 14), volleyball (Oct. 19), girls' golf (Oct. 21) and cross-country (Oct. 26) up first.

Football playoffs are scheduled to begin Nov. 8.

"Until we can get a true assessment to when schools can return to play, and just be able to open up school, we can't make decisions at this point," Tucker said. "But I do know our board will be as far as equitable as when they were dealing with situations (brought on by past weather events) in eastern North Carolina."

Tucker said she is worried about how to get the playoffs going, knowing they are important so many schools and athletes and families. But seeing the images of the damage done, she said, is heartbreaking.

"It's a lot to think about," Tucker said. "Some people don't have drinking water. But you have to have hope, and hope brings about renewed excitement to push through. We know when we get to the other side, we'll play again, and we don't want to act like we don't have hope. But we have to be patient and try to keep it all in perspective as we try to do things that are in the best interest of everyone."

• Citation (aglc Style)

Langston Wertz Jr., The Charlotte Observer, 'How damage from Hurricane Helene could affect NC high school playoff schedule', Statesville Record & Landmark (online), 1 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF17E86D3808D8>



The latest on Henderson County after Helene

October 1, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Brandi D. Addison; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 532 Words Page: A2 OpenURL Link

Communities across Western North Carolina are in recovery after strong storms, heavy rain and severe flooding battered the state, leaving "biblical devastation," according to officials.

Tropical Storm Helene swept through the region Sept. 27, causing massive power outages, dam and reservoir breaches and countless downed trees. Widespread cell service disruptions and impassable roads left people cut off, disconnected or trapped in their homes.

Here is what you should know about Henderson County in the wake of Helene's devastation.

5 confirmed dead in Henderson County

Henderson County spokesman Mike Morgan confirmed that there have been five Tropical Storm Helene-related deaths in the county.

Duke Energy: Power expected back by Friday

As of 7:30 p.m. Sunday, almost all Duke Energy customers in Henderson County were without power, 69,195. In a statement, Duke Energy said a majority of customers are expected to have power returned no later than Friday evening. However, repair efforts are so widespread that very few areas have been assigned estimated times of restoration.

2 emergency shelters open in Henderson County

During a media briefing Sunday, Henderson County Manager John Mitchell encouraged residents to stay home if possible in order to clear roads for first responders. When traveling, avoid driving over downed power lines.

He also shared the following information:

Two emergency shelters are now open in the county: the Henderson County Athletics and Activity Center at 708 S. Grove Street and Edneyville Elementary School at 2875 Pace Road.

Limited water and supplies are available at Mills River Town Hall.

In an emergency call 911. For all other information or non-emergency needs, call 828-771-6670.

Henderson County Schools will be closed until further notice.

Supplies being airlifted to Western North Carolina

Gov. Roy Cooper announced that the NC National Guard is airlifting supplies, including food, water, and other essentials, to impacted counties. Crews are making progress in restoring power, cell service, and repairing roadways.

Cell service is still out in Western North Carolina: No set timeline for restoration

The effects of Hurricane Helene are still impacting the southeastern U.S., with widespread cell service outages in Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, days after the Category 4 storm made landfall in Florida's Big Bend region.

Major cellular providers — AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon — are actively working to restore service, though none have provided a specific timeline for full restoration.

AT&T: Significant service impacts remain due to historic flooding and extensive damage in these areas, making access and recovery efforts challenging. Restoration is ongoing, but progress is slow.

Verizon: Extensive damage has been reported, and repairs are expected to take considerable time, with no timeline for restoration.

T-Mobile: More than 60 additional portable generators have been deployed, and more than 100 sites were restored Saturday. A SatCOLT has been deployed to Hendersonville to support local public safety. With improved access to the western Carolinas, site assessments and restoration efforts will continue. There's no clear timeline on service will be restored.

Henderson County schools are closed

Henderson County Public Schools announced that it would be closed until further notice to "ensure the safety and well-being of our students and staff."

Once essential services are restored, the district will determine when schools can begin again.

