

Climate change made deadly Hurricane Helene more intense: study

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Lucie AUBOURG | Section: National | 527 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene's torrential rain and powerful winds were made about 10 percent more intense due to climate change, according to a study published Wednesday by the World Weather Attribution (WWA) group.

Although a 10 percent increase "might seem relatively small... that small change in the hazard really leads to big change in impacts and damage," said climate scientist Friederike Otto, who heads the research organization.

The study also found that fossil fuels -- the primary cause of climate change -- have made hurricanes like Helene 2.5 times more likely to occur.

In other words, storms of Helene's magnitude were formerly anticipated once every 130 years, but now the probability is closer to once every 53 years, on average.

To conduct the study, researchers focused on three aspects of Hurricane Helene: precipitation, winds and the water temperature of the Gulf of Mexico -- a key factor in its formation.

"All aspects of this event were amplified by climate change to different degrees," Ben Clarke, a co-author of the study and researcher at Imperial College London, told a press conference.

"And we'll see more of the same as the world continues to warm," he continued.

The research by WWA, an international group of scientists and meteorologists who study the role of climate change in extreme weather events, comes as the southeastern US state of Florida prepares for the arrival of another major hurricane, Milton, just 10 days after it was hit by Helene.

- Destruction -

Helene made landfall in northwestern Florida on September 26 as a Category 4 hurricane with winds up to 140 mph (225 kph).

The storm then moved north, causing heavy rain and devastating floods in several states, including North Carolina, where it claimed the highest death toll.

The authors of the study emphasized that the risk posed by hurricanes has increased in scope beyond coastal areas.

Bernadette Woods Placky, chief meteorologist at NGO Climate Central, said Helene "had so much intensity" that it would take time for it to lose strength, but the "storm was moving fast... so it could go farther inland pretty quickly."

This study utilized three methodologies to examine the three aspects of the storm, and was conducted by researchers from the US, the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands.

To study its rainfall, researchers used an approach based on both observation and climate models, depending on the two regions involved: one for coastal areas like Florida, and another for inland areas like the Appalachian mountains. In both cases, the study found precipitation had increased by 10 percent because of global warming, which is currently at 1.3 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

To study Helene's winds, scientists looked at hurricane data dating back as far as 1900.

They determined Helene's winds were 11 percent stronger, or 13 mph (21 kph), as a result of climate change.

Lastly, the researchers examined the water temperature in the Gulf of Mexico, where Helene formed, finding it was around 2 degrees Celsius above normal.

This record temperature was made 200 to 500 times more likely due to climate change, the study asserts.

Warmer oceans release more water vapor, providing more energy for storms as they form.

"If humans continue to burn fossil fuels, the US will face even more destructive hurricanes," Clarke warned in a statement.

la/jgc/md

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North Carolina approves \$273M for Helene victims in first act of many

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Elyse Apel | The Center Square | Section: State | 666 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – In the first legislative session since Hurricane Helene devastated North Carolina, lawmakers proposed the "first step" in many to provide aid and financial assistance to those in need.

The Disaster Recovery Act of 2024 will dole out \$273 million, mostly to different state agencies and local governments who can then use the money to help those most affected. Helene has killed 237 across six states in the Southeast.

Senate approval was 48-0 and the House of Representatives 113-0. Gov. Roy Cooper's administration was involved in discussions and is expected to sign the bill Thursday.

All of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump's suggestions for displaced voters are included in the bill.

"Recovering from Hurricane Helene will be no small task," said Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, at a Wednesday press conference. "But, I believe we, the state of North Carolina, and the people of North Carolina are up to that task."

Helene made landfall in Florida on Sept. 26 and inundated the Appalachian Mountains after scooting through Georgia. Just shy of two weeks later, not all missing persons reports are cleared, according to reports.

Damage estimates from the storm is in the tens of billions according to multiple analyses, with counties in western North Carolina being particularly devastated.

