

Despite false claims, no technology exists to create massive hurricanes, experts say

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Author: Mary Helen Moore; Staff Writer Section: News 706 Words

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You may have read the falsehoods spread on social media suggesting people, not nature, created Hurricane Helene.

Though people do have the means to encourage rainfall on a small scale, no technology exists that would allow anyone to create a hurricane, experts say.

That's because hurricanes require massive amounts of energy to form, explained Chip Konrad, a University of North Carolina professor whose research focuses on the science of extreme weather.

"They're very strong, and they occur over a very broad area, and there's just a tremendous amount of energy that's required to create them and also to maintain them," Konrad said.

Helene originated from a thunderstorm in the western Caribbean first observed on Sept. 23, according to NASA. Its first recorded coordinates are around 1,500 miles from North Carolina, and the National Hurricane Center tracked the storm continuously.

When Helene made landfall Sept. 26, tropical storm-force winds extended more than 300 miles from its center. That's approximately the distance from Raleigh to Cherokee.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's research division says no weather modification technology could produce or steer such a storm.

"Hurricanes Helene and Milton, like all hurricanes, formed on their own due to the right conditions of sea surface temperature and upper atmospheric winds," NOAA spokesperson Monica Allen said in an email.

It takes months of heat over spring and summer to warm the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico enough to create powerful hurricanes, said Konrad, who also directs NOAA's Southeast Regional Climate Center.

"That energy gradually builds up, and that's what it requires to get a hurricane," he said. "Think about how big the oceans are. And it takes a long time in the natural world."

Conspiracy theories spread after Hurricane Helene

U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a Republican from Georgia, has amplified conspiracy theories on social media that suggest the hurricanes that have hit the Southeast this year are tools of voter suppression ahead of the 2024 election.

"Yes they can control the weather. It's ridiculous for anyone to lie and say it can't be done," Greene wrote Oct. 3.

Democratic President Joe Biden dismissed the idea Oct. 9 as "beyond ridiculous."

Greene followed up Oct. 8 with a link to NOAA's records of attempts at weather modification. The agency has tracked 1,026 such attempts since 1972.

The most common reasons listed on the site are increasing rain and snowfall by cloud seeding, "usually for the purpose of increasing the local water supply," according to NOAA.

That's typically done out west, not in the less drought-prone Southeast, Konrad said, and could never produce rainfall on the scale brought by Helene.

"The thing about cloud seeding is it can only be effective at a local scale. So, you could make it rain, maybe, a little bit more in one place, but you can't make it rain over a broad area," Konrad said.

Helene brought more than 10 inches of rain to much of Western North Carolina, but large areas saw 18 inches from the tropical storm and the rain that fell the two days before. The N.C. State Climate Office's highest measurement for Sept. 25 to Sept. 27 was more than 31 inches at Busick, in Yancey County.

The U.S. government did experiments decades ago that aimed to weaken hurricanes, not strengthen or create them, according to NOAA records.

In 1947, military scientists working with General Electric on Project Cirrus dumped crushed dry ice into a hurricane after it had passed over Florida into the Atlantic, according to NOAA. Instead of weakening, the storm strengthened and veered into southern Georgia. Experts were unsure if the swerve was caused by the scientists, but the public was outraged and the efforts were abandoned.

From 1962 to 1983, the government used silver iodide to weaken storms further from land under Project Stormfury. The results were inconclusive, according to an account published in the American Meteorological Society in 1985.

"Since then NOAA has done no weather modification," Allen said. "The primary concern about altering weather is that you could make things worse, such as the case of using nuclear bombs on hurricanes - a common recommendation NOAA receives from the public."

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Challenges are just beginning for some Western NC schools after Helene

October 13, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC) Author: Rebecca Noel; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1277 Words Page: 20A OpenURL Link

Michael Luplow stood in front of FernLeaf Community Charter School two weeks ago, feeling optimistic. He thought the school had been spared the worst of Hurricane Helene.

But in less than 24 hours, the school - and his life's work - would be swept clean off its foundation.

"It was absolutely heartbreaking," he said of the school he launched in 2016 in Fletcher. "The Creek campus has been a big part of our identity from the beginning."

The campus in Henderson County sits surrounded by Cane Creek, where students in kindergarten through fourth grade would go for outdoor learning during the week. It's flooded before - but nothing like this. Outdoor learning spaces and athletic fields were washed away, and each of the campus's three buildings became unusable as 5 feet of water crept up the walls.

"The shared experience of watching the loss of this space is creating real, intense feelings for all of us," Luplow said.

FernLeaf is slated to begin classes again Oct. 16, but other nearby school districts will need more time. They're racing to get access to running water and get kids back in the classroom. And parents can't help but wonder whether this break from school might be as devastating for student learning as COVID.

Immediately after the storm, Luplow began trying to contact staff - a tall task when few people in the region had cell phone or internet service. They reached out via email, text, phone calls and, eventually, contacting neighbors and friends until they confirmed all staff and students were safe and accounted for.

"The two happiest days were when they told us that every staff member had been accounted for and then the day when they told us every student had been accounted for," said Lisa Spalding, a third grade teacher at FernLeaf.

Spalding says most staff members, including herself, still lack running water.

But not all is lost. The school has a second campus for middle and high school that 430 elementary school students will now share.

"We've been able to put together a really solid plan to allow for the least amount of disruption," Luplow said. "We are incredibly fortunate that we have been building our facilities to accommodate growth, so we have some flexibility."

Luplow still feels a personal connection to the Creek campus, but after Helene, he's hesitant to rebuild there.

"I would love to see us rebuild the Creek campus because it is such an integral part of who we are, but we're conscious that storms of this magnitude are on the rise," he said. "We know that what makes us who we are are the people."

What's the damage

Buncombe County Schools, the largest public district in the region and 13th largest in the state, aims to reopen its

campuses "as quickly as possible," but only 40 out of 45 schools had power as of Wednesday afternoon. Only 13 had running water.

"We've looked at every viable option we could imagine for the safest and quickest solution to get students back in school," Buncombe County Schools Superintendent Rob Jackson said at a community briefing Wednesday. "We've looked into sharing buildings that do have power and water, looked into partial day schedules and bussing students across the county."

The district, along with Asheville City Schools, is even considering assembling "flush brigades" of community volunteers to carry non-potable water to schools throughout the day to supply and flush their toilets. Both districts said they're ordering portable toilet trailers, though delivery dates have not been announced.

None of Buncombe County's campuses sustained catastrophic structural damage. Some classrooms need carpet replaced and one school saw flooding in its boiler room. Maintenance and facilities crews started repairs and removing downed tree limbs and debris blocking entrances, Chief Communications Officer Ken Ulmer told The Charlotte Observer.

Once some internet and cell service started returning, teachers, administrators and other staff teamed up to try to contact families and educators. As of Wednesday, the district had made contact with 100% of its staff and 98% of families.

"Communication continues to be challenging, but we're connecting with students everyday," Ulmer said. "I was able to connect to a student while I was at a water distribution site. We had several schools where teachers found spots where they had cell service and started calling."

Asheville City Schools initially announced it would close indefinitely, but Superintendent Maggie Furman said Wednesday the district wants to bring students back Oct. 28. It's drilling wells at each of its schools.

"While the city continues to make progress with the municipal water system, we can't wait until it is fully repaired to open our schools," Furman said Wednesday. "Yesterday, we began drilling a well at Hall Fletcher Elementary School and were able to hit groundwater."

She cautioned that it will still take two to three weeks before the district can start using that water in its buildings.

"I felt immense relief that there is some kind of timeline being announced because, at first, there was messaging that suggested we could be out for weeks and weeks," said Liz Tallent, a parent to two second-graders and one sixth-grader in Asheville City Schools. "There was basically a 100% communication blackout. It was really like we were transported to another era."

Tallent says she worries for teachers, most of whom still don't have water in their homes.

"I would almost call teachers first responders in this situation because they're having to make these huge sacrifices and get back to work for the sake of the rest of us," she said. "It really highlights the importance of schools. When there's no school, the whole community is at a standstill."

'Déjà Vu'

North Carolina has strict laws in place for when the school year can start and end as well as how many remote learning days are permitted. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt announced she's requesting more flexibility for school districts after Helene from the General Assembly, including the ability to continue the school year past mid-June.

Tallent's sixth-grader was in first grade when the pandemic hit in 2020. She said Helene's damage feels similar - life grinding to a halt yet again in the face of a disaster.

"It really feels like déjà vu," she said. "I'm putting some of those lessons that I learned during the pandemic into practice now, which is not something I really thought I'd have to do again. I think I'm kind of in shock."

She's concerned about learning loss like kids saw during the pandemic, which schools are still recovering from. She's finding opportunities for her kids to do lessons with teachers. But she's worried for people who don't have those opportunities.

"This kind of thing, just like the pandemic, exacerbates the difference between those who have the resources and the bandwidth and those who don't," Tallent said. "It just widens the inequities that Asheville already struggles with."

Luplow said parents at his school are echoing some of Tallent's concerns.

"Parents are still reeling from some of the experiences from COVID," Luplow said. "They're concerned about learning loss."

Pulling together

Luplow and Tallent said their communities have sprung into action, volunteering to clear away road blockages, clean rivers and get resources to people who need them most.

"With that heartbreak, also there's immediately been a sense of hope and optimism and opportunities to rebuild," said Luplow. "It's been astounding to watch."

Luplow said schools across the country have sent loads of school supplies to FernLeaf. Tallent said parents in her community have set up a GoFundMe for teachers in her area who may need help covering the cost of home repairs.

Still, they say, it will take years to fully recover.