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Cell service still out in WNC: AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile respond

October 1, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Brandi D. Addison; USA TODAY NETWORK| Section: News | 663 Words Page: A4 OpenURL Link

The effects of Hurricane Helene are still impacting the southeastern U.S., with widespread cell service outages in Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, days after the Category 4 storm made landfall in Florida's Big Bend region.

Major cellular providers — AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon — are actively working to restore service, though none have provided a specific timeline for full restoration.

Here's the latest progress and updates from each provider.

Weather alerts via text: Sign-up to get updates about current storms and weather events by location .

When will Verizon restore service?

Many cell sites in affected areas are running on backup power due to widespread power outages, depending on refueling operations.

Damaged or unpowered fiber cables that connect cell sites to the broader network are being repaired as quickly as possible, with alternate connections deployed to restore service.

Restoration is ongoing but progress is slow.

Here's the latest updates from Verizon:

North Florida: While much of the network withstood Hurricane Helene's impact, service disruptions persist, particularly due to flooding and commercial power loss near the Tampa coastline. Some areas between Tallahassee and Jacksonville are also experiencing outages.

Eastern Georgia: Population centers like Valdosta, Savannah, and Augusta are starting to recover. Limited service is becoming available to affected customers.

Upstate South Carolina and Western North Carolina: Significant service impacts remain due to historic flooding and extensive damage in these areas, making access and recovery efforts challenging. Restoration is ongoing, but progress is slow.

Eastern Tennessee: Service impacts have been reported in some areas, and restoration teams are actively working to restore connectivity.

Verizon will waive postpaid domestic call/text/data usage from Sept. 26 through Oct. 5.

When will AT&T restore service?

AT&T has set up a disaster response basecamp in Georgia to coordinate resources and support ongoing restoration efforts in the affected regions. Dispatch yards are also staged in multiple states to improve efficiency.

"So far, public safety has made more than 80 requests for emergency connectivity support across Florida, Georgia,

North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee, and we will continue to prioritize their response and recovery communications needs," a statement from the company reads.

Here are the latest updates, according to AT&T:

Florida: Network improvements are already visible as more crews are dispatched to restore service.

Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia: Restoration efforts are in progress, but no timeline for full recovery has been provided.

North Carolina and South Carolina: Extensive damage has been reported, and repairs are expected to take considerable time, with no timeline for restoration.

AT&T has announced it will waive talk, text, and data overage charges for AT&T Postpaid & Prepaid customers with billing addresses in 1,415 affected ZIP codes from Sept. 27 to Oct. 27. Charges for residential and business wireline orders placed through Oct. 27 will also be waived.

When will T-Mobile restore service?

There are currently more than 500 emergency crew members, field engineers and technicians deployed with T-Mobile, according to a statement from the company.

Here are the latest major updates:

Florida: The network is nearly fully restored in Tampa and operating as expected in Miami, Orlando and surrounding areas. Additional portable generators are being deployed in Jacksonville and Valdosta to restore the remaining sites affected by power outages.

Georgia: Efforts to deploy portable generators and microwave equipment continue, particularly in the Augusta area. Downed trees and heavy traffic are causing minor delays in recovery.

South Carolina and North Carolina: More than 60 additional portable generators have been deployed, and more than 100 sites were restored Saturday. A SatCOLT has been deployed to Hendersonville to support local public safety. With improved access to the western Carolinas, site assessments and restoration efforts will continue. There's no clear timeline on service will be restored.

Tennessee: Site access is limited due to unsafe conditions. Ongoing power outages and a third-party fiber cut are impacting service in Johnson City. We are working closely with our vendor and expect repairs to be completed later tonight.

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Recovering from Helene - In Henderson County, residents wait for water, food and power

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HENDERSONVILLE – Two teenaged brothers, Malachi and Malek Barber, stood shirtless in the middle of Butler Bridge Road in Henderson County Sept. 30, near what used to be the banks of the French Broad River.

Before Tropical Storm Helene brought torrential rains and wind to Western North Carolina, killing dozens in the region and leaving many without water and power, the French Broad snaked through the county's farmland.

Now, it covers it.

On Monday, Malachi, 14, and Malek, 16 were Facetiming their sister, Malaysia, 20, who was four hours away in Fayetteville where she's enrolled in college.