All the lawmakers that spoke during the joint press conference acknowledged how invaluable the help of individuals, organizations, and businesses has been in beginning the recovery process. Many are from western North Carolina, or visited the mountains to help or personally see the devastation.

"With all of the tragedy that we've seen in western North Carolina, we've also seen an incredible amount of humanity," said House Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland.

They emphasized that the damage is unprecedented.

"This is by far the most devastating thing I've ever experienced," said Sen. Ralph Hise, R-Mitchell. "We've had an incredible outpouring from so many communities across the state and others, but we're in a long-term recovery."

Hise, from hard-hit Mitchell County, also committed that this is just the beginning of the assistance that will be given.

"There's a lot of distrust in the areas I have, but I hope we can begin to show that North Carolina is stepping up to its responsibilities, and we are here for the people of the West," he said.

Sen. Timothy Moffitt, R-Henderson, added that it is important for the Legislature not to ignore the rural communities.

"We've often complained here in Raleigh as the mountain delegation, that the mountains are often forgotten about," Moffitt said. "We're different, we're mountain folks, we're tough, we're resilient, and we're uncomfortable in the spotlight. But it is needed

"This is something that is beyond description."

Moore said the Legislature is being careful to make sure that the Federal Emergency Management Agency and federal agencies pay their fair share of the cost.

"We want to be careful in how the money is spent, so that we don't forfeit the ability to get those federal dollars," Moore said. "If we do it right, it is a 90-10 match, 90% born by the feds, 10% by the state. But if you don't do it exactly the way it's supposed to be done, you can end up forfeiting those dollars."

The state has \$744 million in disaster response reserve to tap, along with \$4.75 billion in what is known as a rainy day fund.

The State Board of Elections is getting \$5 million to ensure that they are able to continue to reach voters in the affected areas before Election Day.

While the board did recently approve additional assistance and flexibility for 13 of the hardest-hit counties, the Legislature is expanding that to 25 counties.

The act also cuts a lot of government and bureaucratic red tape to help with a swift recovery.

"We've also waived some certain environmental requirements," Moore said, "like burning restrictions, wastewater treatment restrictions, and road construction to get this process moving. We don't need these efforts tied up in bureaucracy and delay."

Lawmakers plan to hold another legislative session on Oct. 24 and again in November to discuss what other needs must be addressed.

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A US climate scientist sees hurricane Helene's devastation firsthand

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Ulysse BELLIER | Section: National | 504 Words OpenURL Link

Carl Schreck spent his career studying tropical storms thousands of miles away from home.

But when Hurricane Helene hit the American climate scientist's hometown in North Carolina and flooded several of his friends' homes, the shocking experience made him rethink his research priorities.

"I know how devastating the rainfall in hurricanes can be, but like to actually know people... that are affected by it -it is, it's really heartbreaking to see," Schreck told AFP from his home near Ashville, the epicenter of the disaster
that ravaged the southeastern United States.

As another major hurricane, Milton, was barrelling toward Florida, a study released Wednesday by the respected World Weather Attribution concluded that Helene's destructive force was exacerbated by climate change.

Schreck, a scholar at the Institute for Climate Studies at North Carolina State University, and his colleagues had been studying Helene's formation in the Caribbean for days -- until it pummeled Asheville on September 26-27.

Several of Schreck's friends saw their houses destroyed, while a family he knew died in the flooding.

"It's been over 100 years since we've seen something like this," said Schreck, whose own house was spared. "So it's been a very tragic experience for our community."

- 'Irony' -

With at least 230 people killed, Helene is the second deadliest hurricane to hit the continental United States in more than half a century after Katrina, which ravaged the state of Louisiana in 2005, claiming nearly 1,400 lives.

But amid the immense material damage, another misfortune befell the community in Asheville: a major climate data center, which shares the building with Schreck's facility, lost power in the storm, and its crucial data is currently inaccessible to scientists worldwide.