"I think it's important for our community and the broader community to understand the true impact of this storm," Luplow said. "We need all the help we can get."

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JD Vance addresses Helene aid, immigration at NC town hall

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Greensboro Republican vice presidential candidate JD Vance has been no stranger to North Carolina in the past few months.

And on Thursday, just 25 days from the election, Vance sat on an armchair across from moderator Danica Patrick - a former professional race car driver and Trump supporter - and took questions from the public during a town hall at the Koury Convention Center in Greensboro.

In a wide-ranging discussion, he addressed Hurricane Helene recovery, immigration and Social Security.

North Carolina is a battleground state and will play a pivotal role in determining who wins the presidential election this November. About 500 to 600 people were gathered at the convention center.

One person asked Vance whether he and former President Donald Trump promised "not to forget Western North Carolina" and, when a "legitimate conversation" could be had about "overhauling the process of disaster relief in the United States," to cut bureaucratic red tape.

"We're never going to let the people of that region of our country - the region really built our country," Vance replied. "We're never going to let them be left behind and forgotten."

Vance is a U.S. senator from Ohio but before that, he was known for "Hillbilly Elegy," a memoir where he writes about growing up in Appalachian Ohio.

"I think once we get past" the recovery phase, "then it's time to focus on the disastrous federal response to this incredible crisis," Vance said.

Trump has spread conspiracy theories on social media, including one that falsely claimed the Biden administration has used disaster relief funds for people in the country without legal authorization. And in Trump's first trip to North Carolina since it was hit by Helene, he said the federal government's response to the devastating storm had been "terrible."

Over the past week, Trump and President Joe Biden's teams have criticized each other's past and current disaster relief efforts. The news release announcing Vance's town hall said Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee for president, "completely left North Carolinians behind in the wake of devastation post-Hurricane Helene."

Federal, state and local responders have been working in Western North Carolina. And on Wednesday, state lawmakers passed a bill providing \$273 million for relief efforts. Legislative leaders have described this as a "first step."

Robert McKenzie, who had traveled from Cumberland County to see Vance for the first time, said before the town hall that "all the things that Trump and Vance stand for are important to us."

"Recovering from this last disaster - that is the most important thing for North Carolina," he said.

As for relief efforts, he said: "The actual civilians in North Carolina are doing more than the government."

Questions on immigration

Vance took a question asking for his and Trump's plan to manage illegal immigration. Vance said they planned to deport people in the country without authorization who had committed crimes.

"The plan, to put it simply, is we gotta send them home. We gotta send them home ASAP," he said.

Prior to Vance speaking, Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Whatley and U.S. Sen. Ted Budd of North Carolina gave brief remarks.

Vance also honed in on the fiscal impact of immigrants living in the United States without legal authorization and blamed undocumented individuals for the high cost of housing.

"The young generation in this country, they're growing up in a nation where they're going to become paupers in the country that their parents and their grandparents built," Vance said. "The American dream of home-ownership: not being deep in credit card debt, I want you to own a piece of the future and not just be a permanent debtor to people and institutions that don't care about you."

Home prices shot up during the pandemic and have remained high. Economists who spoke with Forbes said mortgage rates - which have been dropping recently - need to remain low and inventory needs to grow for prices to drop.

A woman asked Vance to clarify Trump and Vance's plan for Social Security.

Trump "is going to protect Social Security and he is going to cut taxes on Social Security income," Vance said. He then once more shifted to immigration, saying that "illegal aliens" would "bankrupt" the program.

Social Security benefits are for citizens with only some noncitizens, such as green card holders and refugees, allowed to access these benefits.

Vance criticized Harris's response in a recent interview on ABC's "The View," where she said "not a thing" came to mind after being asked whether she would have done anything differently than Biden over the past four years.

Vance's last visit came soon after Mark Robinson scandal

Vance is set to return to North Carolina Sunday with an appearance at the NASCAR race at the Charlotte Motor Speedway, the Charlotte Business Journal reported.

Before Thursday, he last visited North Carolina at a stop in Charlotte in late September. That visit came after CNN reported that North Carolina's GOP gubernatorial candidate, Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, allegedly made a series of sexually graphic, racist, homophobic and antisemitic posts on a pornographic message board about a decade ago.

In Charlotte, Vance was asked about the Trump campaign's past support of Robinson. Vance said what Robinson "said or didn't say is ultimately between him and the people of North Carolina," The Charlotte Observer reported. Trump has previously endorsed Robinson.

Greensboro is Robinson's hometown. Vance did not mention Robinson on Thursday.

Voter concerns

Multiple people waiting to enter the Town Hall told The News & Observer they have Hurricane Helene at the top of their minds.

Penny Godfrey from Davidson County said Hurricane Helene had damaged two of her cars and her driveway, and a

tree had fallen.

"That \$750 will sure help pay for that," she said, referring to the \$750 that the Federal Emergency Management Agency makes available, and that does not need to be repaid, for disaster survivors to cover immediate costs like food and water. FEMA also provides up to \$42,500 for other needs.

Lisa Rancer, from Guilford County, said it's "very important for money to be available for people in Western North Carolina to receive aid instead of giving that aid to illegal immigrants."

"Having that FEMA money available for our own people," she said.

Others were concerned about the economy. Brendan Sheet, who relocated from Fort Worth, Texas, to Winston-Salem, said it was his first campaign event.

"I would like to see prices level out to where we can afford to live and not be slaves to money. It's like we work harder and have combined incomes, but are poorer than we've ever been," he said.

Unemployment remains low in the United States. But the purchasing power of a dollar has dropped by 23% between September 2019 and September 2024.

Rachel Withers said she was "broke." Withers was with her two daughters, who are homeschooled by Godfrey. She said this event was part of her daughter's civic education.

"My paycheck is worth 40% less than it used to be. I make one-third more than I did in 2020. I had savings in 2020," said Withers, who is from Mooresville.

"In 2024, I have \$40,000 in credit card debt," she said, citing data that shows that American credit card debt is the highest it's ever been.

Democrats speak on Trump's record responding to disasters

Ahead of Vance's visit, Democrats held a virtual press conference to "call out Trump's record of denying disaster aid to North Carolina and playing politics with disaster relief," and Trump, Vance and Robinson's "extreme Project 2025 agenda to gut future disaster relief and preparation," according to a news release sent out by Democrats.

Project 2025 is a political initiative created by conservative think tank the Heritage Foundation. Democrats have said Trump and the GOP are behind the plan, and many of Trump's former staff reportedly helped create it, but Trump has denied involvement.

"As President, Donald Trump cut \$155 million from FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund, and denied North Carolina over \$900 million in requested disaster aid after Hurricane Matthew struck our state," said U.S. Rep. Kathy Manning, according to the news release.

The \$155 million number appears to be referring to the Trump administration's intention to transfer \$155 million from FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund to pay for transportation for adult migrants between detention centers and courtrooms.

As for the denied funds, the Trump administration initially denied most of a request for federal funds to respond to Hurricane Matthew in 2017, but later approved more aid.

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Work begins to restore I-40 through the NC mountains, but timetable still uncertain

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Author: Richard Stradling; Staff Writer | Section: News | 631 Words

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The N.C. Department of Transportation has hired contractors to stabilize the surviving two lanes of Interstate 40 through the Pigeon River Gorge but says no decision has been made about what to do with them.

It also says there's still no timetable for reopening the highway that connects North Carolina with Tennessee.

The eastbound lanes of I-40 washed out in several places on both sides of the state line. During a visit to the gorge on Monday, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee told reporters that work had begun to convert the westbound lanes to two-way traffic while long-term repairs are made.

"We'll have the road moving in another week or so," Lee said.

But NCDOT says the North Carolina side isn't ready. Contractors arrived Tuesday to begin a process called "soil nailing," essentially driving reinforced steel bars up to 20 feet long into the side of the gorge under the road to keep it from eroding further.

That work will take a few months, said NCDOT spokesman David Uchiyama. In the meantime, NCDOT and the Federal Highway Administration will determine the best use of the westbound lanes as plans for major repairs come together, Uchiyama said.

"This temporary shoring operation will save the remainder of westbound lanes in sections where eastbound lanes slid into the river gorge," he said. "Around the time this operation concludes, plans for a larger complex and complete repair will be in progress."

The \$10 million shoring contract has incentives if the contractors - Wright Brothers Construction of Charleston, Tennessee, and Colorado-based GeoStabilization International - can finish the work by Jan. 4.

Engineers are still trying to figure out how to restore the land that once supported the eastbound lanes of I-40.

Historic rain from the remnants of Hurricane Helene turned the Pigeon River into a torrent that wore away the earth below the highway. The guardrail and shoulder along the eastbound lanes fell into the river in several places. In some spots, the travel lanes themselves also disappeared.

The westbound lanes remain intact. But in at least one place, all that separates them from the river is the median barrier.

Options for travel between the two states

In North Carolina, I-40 is open as far as Exit 20, the Maggie Valley interchange with U.S. 276. On the Tennessee side, westbound I-40 opens at Exit 447, while eastbound traffic must get off at Exit 440, U.S. 321.

Tennessee DOT has begun converting the westbound lanes of I-40 to two-way traffic around its damaged section of the highway, between the North Carolina line and Exit 447, a distance of about 4 miles, according to spokesman Mark Nagi.

TDOT hopes to finish the conversion by the end of next week, though drivers won't be able to go beyond the North

Carolina state line.

Speaking with reporters, Gov. Lee called the Pigeon River Gorge section of I-40 "incredibly important." More than 26,000 drivers a day normally use what is the busiest route between the two states.