"It's crazy how much it flooded," Malachi told the Citizen Times.

But given the scene, his older brother's description seemed slightly more apt.

"This s--t is horrible," Malek said.

The storm cut a path of destruction stretching from Florida to the western mountains of North Carolina, pounding the region with heavy rainfall and flash floods. The storm caused some of the greatest damage in Western North Carolina, with rivers sweeping away houses and crumbling bridges, and high winds felling trees. There are also reports that 30 people died in Buncombe County, and another five died in Henderson County, though those numbers are likely to rise as the full scope of the tragedy becomes clearer.

Less than two miles away, cars were lining up along Asheville Highway waiting to reach Mills River Town Hall, where the county was setting up a water and food distribution point.

An hour before the site was set to open, Kaira Raynor, 26, stood next to her white Jeep Commander with her two young children, Galaxy, 5, and Serena, 2. The Mills River resident said she was waiting specifically for food, having nearly run out after grilling everything that had been in the family's freezer before Helene hit last week.

Raynor said she lost power early Friday morning, and water the next day.

"We had a can of baked beans on the grill last night," she said. "That's about all we've been doing for food."

Jacob Biba is the county watchdog reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times. Reach him at jbiba@citizentimes.com.

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Henderson County still devastated from flooding

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As Henderson County faces historic flooding that has left six dead — a number that is estimated to grow — the county and the city of Hendersonville working on opening new resources for residents that have been impacted by Tropical Storm Helene. In total, at least 41 deaths have been reported between Buncombe, Henderson and Macon counties.

Hendersonville City Manager John Connet said that the county's "hearts go out to everyone impacted" by the storm, as emergency services continue to complete rescues into the morning of Sept. 30.

With one of the highest rain totals in the region, 6 miles south of the city of Hendersonville received a total of 21.96 inches of rain following the impact of Tropical Storm Helene, according to National Weather Service Meteorologist Doug Outlaw. A mile south of Hendersonville, NWS measures indicate that 16.15 inches fell. The storm had been followed days of torrential rain and light downpours.

"Our first responders are actively completing rescue and recovery efforts. Please stay home to keep the roads clear for these efforts and as utility crews work to restore critical services," Connet said. Portions of Hendersonville are experiencing water outages and periods of low pressure due to damage, Connet said, noting that a boil water advisory is in affect for the city.

Two emergency are now open in the county: the Henderson County Athletics and Activity Center at 708 S. Grove Street and Edneyville Elementary School at 2875 Pace Road. Limited water and supplies are available at Mills River Town Hall.

In addition, the county is launching six resource hubs for water distribution and other supplies as available, Connet said. In a later email, Henderson County Public Information Officer Mike Morgan wrote that distribution starts at noon on Sept. 30, at Etowah Elementary Rugby Middle, East Henderson, North Henderson, Mills River Town Hall and Fletcher Town Hall. The aid will only be from those sites on Sept. 30.

The Henderson County Transfer Station will be open on Sept. 30 at 7 a.m. They will accept storm debris with normal fees, but cash, check or established accounts are accepted. A free debris dumping site will be available soon, Morgan wrote.

The storms have damaged most major roads in Western North Carolina, setting up the region for a devastating public health crisis where aid has taken now over three days to be fully received in the region. Morgan, in a Sept. 27 email, the day of the floods, called the damage the "worst he's ever seen."

In a statement, Duke Energy said a majority of customers are expected to have power returned no later than Friday evening. However, repair efforts are so widespread that very few areas have been assigned estimated times of restoration.

During a media briefing Sept. 29, Henderson County Manager John Mitchell encouraged residents to stay home if possible in order to clear roads for first responders. When traveling, avoid driving over downed power lines.

Hendersonville emergency operations center phone number

Connet said that individuals who want more information about resource connection, Hendersonville residents are

encouraged to call the emergency operations center phone number at 828-771-6670.

Will Hofmann is the Growth and Development Reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA Today Network. Got a tip? Email him at WHofmann@citizentimes.com. Consider supporting this type of journalism with a subscription to the Citizen Times.

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