"That's one of the real ironies of this event," said Schreck. "We collect all of the world's weather and climate data right here in Asheville, going back more than 100 years, and power was cut off to that."

Emergency workers are having to pump water into the center's water cooling system from a fire truck to cool down the computers.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which manages the center, says it is working "to minimize the risk of any potential data loss," but gives no timeline for when the center will resume operations.

- Communicate better? -

As soon as cellphone service was restored in the region following Helene, Schreck and his colleagues got to work.

"There has been a lot of discussion about, like, what does this mean for climate change?" Schreck recalled. "What's going on with our community? Why was this so severe? How could we have communicated it better?"

Although Helene struck Florida first, it was in the Appalachian mountains more than 500 kilometers from the coast

where the vast majority of deaths occurred, mainly due to torrential flooding.

Inland rainfall, "is one of the most dangerous parts of a hurricane that usually doesn't get enough attention," he said. "And that's something that's... getting worse with climate change."

"I've always been really interested in how hurricanes affect rainfall and flooding," he added. "So that's something I'm really gonna be looking at even more going forward."

ube/bpe/md/jgc

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Biden slams Trump for 'onslaught of lies' over hurricanes

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Danny KEMP| Section: National | 443 Words OpenURL Link

US President Joe Biden on Wednesday accused Donald Trump of unleashing an "onslaught of lies" over the government's response to Hurricanes Milton and Helene.

Biden warned that Milton, which is barreling towards Florida, was "looking like the storm of the century" and said misinformation could harm people who need help.

"There's been a reckless, irresponsible and relentless promotion of disinformation and outright lies," Biden told a briefing at the White House as the monster storm barreled towards Florida.

Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, "has led the onslaught of lies," said Biden, who was joined virtually in the briefing by Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic candidate battling Trump in November's election.

Biden said the disinformation was "undermining confidence" in rescue and recovery work and it was "harmful to those who need help the most."

Trump and Republicans have been pushing false claims over the storms, targeting in particular the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

"Assertions have been made that property is being confiscated. That's simply not true. They're saying people impacted by these storms will receive \$750 in cash and no more. That's simply not true," said Biden.

"They're saying the money needed for this crisis is being diverted to migrants. What a ridiculous thing to say. It's not true."

Biden also slammed the "even more bizarre" claims being promoted by pro-Trump Republican Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene.

Greene was "saying the federal government is literally controlling the weather... It's beyond ridiculous. It's got to stop."

Biden repeated his warnings that Florida residents in the affected areas should evacuate immediately: "It's literally a matter of life and death."

Harris -- who joined the briefing virtually from New York where she has been on an election media blitz -- promised to crack down on any traders gouging prices of food, fuel and accommodation as Milton approaches.

"Anyone taking advantage of consumers will be held accountable," Harris told the briefing.

Harris also echoed Biden's criticisms of Trump in a separate telephone interview with CNN.

"It is dangerous, it is unconscionable, frankly, that anyone who'd consider themselves a leader would mislead desperate people to the point that those desperate people would not receive the aid to which they are entitled," she said.

"We all know it's dangerous, and the gamesmanship has to stop."

Biden postponed a trip to Germany and Angola on Tuesday and has been heavily promoting the White House's efforts in recent days for both Milton and the response to Helene, which killed more than 230 people across the southeastern United States.

Biden and Harris were stung by criticism of their initial response to Hurricane Helene, when the president spent the weekend working from his beach house and the vice president was at an election fundraiser on the US west coast.

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Biden begs Florida residents to flee as Milton returns to Category 5

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Gerard Martinez and Gianrigo Marletta | Section: National | 704 Words OpenURL Link

US President Joe Biden has begged Florida residents to flee Hurricane Milton, warning that the Category 5 storm could turn into the worst natural disaster to hit the state in a century.

As the second huge hurricane in as many weeks rumbled toward Florida's west coast, people raced to board up homes and flee.