Meanwhile, an alternate route, Interstate 26, remains closed after floodwaters knocked down twin spans that carried the highway over the Nolichucky River in Erwin, about 40 miles from the North Carolina line. Nagi says there's no timeline set for rebuilding the bridges and reopening the highway.

For now, NCDOT advises drivers wishing to go west toward Tennessee to take either I-77 north to I-81 near Wytheville, Virginia, toward Knoxville or take U.S. 74 west toward Chattanooga.

NC Reality Check is a continuing series holding those in power accountable and shining a light on public issues that affect North Carolina. Have a suggestion for a future story? Email realitycheck@newsobserver.com

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Editorial/Opinion

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Price gouging is occurring daily on Interstate 77 toll lanes. I-77 Mobility Partners should rename their "dynamic pricing" to "opportunistic pricing." It is just another unintended consequence of this plan's debacle. With I-40 west shut down for maybe a year, the traffic on I-77 has the southbound lanes bumper to bumper. Residents of Mooresville, Davidson, Cornelius and Huntersville are facing a decision to spend time staring at brake lights, or for the next year, pay a ridiculous amount of money to use the toll lanes where the it can cost \$4.90 to travel two exits. Can anyone in government get us some relief?

Carl Brooks, Cornelius

Young voters

Millennials and Gen Z together will form the largest and most diverse voting bloc in history this year, representing nearly one-fifth of voters. With over 40 million Gen Z voters, including 8 million newly eligible since 2022, our collective power is immense. In North Carolina, people aged 18-35 make up nearly a quarter of the electorate. Our generations face significant challenges - threats to reproductive rights, an urgent climate crisis and an economic system that often feels stacked against us. Young people must make their voices heard this November. We hold the power to create lasting change.

Brennan Steele, Charlotte

Trump lies

My heart is heavy over the unimaginable suffering in western NC. Hundreds of people dead and still missing. Thousands who have lost everything. We have only begun to grasp the scope of this event that will reverberate through our lives and communities for years. I am a long-time unaffiliated voter. It is despicable when politicians use tragedy to sow division, confusion, and conspiracy theories. Aren't the victims suffering enough? At a time when we need for our leaders to encourage us to pull together, to support each other, to lend a helping hand, and to put partisan divisions aside, the ex-president, who cares about nobody but himself, tries to capitalize on human suffering, including the suffering of many members of his own political party, by pushing lies about the federal government's Helene response.

Robert Dulin, Charlotte

Tillis tilt

I went from being so proud of Sen. Thom Tillis for speaking a non-partisan truth that people in North Carolina were getting help from the federal and state governments to being in disbelief and sad. He said no finger-pointing or conspiracy theories should be happening at a time when lives are devastated by Hurricane Helene. Now Tillis is upset that Kamala Harris quoted him correctly. Now he is saying he meant that Harris is doing the finger-pointing. Sen. Tillis doesn't love North Carolina as much as he says. He loves being loyal to Trump more.

Willa Hackney, Charlotte

Middle East peace

As Rabbi Judy Schindler said in her Observer op-ed, we pray for peace for Israelis and Palestinians. The only path to peace is the two-state solution. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu does not support this solution. He is the wrong man to lead Israel now. Supporters of peace for Israel and innocent Palestinians and other Arabs must be protected. In an ideal world, Jews and Arabs would demonstrate together for the two state solution.

David A. Nachamie, Lincolnton

Harris' instincts

I am grateful someone of any gender, religion or race can today become president. But that does not mean Kamala Harris is ready for promotion. Harris is a genuine person who fully delivers on good vibes and joy. Unfortunately, saying something with a smile does not make it good policy. Harris appears politically inauthentic, parroting rhetoric she thinks will win votes, leading to many policy flips on immigration, energy and more. Her initial instincts were bad. Switching positions after the impact is already felt is meaningless. By casting the tie-breaking vote for the Inflation Reduction Act, Harris directly contributed to our bad economy. As vice president she cast the most tie-breaking Senate votes in history. When proactively voting for something - you must own the outcome. Harris proudly states she was the last person in the room when the Afghanistan exit strategy formed. She recently said nothing comes to mind when asked what she would do different than the past administration. Harris has bad instincts.

Jennifer Louis, Charlotte

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Former Green Beret flew to 3-year-old daughter, then helped other Helene victims in NC

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A former Army Green Beret has been helping lead volunteer helicopter pilots as they drop supplies and rescue people across Western North Carolina.

Black Mountain's Adam Smith led the effort after a more personal job. His ex-wife, Megan, and three-year-old daughter, Tove, live close to the Broad River.

He lost contact when the storm hit and feared they were dead. In a brief interview before he went on another helicopter mission Tuesday, Smith said he was in Texas at the start of the storm.

"I legitimately didn't think there was any hope," he said. "The house is, like, 30 yards from the river."

A friend flew Smith to the house and airlifted his family out.

Since then, he's rounded up other military connections, and they've set up base at a Harley-Davidson shop in Swannanoa. About 300 volunteers have delivered food, rescued people and brought a generator to a community center by air, Smith said.

"That's really what it's been," Smith said. "It's been guys getting (stuff) done because they support their community."

Ryan Oehrli: @oehrli

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Here are the new rides coming to the NC State Fair (+ what to know about tickets)

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Author: Evan Moore; Staff Writer | Section: Living | 465 Words

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The North Carolina State Fair is approaching, and fairgoers can expect to see some new rides and attractions this year.

The fair, scheduled for Oct. 17-27 in Raleigh, will feature nearly 100 rides. New attractions include a traveling musician and a spot to enjoy adult beverages made right here in the Tar Heel State.

Here's what to know about new fair rides and attractions in 2024.

What new rides will be at the NC State Fair this year?

There will be two new rides at the state fair:

State Fair Slide: A 210-foot slide

Candyland Adventure: A 130-foot long funhouse

What else is new at the NC State Fair this year?

The Strolling Piano one of the new attractions that will be at the state fair this year. The motorized piano will travel around the fairgrounds as a piano player takes request to play and sing popular songs. The Strolling Piano can be found near Gate 2 behind Dorton Arena near the SkyGazer Ferris Wheel.

Another new attraction comes courtesy of the N.C. Distillers Association, where fairgoers 21 and older can purchase North Carolina-made spirits and cocktails at the new Stillhouse Building located down from the Gate 7 entrance near Heritage Circle. Drinks will be \$15 and capped at two per person.

How can I buy ride tickets cards?

You can purchase ride ticket cards at the NC State Fair website (ncagr.gov/divisions/ncstatefair).

Ride tickets can be purchased at a discounted rate (\$10 for 18 ride tickets) until Oct. 17. Tickets will be \$1 each beginning Oct. 18. One-day unlimited ride wristbands can also be purchased for \$30.

You can also support Hurricane Helene disaster relief efforts while purchasing your tickets. All money collected will go to the MANNA FoodBank of Asheville, which lost its distribution warehouse in the hurricane. When purchasing fair tickets online, a "State Fair Cares" boxed link will pop up on the shopping cart page before you check out.

NC State Fair Ferris wheel and sky lift tickets

There are two rides that are not included with ride ticket cards or wristbands: the State Fair Flyer and the State Fair SkyGazer.

* The State Fair Flyer is a permanent ride at the fairgrounds that offers a 14-minute round trip ride over the midway. One-way trip tickets are \$6 and round-trip tickets are \$9.

* The State Fair Skygazer is a 155-foot Ferris wheel that offers sight lines of up to 15 miles at the top. Tickets are \$6.

How can I check the height requirements for each ride?

You can check the height requirements for each ride online at powersgreatamericanmidways.com.

Note: Wristbands are not recommended for children under 36 inches tall, as there are a limited amount of rides they can safely ride. Parents with children under 48 inches tall should check the height requirements before purchasing to determine if wristbands offer the best value for their children.

Evan Moore: @evaninclt
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Panthers CB Dane Jackson preparing to return from IR

October 13, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC)

Author: Mike Kaye; Staff Writer | Section: Sports | 978 Words

Page: 1B OpenURL Link

Dane Jackson won't offer up any spoilers on his status for Sunday's game against the Atlanta Falcons.

The veteran cornerback, who has been on injured reserve since the season started, could make his Carolina Panthers debut this weekend. But for now, he's just doing what he's told, and not sharing those directions with anyone outside of Bank of America Stadium.

"I'm just following the plan that they've got for me," Jackson said with a big smile on Thursday after practice.

Jackson signed a two-year deal with the team in free agency in March. He was projected to be the favorite at the No. 2 cornerback spot opposite Jaycee Horn, but he suffered a notable hamstring injury in training camp in August.

And he has been sidelined ever since.

"It's been a process, for sure," Jackson said. "Never had a (hamstring injury) to this extent, so it's definitely been a process. But I've been working with the strength staff, with the training room staff - doing my own thing on the side, too - just trying to get to it and get back as healthy as I can."

Jackson built a bond with teammates in trainers room

During Jackson's stint on the sideline, he bonded with fellow veterans D.J. Wonnum and Amare Barno, who have been on the physically unable to perform (PUP) list since July.

The trio worked in the trainers room together as they went through their respective rehab assignments. The bond between Wonnum and Jackson, in particular, helped the pair get back on the right track to returning to the field.

"We've definitely (grown) closer since we've both been hurt, we've both been out," Jackson said. "We both like to play around a lot. Getting each other through the day - sometimes, you come in here hurt, and you've got to find it yourself. Just getting each other through the days and bonding with each other and growing together as teammates for sure."

Jackson, who played four seasons with the Buffalo Bills, is eager to play. He signed with Carolina largely due to his relationship and background with GM Dan Morgan.

The GM bet on Jackson, who wants to make the most of his opportunity with his new team, whether that's this week or down the road.