"It's a matter of life and death, and that's not hyperbole," Biden said from the White House on Tuesday, urging those under orders to leave to "evacuate now, now,"

As of Tuesday, Milton returned to the maximum Category 5 designation, generating maximum sustained winds of 165 mph (270 kph), the National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

"Fluctuations in intensity are likely while Milton moves across the eastern Gulf of Mexico, but Milton is expected to be a dangerous major hurricane when it reaches the west-central coast of Florida Wednesday night," the NHC said .

Governor Ron DeSantis, at a news conference, ticked off town after town in danger.

"Basically the entire peninsula portion of Florida is under some type of either a watch or a warning," he said.

Airlines put on extra flights out of Tampa, Orlando, Fort Myers and Sarasota, as highways clogged up with escaping traffic and gas stations sold out of fuel.

- Walls of water -

Hurricane expert Michael Lowry warned that in the Tampa area, home to about three million people, Milton's storm surge "could double the storm surge levels observed two weeks ago during Helene," which brought massive flooding.

Biden postponed a major trip to Germany and Angola to oversee the federal response, as storm relief efforts have emerged as a political battleground ahead of the presidential election on November 5.

Donald Trump has tapped into frustration about the emergency response after Hurricane Helene and fueled it with disinformation, falsely claiming that disaster money had been spent instead on migrants.

Biden on Tuesday slammed Trump's comments as "un-American," while Vice President Kamala Harris warned about the danger that misinformation posed to the federal response.

"It's crude. Have you no empathy, man, for the suffering of other people? Have you no sense of purpose if you purport to be a leader?" she said, challenging Trump directly, during an interview with late-night talk show host Stephen Colbert.

In a scene of frantic preparation repeated all over Florida, dozens of cars lined up at a sports facility in Tampa to pick up sandbags to protect their homes from flooding.

John Gomez, 75, ignored official advice and traveled all the way from Chicago to try to save a second house he has in Florida.

"I think it's better to be here in case something happens," Gomez said as he waited in line.

But Katie, in her 30s, heeded the call to evacuate and arrived in Orlando with her five-year-old son and dog from St. Petersburg, a coastal city where Hurricane Helene had brought three feet of floodwater into her bayside home two weeks ago.

Normally she would ride out the storm at a friend's elevated apartment, she told AFP, "but I'm not taking any chances this time around."

- Global warming factor -

Scientists say global warming has a role in intense storms as warmer ocean surfaces release more water vapor, providing additional energy for storms, which exacerbates their winds.

A report by the World Weather Attribution (WWA) group published Wednesday said Hurricane Helene's torrential rain and powerful winds were made about 10 percent more intense due to climate change.

Storms of Helene's magnitude were formerly anticipated once every 130 years, but now the probability is closer to once every 53 years, on average.

On the ground, communities hit by deadly Hurricane Helene, which slammed Florida late last month, have rushed to remove debris that could become dangerous projectiles as Milton approaches.

In Mexico's Yucatan, strong winds toppled trees and pylons, and heavy rain caused flooding, but the peninsula avoided major damage or casualties as the storm barreled offshore.

Across the southeastern United States, emergency workers are still struggling to provide relief after Helene, which killed at least 230 people across several states.

It hit the Florida coastline on September 26 as a major Category 4 hurricane, causing massive flooding in remote inland towns in states farther north, including North Carolina and Tennessee.

Helene was the deadliest natural disaster to hit the US mainland since 2005's Hurricane Katrina, with the death toll still rising.

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Time running out in Florida to flee Hurricane Milton

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Gerard Martinez with Daniel Stublen in Orlando| Section: National | 666 Words OpenURL Link

Florida residents fled or just hunkered down in the final hours Wednesday before massive Hurricane Milton pummels the state, as government emergency relief efforts were dragged to the center of the US election.

Ferocious winds and tidal surges are expected to inundate the heavily populated and low-lying coast, with the cities of Tampa and Sarasota in the storm's path, amid rising fears of widespread chaos and multiple fatalities.