His 21-day window is currently in its second week. If he remains on injured reserve beyond Week 7, he'd be shut down for the season.

But, for now, he's just focusing on one day at a time. On Thursday, he was listed as a limited participant in practice, along with tight end Ian Thomas (calf) who is also designated to return from IR.

"Whenever my name is called, whenever it's my time to go out there and ball, I'm just going to be ready," Jackson said.

While the Panthers are staying mum on Jackson's status, head coach Dave Canales has been pleased with his progress in practice. On Wednesday, Canales said Jackson could "absolutely" be in line for a return against Atlanta.

The Panthers could benefit from using Jackson this weekend against the Falcons, especially with wide receivers like Drake London and Darnell Mooney coming to town.

"I think with Dane coming back, it's just going to add another element of even more physicality - his energy is upbeat," said Jonathan Cooley, the team's defensive pass game coordinator. "And so I just think it's just going to make us better. And we're excited about whenever it is his time to play again."

Panthers injury updates: Diontae Johnson still limited in practice

The Panthers are still monitoring wide receiver Diontae Johnson's ankle injury. The top receiving threat on the roster was limited in practice again on Thursday.

Johnson, who leads the team in receiving yards, has taken part in the first two practices of the week. The same can't be said for pass rusher Jadeveon Clowney (shoulder), tight end Tommy Tremble (concussion protocol), linebacker Josey Jewell (hamstring/groin) and rookie lineman Andrew Raym (concussion protocol). All four were listed as non-participants on Thursday.

Right tackle Taylor Moton (triceps), who was already ruled out for this weekend, was also sidelined. Center Austin Corbett has yet to be placed on injured reserve, so he was singled out as a non-participant as well.

In more positive news, wide receiver Xavier Legette (shoulder) was a full go for a second day in a row.

Here is the entire injury participation report for Thursday:

Did not participate: OLB Jadeveon Clowney (shoulder), TE Tommy Tremble (concussion protocol), C Andrew Raym (concussion protocol), C Austin Corbett (biceps), LB Josey Jewell (hamstring/groin), DE A'Shawn Robinson (ankle), OT Taylor Moton (triceps)

Limited: WR Diontae Johnson (ankle), TE Ian Thomas (calf), CB Dane Jackson (hamstring), OT Ikem Ekwonu (elbow)

Full: WR Xavier Legette (shoulder)

Quick hits

- * The Panthers re-signed running back Mike Boone, defensive end Jayden Peevy and defensive back Russ Yeast to the practice squad Thursday. All three players were released from the 53-man roster earlier in the week. The team came into the day with two open spots on the practice roster, so tight end Stephen Sullivan was released in a corresponding move.
- * Week 6 will feature a pair of NFC South head-to-head matchups. Along with the Panthers (1-4) hosting the Falcons (3-2) on Sunday, the New Orleans Saints (2-3) will host the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (3-2) this weekend as well.
- * The Panthers have designed a "Keep Pounding for the Carolinas" shirt that will be available in their team store at Bank of America Stadium this week. The net proceeds for the shirts priced at \$35 will be donated to the Carolinas Hurricane Helene Relief Fund to help those impacted by the storm in North Carolina and South Carolina.
- * Follow Observer reporters Mike Kaye (@mike_e_kaye) and Alex Zietlow (@alexzietlow05), and columnist Scott Fowler (@scott fowler), on X, formerly known as Twitter, for the Panthers' latest news and highlights.

Mike Kaye: @mike_e_kaye
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Price gouging is occurring daily on I-77 near Charlotte for nearby residents - Opinion

October 13, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: From our readers, The Charlotte Observer | Section: opinion | 719 Words OpenURL Link

Price gouging is occurring daily on Interstate 77 toll lanes. I-77 Mobility Partners should rename their "dynamic pricing" to "opportunistic pricing." It is just another unintended consequence of this plan's debacle. With I-40 west shut down for maybe a year, the traffic on I-77 has the southbound lanes bumper to bumper. Residents of Mooresville, Davidson, Cornelius and Huntersville are facing a decision to spend time staring at brake lights, or for the next year, pay a ridiculous amount of money to use the toll lanes where the it can cost \$4.90 to travel two exits. Can anyone in government get us some relief, or is this just another case of "Thank you sir! May I have another."

Carl Brooks, Cornelius

Young voters

The writer is the NC Director of NextGen America

This year, Millennials and Gen Z together will form the largest and most diverse voting bloc in history, representing nearly one-fifth of the electorate. With over 40 million Gen Z voters, including 8 million newly eligible since 2022, our collective power is immense. In North Carolina, people aged 18-35 make up nearly a quarter of the electorate. Our generations face significant challenges — threats to reproductive rights, an urgent climate crisis and an economic system that often feels stacked against us. Young people must make their voices heard this November. We hold the power to create lasting change.

Brennan Steele, Charlotte

Trump lies

My heart is heavy over the unimaginable suffering in western North Carolina. Hundreds of people dead. Hundreds still missing. Thousands and thousands of people who have lost everything. We have only just begun to grasp the scope of this event that will reverberate through our lives and communities for years to come. I am a long-time unaffiliated voter. It is despicable when politicians use tragedy to sow division, confusion, and conspiracy theories. Aren't the victims suffering enough? At a time when we need for our leaders to encourage us to pull together, to support each other, to lend a helping hand, and to put partisan divisions aside, the ex-president, who cares about nobody but himself, tries to capitalize on human suffering, including the suffering of many members of his own political party, by pushing lies about the federal government's Helene response.

Robert Dulin, Charlotte

Tillis tilt

I went from being so proud of Sen. Thom Tillis for speaking a non-partisan truth that people in North Carolina were getting help from the federal and state governments to being in disbelief and sad. He said no finger-pointing or conspiracy theories should be happening at a time when lives are devastated by Hurricane Helene. Now Tillis is upset that Kamala Harris quoted him correctly. Now he is saying he meant that Harris is doing the finger-pointing. I guess Sen. Tillis doesn't love North Carolina as much as he says. He loves being loyal to Trump more.

Middle East peace

As Rabbi Judy Schindler said in her Observer op-ed, we pray for peace for Israelis and Palestinians. The only path to peace is the two-state solution. Unfortunately, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu does not support this solution. He is the wrong man to lead Israel at this time. Supporters of peace for Israel and innocent Palestinians and other Arabs must be protected. In an ideal world, Jews and Arabs would be demonstrating together for the two state solution.

David A. Nachamie, Lincolnton

Harris' bad instincts

I am grateful someone of any gender, religion, or race can today become president. But that does not mean Kamala Harris is ready for promotion. Harris is a genuine person who fully delivers on good vibes and joy. Unfortunately, saying something with a smile does not make it good policy. Harris appears politically inauthentic, parroting rhetoric she thinks will win votes, leading to many policy flips on immigration, energy and more. Her initial instincts were bad. Switching positions after the impact is already felt is meaningless. By casting the tie-breaking vote for the Inflation Reduction Act, Harris directly contributed to our bad economy. As vice president she cast the most tie-breaking Senate votes in history. When proactively voting for something — you must own the outcome. Harris proudly states she was the last person in the room when the Afghanistan exit strategy formed. She recently said nothing comes to mind when asked what she would do different than the past administration. Harris has bad instincts.

Jennifer Louis, Charlotte

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Robinson's scandal remains unresolved, as NC Republicans dodge the issue - Opinion

October 13, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Paige Masten, The Charlotte Observer | Section: opinion | 628 Words OpenURL Link

It's been approximately three weeks since news of Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson's disturbing online behavior surfaced in a CNN report. That's three weeks since Robinson vigorously denied the allegations, and since Republicans used Robinson's denial to avoid criticizing him.

According to CNN, Robinson posted lewd and racist comments on a pornography website more than a decade ago — comments in which he called himself a "Black Nazi" and expressed support for reinstating slavery.

Republicans hedged by saying Robinson owed the people of North Carolina "answers" and called on him to provide concrete evidence that CNN's report was untrue. U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis, for example, called on Robinson to disprove the allegations and take legal action against CNN to clear his name. Hal Weatherman, the Republican nominee for lieutenant governor whose face is plastered alongside Robinson's on campaign signs across the state, also called on Robinson to prove his innocence.

Robinson says he has hired a legal team — led by a lawyer who represented Donald Trump in his attempts to overturn the 2020 election as well as in more recent legal battles — and vowed to go after CNN for spreading "salacious tabloid lies." Both Robinson and his attorney promised to move "quickly" in order to resolve the matter before the upcoming election. But that was nearly two weeks ago. Robinson has yet to provide any evidence or take any official legal action.

Robinson's campaign has not provided any further information about the matter, despite inquiries from various media outlets. WUNC reported that Robinson's campaign did not respond when asked for updates and a timeline on when the law firm might release its findings. A spokesperson for Robinson's campaign did not respond to my request for comment, either.

But Robinson and his campaign aren't the only ones who have remained silent on the matter. When the reports surfaced, Tillis even went so far as to issue an ultimatum: disprove the allegations by Friday, or the party needs to "move on." But it's been two weeks since that deadline expired, and Tillis has shown no sign of taking action on it. Tillis' office did not respond to a request for comment.

Weatherman, who said at the time that Robinson's "entire campaign strategy should be focused on proving the allegations false," did not respond to a request for comment, either. House Speaker Tim Moore has said he stands by his endorsement of Robinson, but Senate leader Phil Berger hedged when speaking to reporters last week.

Of course, other serious events have replaced Robinson's scandal in the news cycle. And, twisted as it may be, Robinson has seemingly tried to reap the benefits of those events. He has taken full advantage of the devastation in Western North Carolina caused by Hurricane Helene through photo ops and social media posts, even going as far as to improperly criticize the state's response and run Facebook ads with pictures of himself comforting flood victims.