With Milton coming immediately after lethal Hurricane Helene also hit the US southeast, Donald Trump has sought political advantage from the twin storms by falsely saying aid is channeled away from his Republican Party supporters toward migrants.

At the White House on Wednesday, President Joe Biden slammed the Republican election candidate's "onslaught of lies."

"There's been a reckless, irresponsible and relentless promotion of disinformation and outright lies," Biden said in angry remarks.

Biden said the disinformation was "undermining confidence" in rescue and recovery work and it was "harmful to those who need help the most."

In Florida, officials again warned those in danger zones to seek safe shelter.

"You still have time to evacuate if you are in an evacuation zone," Governor Ron DeSantis told a press briefing.

"This hurricane is going to pack a major, major punch and do an awful lot of damage."

But time was running out.

- 'Nervous' -

By Wednesday morning, Milton was located 250 miles (400 kilometers) southwest of Tampa, generating maximum sustained winds of 155 mph (250 kph), according to the National Hurricane Center (NHC).

"Winds will begin to increase along the west coast of Florida by this afternoon," the NHC said. "Preparations, including evacuation if told to do so, should be rushed."

"I am nervous. This is something we just went through with the other storm -- ground saturated, still recovering from that," Sarasota resident Randy Prior, who owns a pool business, told AFP.

Prior, 36, says he plans to ride out the storm at home, after recently toughing out Hurricane Helene, which flooded the same western parts of Florida before wreaking havoc across remote areas of North Carolina and further inland.

"I own a business, so once the storm stops, I've got to be here, help clean up, get everything back to normal. But this one's a big one for sure."

Tampa resident Luis Santiago said he would "close up everything" and leave.

Airlines added flights out of Tampa, Orlando, Fort Myers and Sarasota, as highways clogged up with escaping traffic and gas station pumps ran dry.

Not all Floridians and tourists were hurrying to leave.

John Gomez, 75, traveled all the way from Chicago to try to save his Florida home.

"I think it's better to be here in case something happens," Gomez said.

- Political clashes -

At Walt Disney World in Orlando, which was expected to receive a big hit once Milton crosses the peninsula, visitors were getting a few rides in before the theme parks close shortly after midday.

"It's safe and we're here, so might as well," said Lindsay Moore, 42, who flew in from Hawaii over the weekend.

"We thought about canceling but airlines wouldn't let us."

Trump has repeatedly fuelled conspiracy theories and disinformation about supposed failure by Biden and his vice president, the Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris.

"Western North Carolina, and the whole state, for that matter, has been totally and incompetently mismanaged by Harris/Biden," Trump said Wednesday on his Truth Social network.

"Hold on, and vote these horrible 'public servants' out of office."

Harris attacked Trump late Tuesday, asking: "Have you no empathy, man, for the suffering of other people?"

Scientists say global warming has a role in intense storms as warmer ocean surfaces release more water vapor, providing additional energy for storms, which exacerbates their winds.

A report by the World Weather Attribution group published Wednesday said Hurricane Helene's torrential rain and powerful winds were made about 10 percent more intense due to climate change.

"The tragedy is that climate scientists have been warning of this for decades," said John Marsham, a professor at the University of Leeds.

Across the southeastern United States, emergency workers are still struggling to provide relief after Helene, which killed at least 235 people.

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Florida seaside haven a ghost town as hurricane nears

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Gerard MARTINEZ with Daniel STUBLEN in Orlando| Section: National | 671 Words OpenURL Link

The normally pleasant seaside town of Sarasota looked deserted Wednesday, with most of its residents gone or seeking shelter as dangerous Hurricane Milton rumbled toward Florida.

The town of 57,000 people sits on a bay connected to the Gulf of Mexico and in normal times its prime location is a lure for visitors.

But these are anything but normal times: Hurricane Helene hit Florida two weeks ago, doing major damage, and next comes Milton -- a monstrous storm packing 130 mph winds and potential for a coastal surge of 15 feet (4.5 meters).