Asked at a recent campaign event if he's filed a lawsuit against CNN, Robinson appeared to resort to more stalling tactics.

"Not yet, but that is coming and that's one of the things we plan on doing. We have a law firm handling that while we continue to campaign and help the people of western North Carolina," Robinson said, according to CBS 17.

Robinson may be trying to run away from his scandal, but that doesn't mean his fellow Republicans should let him. Because as much as Robinson is stalling, they're stalling, too. It's far easier to deflect and delay than it is to take the more difficult step of criticizing one of their party's top candidates, let alone call for him to step down. If they dodge the matter altogether, they don't have to say what they actually think. It's the easier choice — and the cowardly one.

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Harris, Trump seek advantage in knife-edge election battle

October 13, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Michael Mathes, with Brendan Smialowski in Greenville, North Carolina Section: National 657 Words OpenURL Link

Kamala Harris and rival Donald Trump campaigned in battleground states Sunday seeking 11th-hour advantages in a deadlocked White House race, as new polling shows the vice president underperforming among some traditional Democratic voter demographics.

Harris was in North Carolina, a state hard-hit by a hurricane two weeks ago that devastated several communities and left more than 235 people dead across the US Southeast, as she seeks to counter Trump's claims that federal agencies have done little to help storm victims.

"Moments of crisis, I believe, do have a way of revealing the heroes among us," she said during a speech at a church in Greenville, a North Carolina city where African-American students staged the historic 1960 sit-in at a segregated lunch counter in a fight for civil rights.

Without naming the former president, Harris then called out those who had been "lying about people who are working hard to help folks in need, spreading disinformation."

Trump heavily focused on the key election issue of migration at a rally in Arizona, promising in an often meandering 92-minute speech that he would hire 10,000 new US border guards if reelected.

The Republican earlier used a Fox News interview to float the idea of using military force against Americans he described as "the enemy from within."

"We have some sick people, radical left lunatics," he said, without specifying whom he had in mind. "And it should be very easily handled by -- if necessary, by National Guard or, if really necessary, by the military."

Federal law generally bars use of the military for civilian law enforcement, though there are limited exceptions.

Meanwhile, police said a man in possession of a shotgun and a loaded handgun was arrested on Saturday near a Trump rally in California.

The Secret Service said the former president, who has been targeted in two assassination attempts since July, was not in any danger during the incident.

- 'Left behind' -

Polling shows Harris and Trump neck-and-neck, including in the seven swing states that are likely to determine the outcome of the election.

It also shows Harris has so far failed to stanch the flow of Latinos from the Democratic fold toward Trump, even as he pushes his sharply anti-immigration message.

Data from the latest New York Times/Siena College poll show Harris underperforming other recent Democratic nominees among likely Latino voters, currently earning just 56 percent of the demographic compared to Trump's 37 percent, a margin of 19 points.

While Harris has large advantages with women, particularly women of color, she is struggling to gain traction with Black male voters, a growing number of whom are leaning toward the brash Republican.

As the 59-year-old was campaigning in North Carolina, her boss, President Joe Biden, was in Florida assessing the damage from more recent Hurricane Milton.

He announced \$600 million in aid for areas affected by that storm as well as by Hurricane Helene, which struck with deadly force in late September.

With just 23 days before the November 5 election, Trump and his running mate Senator J.D. Vance continue to thrust the federal disaster response squarely into the presidential race.

Asked on ABC Sunday talk show "This Week" whether Trump has been accurate in describing the federal response as incompetent, Vance said "it's to suggest that Americans are feeling left behind by their government, which they are."

- Eyes on Pennsylvania -

Both candidates hold campaign events in the biggest swing state prize of all, Pennsylvania, on Monday.

A Harris heavyweight surrogate, Democratic ex-president Bill Clinton, was also on the trail Sunday in battleground Georgia, where he spoke at Mount Zion Baptist Church, a historically Black congregation.

Speaking at a rally in Greenville later on Sunday, Harris accused Trump of "not being transparent with the voters," pointing to his refusal to release his medical records, or sit down for an interview with CBS's 60 Minutes news program.

"It makes you wonder, why does his staff want him to hide away?" she said. "Are they afraid that people will see that he is too weak and unstable to lead America?"

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Unlike Obama, Harris stays away from race, gender in campaign rally

October 13, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Alan Wooten | The Center Square | Section: State | 818 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – Three days after controversial race and gender comments by former President Barack Obama, presidential candidate Kamala Harris made multiple appearances Sunday in a North Carolina county Joe Biden won by 9.5% four years ago.

The vice president didn't specifically appeal to Black males, as Obama did at a Harris campaign office on Thursday. She stayed on message and instead talked primarily to the "middle class" and "working people," never once tying a voting bloc to race or gender.

The closest was her campaign point for reproductive freedom.

"Your vote is your voice, and your voice is your power," Harris said in reminding those attending of early in-person voting beginning Thursday. Election Day is 23 days away.

Harris overnighted in the state, on Saturday lending a hand on a supply line sending aid to Hurricane Helene victims in the mountains, and Sunday attending services and stepping into the pulpit at Koinonia Christian Center Church in Greenville. Her late-afternoon rally was on the campus of East Carolina University in Minges Coliseum, an arena with basketball capacity of 8,000.

Pitt County was a 53.96%-44.51% win for the challenger Biden against incumbent Republican President Donald Trump in 2020, taking more than 47,000 of 87,573 votes. It was one of 10 counties, and southern-most sans one, east of Interstate 95 he captured. The Maine to Florida connector is recognized as a bit of a divider for the state, more populous areas being toward the western two-thirds and plenty of rural socioeconomic challenges from it to the Atlantic Ocean.

Harris, No. 2 in charge of the Biden administration, said her presidential ticket with Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz "is the underdog." She didn't need to win a primary en route to accepting nomination at the Democratic National Convention. Polling nationally and in North Carolina is a toss-up, with Harris slightly ahead in RealClear Politics national analysis and behind in the battleground state.

Democrats have been at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. for 12 of the last 16 years.

Harris kept her message firmly pointed at Trump, repeatedly tying him with the Project 2025 idea he says he has no part in crafting. Obama, on the other hand, took his shot at a demographic traditionally favorable to Democrats that is arguably losing reliability.

The former president was at a Harris campaign office in Pittsburgh. According to CNN, Obama said energy for Harris is lacking and "seems to be more pronounced with the brothers."

And, speaking of her opponent in Trump, Obama said, "You're thinking about sitting out or supporting somebody who has a history of denigrating you, because you think that's a sign of strength, because that's what being a man is? Putting women down? That's not acceptable.

"You're coming up with all kinds of reasons and excuses. I've got a problem with that. Because part of it makes me think – and I'm speaking to men directly – part of it makes me think that, well, you just aren't feeling the idea of having a woman as president, and you're coming up with other alternatives and other reasons for that."

Even when Biden had gone through the primary as the candidate for Democrats, Harris tried to lure Black men to vote for the ticket.

Harris, one week shy of her 60th birthday and celebrating her husband Doug Emhoff's 60th on Sunday as she campaigned, has said she would not have done anything different than Biden. Her campaign slogan is to chart "a new way forward."

Interestingly, she led off and hammered away using the early summer's Republican talking points – high costs facing Americans, keeping the nation secure, and personal health of the party's leader. Those, in fact, were central to Trump leading Biden significantly in polling until he quit the race July 21.

Harris infamously went more than a month without doing public interviews or question-and-answer press conferences. She also chastised Trump for that and refusing a second debate with her, when in fact he proposed three in August and the Harris campaign accepted one.

Trump debated Biden on June 27, signaling the beginning of the end for the nation's 46th president.

North Carolina is one of seven consensus battleground states that collectively pivot 93 electoral college votes. Few prognosticators believe either candidate can win without the state or Pennsylvania, and perhaps need to take both – adding even more intrigue to Obama's comments.

Pennsylvania has 19 electoral college votes, North Carolina and Georgia 16 each, Michigan 15, Arizona 11, Wisconsin 10 and Nevada six.

In 2020, Trump won North Carolina 49.9%-48.6% over the ticket of Biden and Harris. In 2016, Trump won the state 49.8%-46.2% over the ticket of Hillary Clinton and Tim Kaine. Trump outperformed the September and October polls each time.

Republicans own an unmistakable 14-cycle pattern in presidential elections. Since Democrat Lyndon B. Johnson carried North Carolina and won the presidency in 1964, only Democrats Jimmy Carter (1976) and Obama (2008) have prevailed. Respectively four years later for each, they lost to Ronald Reagan and Mitt Romney.

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Planning can help NC work well after disasters

October 13, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Rob Schofield; NC Newsline | Section: News | 940 Words Page: C2 OpenURL Link

Government officials and average citizens of all guises and stripes have done a mostly remarkable job of carrying out relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Notwithstanding the understandable frustrations of those in devastated areas still waiting for aid and the calculated lies of some cynical politicians and shameless social media creeps, the truth is that government agencies and elected leaders of both major parties have been working tirelessly, and even heroically, in the storm's aftermath.

As Bill Wilke, the Republican sheriff of hard-hit Haywood County said last Friday in response to the wild and false rumors and crazy conspiracy theories that continue to spread on social media: "turn that garbage off...get off Facebook and get out there and put on a pair of boots and pair of gloves and get to work." Meanwhile, average citizens and private organizations across the state are heeding Wilke's call by contributing millions of dollars, tons of supplies, and where and when possible, large amounts of physical labor to the effort.

Helene cleanup shows we care about our neighbors. But the disaster has a familiar feel.

In some places, officials have been inundated by so many donations that figuring out a way to distribute them efficiently is one of the big current challenges.

And this latter fact helps illustrate an important good-news-bad-news truth about the current situation.

The good news, of course, is that notwithstanding the yawning political divides that plague us these days, the vast majority of North Carolinians still care about their neighbors and are anxious to do what they can to help people in need – whatever their politics or beliefs. We may be a tense and quarrelsome body politic these days, but thankfully for most people, basic human decency still prevails. The bad news in all this, however, is how sadly familiar it all feels. As with the outpourings of shock, grief, and goodwill toward the victims that invariably follow in the aftermath of the mass shootings that so plague us, the hurricane response is wonderful and inspiring. But it's also – as the old saying goes – a day late and a dollar short.

NC, U.S. needs more prevention

In other words, the overwhelming societal response to Helene and other similar disasters demonstrates the happy fact that Americans remain willing to sacrifice for the common good. But as with the shootings, what's needed is not just post-disaster relief and sacrifice, but pre-disaster prevention. Think about it: As climate change and population growth conspire to place millions and millions more people in harm's way, disasters like Helene are certain to become increasingly common (see Hurricane Milton's projected path) unless society comes together quickly to do two things that only government can spearhead.

First, is dramatically enhancing physical infrastructure and disaster planning, as well as the rules governing where and how buildings are constructed.

Simply put, we can and should have water and sewer systems and power and communication grids that are vastly more resilient, but it will take money — lots of it — to construct and maintain them.

Political leaders need to tell hard truths;

public needs to make sacrifice ahead of time

The same is true for the kind of pre-positioned disaster relief and recovery equipment and personnel that could spring into action in huge numbers on a moment's notice to the remotest mountain holler, and for stricter zoning and building codes that could make homes and businesses much tougher and storm resistant. We can have these things, but only if we're willing to pay for them.

What's lacking are political leaders who have the courage to speak these hard truths, to say 'no' to greedy industry lobbyists who try to block every proposed regulation, and to ask voters to come together and sacrifice a little ahead of time so that a crazy patchwork of public and private relief efforts will be less necessary in the future. And, of course, the same is true for climate change itself. As Helene made clear yet again, global warming and sea-level rise may appear to be steady, incremental processes when viewed from a distance, but up close, they are violent and episodic.

The U.S. has what it needs to reduce greenhouse emissions, slow climate change

Happily, we have the knowledge and capacity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions rapidly so that climate change doesn't spiral utterly out of control in the coming decades, but again, probably only if we're willing to make some modest sacrifices. And that means — at least initially — things like slightly higher taxes and energy bills, and lifestyle changes like winding down the overwhelming societal reliance on internal combustion vehicles.

Will a majority of American politicians ever get to the point — as is already the case in some more enlightened countries — at which they're willing to level with voters about these facts? The current electoral cycle in which one side constantly repeats the virulent lie that climate change is a hoax, while the other mostly avoids the issue or implies that it can be addressed in a pain free manner inspires little confidence.

One prays that it won't take several more Helene-like disasters to convince a majority of Americans and their leaders to grasp the wisdom of sacrificing a little now to save a lot later.

This story was originally published in NC Newsline, a nonpartisan nonprofit news organization dedicated to fearless reporting and hard-hitting commentary that shines a light on injustice, holds public officials accountable, and helps improve the quality of life for all North Carolinians. It is published under a Creative Commons license.

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Asheville needs help with Helene recovery

October 13, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Kathleen Wong; USA TODAY | Section: News | 938 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Brian Fetting and his childhood best friend Dan Juhnke put more than their life savings into their business, New Origin Brewing – they put their heart and soul into it. They personally renovated the historic building, learning woodworking and welding, and even made the tables and chairs that filled the space.

When the craft brewery opened in 2021, it quickly became a hub for locals and tourists alike.

"People started as strangers, turned into regulars then turned into friends – it was an incredible community to be a part of," Fetting told USA TODAY. Tourists often stopped by to taste the local small-batch local brews, which weren't distributed or found anywhere else.

"You could tell it's not a commercial operation," he explained.

When the brewers first heard about Hurricane Helene, they spent two days preparing for it, sandbagging thousands of pounds but still expecting some flooding inside the brewery.

"We went to bed that night happy with our hard work," he said. "It's a bad situation, but we might be able to make it through."

The morning Helene hit, on Sept. 27, New Origin was quickly gone. All that was left of the brewery was a pile of blocks and twisted metal. The floodwaters swept up a train car and sent it crashing into the brewery.

Considered one of the deadliest hurricanes to hit the U.S. in modern times, Hurricane Helene left unprecedented levels of devastation in its wake. Although the Category 4 hurricane weakened to a tropical storm by the time it hit North Carolina, it still brought deadly flooding, heavy rainfall and severe winds.

As of Thursday, the death toll had surpassed 200, and thousands of people were still without power or water. Homes and businesses were flooded or severely damaged, if not completely ruined.

For those whose businesses were affected, the damage is twice as bad.

Now the small-business owners who make up the heart of Asheville – woven into the fabric of its vibrancy and unique character – are facing unprecedented challenges of incredible loss. Many have lost not only their homes, but their livelihoods as well. Amid all the uncertainty, one thing is clear: The path to recovery will be a long one.

A hurricane like no other

Everyone knew a hurricane was approaching, but no one thought Helene would be so catastrophic.

In recent years, Asheville has risen as an up-and-coming travel destination, beloved for its eccentric arts and culture scene and especially by leaf peepers in the fall with the many nearby parks. Roughly one in seven jobs is related to the tourism industry, according to a study provided by Tourism Economics to the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority.

"We've encountered hurricanes before," Fetting said. "We're well aware that hurricanes hit and it would come through and it would happen on an annual basis, but this one was just very different."

On the evening before the storm hit, Shane and Rachel Miller closed down their ax-throwing venue, Valhalla Indoor Axe Throwing, a little bit earlier to get home safely.

"It was only just about then we hear this one's going to be a lot worse than usual, and that still doesn't even hold a card to what happened," said Shane Miller.

Valhalla Indoor Axe Throwing isn't expected to reopen for a month at the earliest, at least until water and power are restored.

"That's a healthy estimate, a very optimistic estimate," he said.

The Millers launched a GoFundMe for their business to help continue to provide wages to their employees.

"Communities in western North Carolina, including Asheville and Buncombe County, are recovering after the devastating floods and aftermath of Hurricane Helene," said Vic Isley, CEO of Explore Asheville, in a statement to USA TODAY.

"While our downtown, lodging, and much of our hospitality infrastructure fared well, most areas are still without power and water service, and early stages of recovery are ongoing in parts of our beloved community."

'This is definitely going to hurt'

The chance of rebuilding New Origin is unlikely at this point. Due to city codes, it's not possible for the building to be rebuilt the way it once was.

"It's not a feasible project; we're stuck in this spot," Fetting said. Flood insurance is only going to cover about a third of what was lost, but their debt to the bank remains.

"We're going to have to find a way to pay back the bank with no assets to sell and a big bank loan," he said. Fetting and Juhnke recently launched a \$300,000 GoFundMe asking for donations so they don't have to turn to selling their homes.

Countless other businesses were ripped to the foundation or, even if still standing, left with everything inside destroyed.

To Shane Miller, the hardest part of the recovery process has been "watching so many of our friends within this community, within days of this storm, making the decision they won't be reopening."

With leaf peeping a major time of year for Asheville's tourism economy, the city is going to feel the loss of travelers. The entire Blue Ridge Parkway and areas of Great Smoky Mountains National Park are closed indefinitely due to the hurricane's impacts, with the damage still being assessed.

"This is definitely going to hurt," Isley said. "Our hearts and minds are focused on supporting our community right now and starting to lay the foundation for recovery in the days and months ahead."

In the immediate aftermath, the Asheville community has joined hands in helping each other.

The city is in a cleanup phase – clearing debris and distributing supplies and resources, especially to rural areas, such as those only accessible by dirt roads.

"Businesses from manufacturing to hospitality need water and power to survive, just like residents," Isley said. "It's heartbreaking, but we will not be broken."

• Citation (aglc Style)

Kathleen Wong, USA TODAY, 'Asheville needs help with Helene recovery', *Fayetteville Observer, The* (online), 13 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2E7A80741AE68



'Tiger Dams' aid storm responses across Florida

October 13, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: David Bauerlein; Jacksonville Florida Times-Union | Section: News | 342 Words Page: A3 OpenURL Link

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - Sometimes the best way to fight water is with water.

That's the concept behind inflatable barriers called Tiger Dams, the big orange tube-shaped blockers against rising water that have spread as a tool for storm responses across Florida and in Jacksonville this hurricane season.

The technology has been around for years. The bright orange coloring and pipeline size of the barrier is eyecatching, but the concept is fairly simple – the tubes are filled with so much water that they act as a heavy dam, sealing off the intrusion of flood water.

The Florida Division of Emergency Management deployed the Tiger Dams in partnership with local governments during Hurricane Helene and then stepped up that outreach for Hurricane Milton.

Gov. Ron DeSantis has been touting the barriers after learning how they held off water during Hurricane Helene when placed around Manatee Memorial Hospital in Bradenton and a fire station in Tampa.

"The fact that you do that here and have no real water damage where those devices were deployed, that's a big, big deal," DeSantis said.

He said in addition to helping safeguard critical infrastructure, the Tiger Dams possibly could be used to seal off residential neighborhoods from rising water.

An individual 18-inch-high Tiger Dam weighs 50 pounds dry but when water fills up the bladder technology, it weighs 6,300 pounds and is the equivalent of 500 sandbags, according to U.S. Flood Control, the company that makes the Tiger Dam in different sizes.