Sarasota is one of many cities and towns along the west coast of Florida that are girding for Milton, which is expected to make landfall overnight Wednesday into Thursday.

Brad Reeves, a 55-year-old building inspector, took a walk along the bay in the morning to have one last look before hunkering down in his apartment, in a modern building several miles from the coast.

"This situation really rattles your nerves," Reeves told AFP.

"You have moments where you're excited, moments where you're scared, moments where you just can't sleep. Everything is just topsy-turvy."

Out in the bay, a boat that crashed into the pier of a seaside restaurant less than two weeks ago during Hurricane Helene is still stuck there.

- 'Adds insult to injury' -

Also taking a walk along the water as steady rain falls were 60-year-old Marilyn Borisk and her chihuahua Nemo.

Borisk lives in an apartment in an area that is under an evacuation order but she has decided to stay put, saying she trusts her building, constructed to withstand hurricane force winds, will be sturdy enough.

"It's extremely upsetting for this community. It's a very beautiful, special place, and it's been destroyed with Helene," she said

"Everyone knows someone that's lost a house in the last storm, so it definitely adds insult to injury."

Others in Sarasota are rushing to try to protect their property the best they can from the catastrophic damage that Milton is expected to inflict.

Phil Davies, a 36-year-old real estate agent, shovels sand into bags and dumps them in the trunk of his car. He will stack them outside his house.

"I am just going to hunker down and get ready for this," said Davies. "It will be a rough night. We'll make it through and rebuild what needs to be rebuilt, and we'll be okay."

- Hotel as shelter -

In the city center one of the few hotels that remain open has been turned into a shelter for people who do not want to leave town but do not feel safe in their homes.

Dozens of people -- young, elderly, families with kids -- walked up and down the corridors of the hotel with their belongings stacked on carts.

Many of them brought their dogs and took them out of the hotel for walks.

"We could not leave our pet alone. It must always be with us," Samuel Urzua, a 53-year-old chef, said of his dog, Bombon.

"You feel safer here. There are trees that could fall onto the roof of my house so I came here with some friends and relatives," said Urzua.

- 'It's scary, man' -

Milton is threatening much of the west coast of Florida and many people have sought refuge far from the Gulf of Mexico.

In Orlando, in central Florida, people are afraid of flooding, just two years after Hurricane Ian deluged them with water.

"lan was a really big eye-opener for us," said Brandon Allen, a water rescue official preparing to deploy to areas at risk of flooding.

"As lan showed, all things can go out the window," in huge storms like this, Allen said.

On the outskirts of Orlando, home to Disney World, dozens of people have taken refuge at a high school as they await the arrival of Milton.

"It's scary, man," said Nour Jeboki, 34, who brought his wife and kids to the shelter.

He lived in Texas 20 years ago and lost everything in a hurricane. This time he was determined to find some place safe to weather Milton.

Jeboki said he is praying for the best. "This one here, I'm nervous," he said.

gma/dw/bjt

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No children left on Greece's famed but emptying island

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Hélène COLLIOPOULOU| Section: National | 656 Words OpenURL Link

When winter draws in on Antikythera, the already meagre population of the isolated Greek island shrinks to almost nothing.

"There are 20 to 25 of us, no children, no bakery," said local leader Giorgos Harhalakis, who is fighting an uphill battle to revive the small Aegean island's fortunes.

"I'm not giving up," he told AFP.

A speck of land between the islands of Kythera and Crete, Antikythera, like many rural regions in Greece, has suffered steady depopulation.

When the last national census was held in 2021, it had just 39 inhabitants, down from 120 in 2011.

Harhalakis, 37, still remembers his first years at primary school in the 1990s, before his family, like others, was forced by "financial problems" to move to the mainland.

At the time, the island was home to "farmers, fishermen and cattle breeders" and had around 15 communities, he said.

Today, only the port of Potamos is inhabited.

In the rocky heights of Antikythera, the dry-stone walls of terraced fields are still visible between abandoned and collapsed houses.