U.S. Flood Control says the barriers fill up quickly with no heavy equipment needed to put them in place.

Jacksonville Director of Emergency Management Andre Ayoub said the city has used the Tiger Dams before at a couple of fire stations. The city also is using the Tiger Dam device in the San Marco neighborhood.

If necessary, the tubes can be stacked on top of each other to create an even higher barrier reaching a height up to 32 feet, according to U.S. Flood Control.

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2E7A8B1928570>



Storms surging - As hurricanes get more intense, some say new category needed

October 13, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: David M. Zimmer; NorthJersey.com| Section: News| 979 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Hurricanes are classified from Categories 1 to 5 based on sustained wind speeds: The stronger the wind, the higher the category.

In recent years, major hurricanes – Category 3 and above – have been hitting U.S. shores at an unusual rate, according to records kept by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

From 2020 through 2023, the U.S. saw 10 hurricanes make landfall. Five of them, Laura, Zeta, Ida, Ian and Idalia, were major storms.

In 2024, four more storms have made landfall: Beryl, Debby, Francine and Helene. One, Helene, was a major hurricane. Hurricane Milton, which came ashore last week as a dangerous Category 3, made it two.

This rate of intense storms is almost unmatched in the nearly 175-year-old U.S. Hurricane Research Division's record books. One major hurricane made landfall per year during a five-year run from 1957 through 1961, though the record over five years is seven major storms. That was in the early 2000s, when all seven hit in two consecutive years: 2004 and 2005.

Many scientists say global warming is fueling more intense hurricanes, with heavier rainfall, stronger winds and greater flooding from higher storm surges. Warmer ocean waters are powering storms to intensify faster, rain harder and linger longer after landfall. Despite no significant increase in the total number of Atlantic hurricanes compared with 150 years ago, record-high sea surface temperatures are driving predictions of more destructive seasons, like the one that was forecast for 2024.

Reports from the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicate that while the global frequency of tropical cyclones has not increased – and may have even decreased over the past century – storms, particularly in the North Atlantic, are becoming stronger.

The panel found that rising ocean temperatures are leading to a greater proportion of hurricanes reaching dangerous Category 4 or 5 levels. It also raised concerns about hurricanes becoming slower-moving, which can lead to prolonged damage. For instance, Hurricane Harvey stalled over Houston in 2017, dumping over 3 feet of rain in three days and triggering catastrophic flooding. Research suggests that climate change made the extreme rainfall from Harvey three times more likely.

Similarly, a 2023 study conducted by climate scientists at Princeton University found that the flooding and wind damage resulting from hurricanes is rising in the U.S. and the frequency of severe storms will continue to climb. That not only means a higher likelihood of being hit by major hurricanes but a higher probability that multiple powerful storms will strike the same region in quick succession.

This trend has already been evident this century with hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria in 2017. Helene and Milton continued the trend this year.

A look back at hurricanes

The National Hurricane Center keeps records dating back to the 1850s. However, officials consider the oldest numbers inaccurate and likely underestimated due to limited coastline populations before the 20th century. Since

then, the proportion of major hurricanes making landfall on U.S. soil has fluctuated. The highest proportion of major hurricanes making landfall was in the 1960s, with 50%. The lowest was in the 2010s, with about 21% hitting the coast at Category 3 or more, records show.

Still, there was also a notable dip in the total number of hurricanes that made landfall in the '60s and '70s, and the early 20th century saw higher averages of hurricanes per year compared with the late 20th century. There has been a slight increase again since 2001, records show.

NOAA officials warn that climate change is expected to worsen the impact of hurricanes in the coming decades, even if the storms themselves fail to change significantly. Rising sea levels, driven by global warming, are expected to amplify flooding caused by storm surges. A warmer atmosphere that can hold more moisture is due to cause heavier rainfall. Moreover, warmer ocean waters should power rapid intensification of wind speeds.

Storms get more intense

A 2023 study led by climate scientists at Rowan University found storms this century have been far more likely to intensify from weak storms into major Category 3 or higher hurricanes within just 24 hours than in the late 1900s. The study published in Scientific Reports analyzed data from the National Hurricane Center on all Atlantic tropical cyclones between 1970 and 2020. It revealed that from 2001 to 2020, tropical storms had an 8% chance of intensifying into Category 3 hurricanes or stronger within 24 hours, compared to only a 3% chance between 1970 and 1990.

The study found that intensification was becoming more common along the U.S. East Coast, in the southern Caribbean and in the eastern Atlantic, while the Gulf of Mexico has seen less rapid intensification compared to previous decades.

Hurricane Milton may skew the numbers, however. Milton grew Monday morning in the western Gulf of Mexico from a Category 2 to a Category 5 hurricane. Maximum sustained wind speeds went from 100 miles per hour to 150 mph in about four hours, according to reports from the National Hurricane Center. Within the next four hours, wind speeds had reached 175 mph, according to center reports.

The Saffir-Simpson scale, introduced in the 1970s and used worldwide, is what is used to rate hurricanes. Simply, it measures intensity through the speed of sustained one-minute surface winds. A Category 5 hurricane, for example, has wind speeds of 157 mph or more. The last Category 5 storm to make landfall in the U.S. was Hurricane Michael on Oct. 10, 2018.

Due to climate change, some scientists have suggested a sixth category may be needed. Category 5 hurricanes were once rare, but some recent storms have such high wind speeds that a Category 6 might be more fitting.

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hurricane helene - Area man narrowly escapes floods

October 13, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Rebecca Sitzes; Shelby Star | Section: News | 1227 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

For two interminable hours, Josh Tippel perched on the roof of his car waiting for rescue, while a raging river flowed around his tires precariously perched on the edge of the asphalt, just inches from dropping off a steep mountain ridge and into a raging river below.

"Last Friday, I was so close to losing my life that I texted loved ones my goodbyes, just in case I never got another chance to," the Kings Mountain native wrote in a Facebook post, describing his ordeal following Hurricane Helene.

Tippel, who moved to Boone to attend college, ended up making the mountain town his home.

"I moved to Kings Mountain when I was 2 from Florida and lived there all the way up until I was 17 and then moved up here for college. I loved it up here and stayed," he said in a phone interview.

He said after graduating, he got a job working in operations at a chemical manufacturer.

He never anticipated nearly losing his life to the strength and fury of Helene.

"We definitely knew it was coming, but the severity was what shocked us," Tippel said. "I was fully expecting going into to work that morning and there would be a lot of rain and one or two trees down but nothing like what actually happened."

He said that Friday, he went into the work like usual, but the power ended up going out around 9:30 a.m. The wind and rain were so severe, he decided to wait until it calmed down before attempting to go home.

"I left the office at 12, and it was not even 5 minutes down the road that I got stuck," he said. "The drive home was awful. It was pretty much fallen tree after fallen tree. There wasn't really a time you could stay in your lane you were just bobbing and weaving and whatever space was available you were taking it."

He said he came to a place in the road where there was normally a small creek, but it had risen around five feet and was flowing over the top of the pavement. The road was on a ridge and below the hill, a river had formed.

"I stopped at that point until it looked like it was calm enough to where I could get over because my car is usually able to handle that kind of thing, but I misjudged and I got stuck there," he said.

In his Facebook post, he wrote that the water had already eroded the side of the road which led to a steep mountain ridge, now filled with fatal rapids of rushing water.

"I was able to get stopped about eight feet from the ledge but the ever-flowing water, and the rocks that traveled down with it, kept slamming into my car and pushing me closer to going over," he said. "Then, the asphalt on the edge started breaking off chunk by chunk until I was barely two feet from never making it home again. One more large rock, one more chunk of asphalt, one more strong gust of wind could have sealed my fate."

He slammed on the brakes trying to prevent his car from being washed over the hill and into the raging river below but the force of the water turned his car sideways and began to pile up rocks and debris around his tires, pushing him closer and closer to the edge. In a panic, he set the emergency brake and called 911. He said some people walking down the street saw him and also called 911 multiple times, trying to get help to arrive before it was too late.

At their urging, he climbed out of his car and onto the roof as the water rose around him.

"The rain picked back up and wind was still crazy in its bursts," he said. "I sat up there for about two hours."

Time passed by in slow motion as he waited to be rescued. While he waited, he made calls and sent messages to friends and family, telling them he was stuck in a river and if he didn't see them again, he loved them and thanked them for being in his life.

The onlookers waited on the other side of the river, plotting a plan of action if he did fall into the water and keeping him calm until firefighters arrived from the fire department. Tippel said one of the men was also named Josh.

"We screamed our names at each other over the wind," he said. "If it were not for him specifically I wouldn't be able to keep my cool."

Tippel said Josh kept him calm and collected, even climbing onto the roof of a nearby house to keep watch for the fire department. He said when rescuers finally arrived, it took another hour to decide the best course of action to get him to safety, and his rescuers ended up wrapping a rope around a large tree and throwing a harness attached to the rope to Tippel. It took several throws before it landed where he could reach it, and after getting the harness on, he waded through the water to the other side. At one point, the power of the water caused him to lose his footing and he fell and had to be pulled to land.

"It was so powerful," he said. "As soon as that happened, I heard and felt them pull and thought if they accidentally let go of the rope, this is the end of me."

He said he felt shell-shocked when he finally reached land and saw how close to the edge he had been. It wasn't until later, after he was taken back to his office, that the adrenaline wore off he felt all the emotions.

Tippel said he hasn't seen Josh or his other helpers since it happened.

"They were on the side of the river that was uncrossable so I never even got to say thank you," he said.