The island's only connection to the outside world is by boat to Kythera and Crete.

- Shuttered schools -

The exodus meant that the school closed for two decades before reopening in 2018 for just three pupils -- the children of Despina and Dionysis Andronikos, an Antikythera couple who returned from Athens.

"But in 2021, when my eldest daughter finished primary school, we had to leave so she could go to secondary school in Kythera," Dionysis Andronikos said.

The school was forced to close again -- one of dozens across Greece that faced a similar fate owing to lack of pupils when the school year began last month.

Greece's fertility rate of 1.43 children per woman in 2021 is below the EU average of 1.53 children, according to EU data agency Eurostat.

A recent study by the Greek Institute for Demographic Research (IDEM) found that one in three of the country's municipalities has fewer than 10 births a year.

The institute attributed this to Greece's ageing population, but also to "the extremely uneven distribution of the population".

Athens is home to over a third of the country's 10.5 million inhabitants.

And with over a fifth of its population aged 65 and over, Greece ranks fourth among EU member states with the highest number of elderly.

Only Italy (23.8 percent), Portugal (23.7 percent) and Finland (23.1 percent) rank higher, according to Eurostat.

To make things worse, over half a million young people left the country during the financial meltdown of the last decade.

Some efforts have been made to attract new residents to areas in need.

In the mountain village of Fourna, in central Greece, the local church invited large families to move in to prevent the closure of the local school.

In September, this initiative attracted a family with six children.

But a similar attempt, launched three years ago in Antikythera, has so far failed to bear fruit.

- Ancient computer, new hope -

For Harhalakis, the island's community leader, the main problem "is the lack of infrastructure. The state needs to offer incentives" for the construction of houses and shops, he said.

In winter, the island has only one cafe, which serves both as a tavern and a small store. It is run by a man in his eighties.

"The native population is ageing, and the future of the island is in doubt," said Catherine Dechosal, a retired Frenchwoman who divides her time between the island and her homeland.

This year the government introduced a baby bonus to counter the demographic collapse.

But experts warn that increasing the number of births is not the only answer.

"Mortality rates and immigration play a decisive role and should not be downplayed," Vyron Kotzamanis, director of IDEM, recently told Greek state news agency ANA.

Harhalakis hopes that the planned climate change observatory on the island will create jobs.

Antikythera already enjoys an outsized fame in the scientific world.

A 2nd-century astrological clock believed to be the world's oldest computer was found by sponge divers off its coast in the early 20th century among the remains of a Roman-era shipwreck.

hec/jph/fg

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Hélène COLLIOPOULOU, 'No children left on Greece's famed but emptying island', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 9 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1A30A81E74E00



Displaced Bucs pack bags, families, riding out week in New Orleans

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Field Level Media| Section: National | 482 Words OpenURL Link

A structured early exit from Tampa for Week 6 allowed the Buccaneers to pack their bags, families and pets for an impromptu trip to New Orleans as the region braces for the impact of Hurricane Milton. Head coach Todd Bowles described the mission for the team and staff as a three-day process with logistical hurdles in organizing families, players and staff to make the trip to Louisiana on Tuesday morning. More than 350 are in the team's traveling party this week and the Buccaneers evacuated other player and staff family members to resorts in Orlando to remove them from harm's way. "I think overall, everything has gone smoothly. We got the team out, we got the families out, we got their pets out," Bowles said Wednesday from a seat behind a folding table in a makeshift press conference setting. "Family is the most important thing right now. You can replace material things and you want everybody to be OK and you hope everybody evacuated; if not hunkered down safely. Family is the most important thing. If you can get your family out and keep them safe, everything else can be replaced." Bowles and several current players experienced a similar but far less orderly team evacuation prior to Hurricane Ian in 2022. Bowles said multiple players drove with family and there were failed connections along the way. The Bucs made only minor adjustments to their work week when Hurricane Helene made landfall in the Big Bend region of Florida two weeks ago. This week the Buccaneers are practicing at Tulane University in the late afternoon. They'll play the Saints in New Orleans on Sunday before determining possible next steps. Bowles said the Buccaneers will assess the aftermath of the hurricane and another round of potential logistical challenges that could await. The team facility at One Buc Place is landlocked and adjacent to Raymond James Stadium, but sits blocks from the Hillsborough River to the east and is separated from Tampa Bay and the Gulf of Mexico only by Tampa International Airport. The Buccaneers weighed moving to Houston for the week but chose New Orleans to avoid making multiple trips before Sunday. They could be in a similar circumstance next week before a scheduled Monday night game at home against Baltimore. Bowles noted obvious challenges and provisional plans should significant damage to the team facility force the Buccaneers to stay on the road for an extended period. He knows players face unusual challenges returning to hotel rooms at night, many of them with family members present. "We understand that the things that we do in football are a small mechanism in the game of life and the hurricane is going to affect people," Bowles said. "But we're focused and we're trying to get ready for a game. If everybody's here and there families are here, that makes it a lot easier." -- Field Level Media