Since his near death experience, he's had to pass by the location every day on his way to work. He said the road has already been repaved, but you can see where the river bed was carved out and how high the water rose, a visual reminder of that dangerous day. He said he has been filled with feelings of gratitude that he survived, and he has a new appreciation for life.

"This could disappear at any given moment so while I have it, I'm going to hold onto it as best as I can," he said.

Tippel said his car was a total loss and when it got towed, the driver said he didn't know how his car hadn't gone over the edge, as there was nothing holding it up but the emergency brake.

Since last week, he said much of the town has been cleaned up, roads are being repaved and internet and power restored, and he has seen an outpouring of assistance for his town and others.

He said his power and internet are still out, and he is trying to find a new car. Friends started a Gofundme to help Tippel. His employer serves as a hub and has been assisting with storing donations and helping with relief efforts.

He said no one in the mountains expected to get hit with a hurricane, but he has seen people come together and help each other following the disaster.

"It's keeping faith in humanity really," he said.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Rebecca Sitzes, Shelby Star, 'hurricane helene - Area man narrowly escapes floods', *Gaston Gazette, The* (online), 13 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2E5A3D5F9AFC8



Rockingham County transports essential supplies to remote areas impacted by storm

October 13, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Author: STAFF REPORT | Section: Main | 234 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene relief

WENTWORTH - Although roads and bridges leading to the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Helene remain impassable, Rockingham County staff and volunteers were able to transport earlier this week directly to remote communities that have otherwise been completely isolated.

Monday afternoon, water and other essential items were transported to Statesville Regional Airport in Iredell County and flown directly to remote locations in western North Carolina. The airlift was the first, but not the last. More supplies are expected to be flown out in the days and weeks ahead.

People are encouraged to help by bringing much-needed supplies directly to the Rockingham County Maintenance Warehouse located at 338 Cherokee Camp Road, Wentworth, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, through next week. Staff will be available to assist and direct.

Rockingham County Libraries will also be taking donated supplies at the following times:

Eden, Madison/Mayodan, and Reidsville libraries - Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.Stoneville - Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Other drop-off points are the town and city halls of Eden, Madison, Mayodan, Reidsville, Stoneville and Wentworth during normal business hours. All of Rockingham's in-county fire departments are also accepting donated goods.

For more information, visit rockinghamcountync.gov.

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STAFF REPORT, 'Rockingham County transports essential supplies to remote areas impacted by storm', *Greensboro News & Record* (online), 13 Oct 2024 1A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2E82209EAC9BO>



NCHSAA changes fall sports schedule due to Hurricane Helene

October 13, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Author: BRYANT ROCHE Staff Reporter | Section: Local | 817 Words

Page: 3B OpenURL Link

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association has changed its fall sports calendar in response to the damage caused by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina.

"Changes to the fall calendar are difficult as well as complex but necessary," NCHSAA President Stephen Gainey and association Commissioner Que Tucker said in a joint statement. "Keeping our student-athletes safe as we try to minimize risk of injury was central to any decisions made. We commend the work of the NCHSAA staff in its research, the board of directors in making time to consider these changes and the willingness of our host partners to accommodate any changes and make their venues available."

The football schedule has been pushed back a week for each round. State championships will occur on Dec. 20 and 21. The reporting deadline has been moved from Nov. 1 to Nov. 9, with seeding occurring on Nov. 10. The first round is scheduled for Nov. 15 and subsequent round following each week.

The new state championship football schedule conflicts with the annual HAECO Invitational basketball tournament, currently scheduled for Dec. 19-21. Of the participating schools, Greensboro Day, an NCISAA member, is the only one of the eight participants that doesn't have football.

Dudley is likely to be affected the most. While basketball hasn't begun, based on last year's rosters, four projected key players - Jerron Blackwell, CJ Neely, Nasir Newkirk and Andrew Rogers-are also key starters for the Dudley football team which is 6-0.

The Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas is also scheduled for Dec. 21, with Blackwell and Newkirk having been selected to play.

The North Carolina Coaches Association said its East-West All-Star Game in Greensboro is still scheduled for Dec. 22. The NCCA said that players chosen for that game and are involved in the NCHSAA state championships will be replaced, and that head coaches for the all-star game will be replaced by an assistant and reassigned for the 2026 game.

Dudley coach Steven Davis was selected to coach the West team, and Southeast Guilford coach Earl Bates is an assistant. Player rosters for this game have not been announced.

The Frank Spencer Holiday Classic, a traditional Winston-Salem boys basketball tournament, is scheduled for Dec. 18-21. Mount Tabor's Virginia Tech recruit Shamarius Peterkin has excelled in both football and basketball for the Spartans.

The NCHSAA is allowing teams to participate in one additional contest for all sports with a season limit. In this case, the contest must receive prior approval from the NCHSAA. It can't exceed daily or weekly limitations and the contest can't exceed the season limit for both schools. Statistics from the added game cannot be entered into MaxPreps.

The volleyball reporting deadline has been moved back three days to Oct. 19 with seeding to be announced on the next day. The new schedule puts the first round on Oct. 22, the second round on Oct. 24, the third round Oct. 26 and the fourth round on Oct. 29. Regionals will be on Oct. 31 and state championships on Nov. 2.

The weekly limitation on volleyball has been modified to allow for eight matches to make up for postponements, but the weekly limitation remains the same.

The boys soccer reporting deadline has been moved from Nov. 31 to Nov. 6, with seeding on Nov. 7. The first round of the playoffs is set for Nov. 9, the second round Nov. 12, the third on Nov. 14 and the fourth on Nov. 16. Regionals are set for Nov. 19 and state championships are to take place on Nov. 22 and 23. The weekly limitation is modified to make up games but can't exceed four in a week, with the daily limitation being the same.

The girls tennis individual tournament reporting deadline is the only one that remains on the same day, Oct. 14, but the time has been shifted from 3 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. Regionals are on Oct. 18 and 19 and the state championships are on Oct. 25 and 26. However, the dual team reporting deadline has been modified from Oct. 10 to Oct. 17, with seeding on Oct. 18. The first round is on Oct. 21 with the second round two days later. The third round is set for the 28 and the fourth on Oct. 30. Regionals are to be held on Nov. 5 and state championships on Nov. 9.

The cross country reporting deadline has been pushed back three days from Oct. 22. Regionals are to be held on Oct. 26 and state championships on Nov. 2.

Cheerleading and girls golf are the only sports not to undergo a calendar change, but for girls golf, the minimum number of nine-hole rounds to qualify for regionals is revised from five to three.

The association didn't announce any changes for winter or spring sports. For state playoffs, there have been no venue changes.

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Main

October 13, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Section: Main | 652 Words

Page: 2A OpenURL Link

On the morning of Friday, Sept. 27, I woke up to a nice surprise.

I was in Columbus, Ga., for the funeral and burial of my father, and that town had been directly in the projected path of Hurricane Helene.

When I went to bed on Thursday night, with Helene in the Gulf of Mexico making landfall in Florida, I didn't set my alarm because I expected to be awakened at 3 a.m. by trees falling on our rented house, which was set back in a pine forest.

Instead, Bess and I awoke Friday at 7:30 a.m., to the sun shining and birds singing.

My first thought was that we were in heaven.

But we were very much alive. Our best friends from across town called to say they were bringing over donuts and the kind of Southern sausage that you can only get directly from a farmer.

It was a beautiful morning.

I thought about that scene from the "Sun Also Rises," where Jake and Bill are fishing in Italy before the bullfights, and Bill says, "Oh, how should we know? We should not question. Our stay on earth is not for long. Let us rejoice and believe and give thanks."

It's one of my favorite moments in literature, a peaceful moment between friends before a whole lot of sadness and existential angst.

Meanwhile, my children were trying to make their way to Columbus for their grandfather's funeral after being scared by the computer weather models into spending the night in the eastern part of the state.

Which is exactly where the storm went.

My daughter and her husband were driving around fallen trees and squirming power lines in Augusta, and one of my sons was waiting for floodwaters to subside in Atlanta.

Ernest Hemingway wasn't exactly a praying man, and neither was his protagonist Jake or his buddy Bill, but I was in an attitude of prayer that morning.

I was praying for safety for my children and our other family members on the road.

And frankly, I was giving thanks for the bright sunshine we were having in the town where my father was born and died, on this day we were saying goodbye to him.

Later, I learned more about the devastation in Augusta and the terrible destruction and chaos in the mountains of North Carolina, and like everybody I watched the death toll rise.

The image I can't get out of my head is from "Anguish in Ashe," a story our reporter Susie Spear wrote about storm

damage in Ashe County. A man across the Virginia line watched his house floating away and in his despair took his own life.

"He said he was too old to start over and went to his truck and shot himself," said Lansing Fire Chief Jeff Venable, a friend.

Anybody who's lived any amount of time knows that life is a mix of storms and sunshine.

Hopefully you find the peace and strength to ride out the storms.

Hopefully you find the humility and grace to handle those bright days that seem too good to be true.

On Thursday night, my oldest son and his wife were in town and they suggested we take a drive and view the Northern Lights.

My mom has been staying with me and Bess since my dad died, and we all piled into the car and headed toward Bur-Mil Park.

We parked off Strawberry Road and walked along the Atlantic & Yadkin Greenway, under a cover of trees, over a long wooden footbridge, into a field.

And that's when we saw the aurora borealis, a vast pinkish glow piercing the curtain of night.

Far away, it was a solar storm, but down here it didn't feel like one. We just stood there in the dark, thankful to be there.

Then we drove home.

"Now that was a fun adventure," my mother said.

Dimon Kendrick-Holmes is North Carolina editor for Lee Enterprises. Contact him at dimon.kendrick-holmes@greensboro.com.

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