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Field Level Media, 'Displaced Bucs pack bags, families, riding out week in New Orleans', *Courier-Times, The*(online), 9 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1F3EFE76A5118



Trump heads to Biden country as US election heats up

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Frankie TAGGART| Section: National | 601 Words OpenURL Link

Donald Trump will campaign Wednesday in the former coal mining hub where President Joe Biden grew up as the Republican White House candidate woos traditionally Democratic blue-collar voters in the key election battleground of Pennsylvania.

Trump is polling neck-and-neck with Democrat Kamala Harris in the Keystone State, the once-thriving epicenter of the US industrial heartland, and the battleground considered one of the biggest prizes in the Electoral College system that decides US elections.

"The Harris-Biden administration's inflationary policies and disastrous handling of our southern border has devastated Pennsylvania," the Trump campaign said in a statement ahead of his rally in Scranton.

"With prices up over 20 percent and real wages down since Kamala Harris took office, Pennsylvanians are struggling to make ends meet. Meanwhile, tens of millions of illegal immigrants have flooded our country on Kamala's watch, worsening already sky-high rent and real estate costs."

Although Biden's family base is in Delaware, he grew up in Scranton and remains enormously popular in the county where it is located, which he won by nine points on the way to claiming the state in 2020.

Harris, Biden's vice president, has maintained a nationwide polling lead of two to three points since mid-August and has been gaining on Trump on the economy, boosted by easing inflation and a robust jobs report last week.

But the polls in Pennsylvania and the other six swing states likely to decide the election have been much closer.

And with four weeks to go until Election Day on November 5, new Gallup polling shows Trump outperforming Harris 54 percent to 45 percent on the economy as he touts proposals for a tariff-led manufacturing "renaissance."

Pennsylvania is seen as a bastion of the working class vote, and both candidates have visited regularly.

The former president, 78, has a second event Wednesday in Reading, 60 miles (100 kilometers) northwest of Philadelphia.

- Media blitz -

Trump was last in the Keystone State just four days ago for a defiant return to the site of a campaign rally where he was grazed on the ear by an assassin's bullet in July, joined onstage by billionaire backer Elon Musk.

The tech entrepreneur turned right-wing conspiracy theorist stressed the tight margins that will likely decide the election in battleground states like Pennsylvania, claiming that Trump "must win to preserve democracy in America."

Trump was facing outrage ahead of his Pennsylvania swing over allegations in a new book that he secretly sent coveted Covid-19 test kits to Russian leader Vladimir Putin in 2020, as the pandemic was raging and Americans were facing a shortage.

Harris, 59, told radio personality Howard Stern that Trump has the "desire to be a dictator" and is easily manipulated "by flattery and with favor" from people like Putin.

The interview was part of a new media blitz targeting undecided voting blocs after weeks of criticism from Republicans -- and some dissenting voices on her own side -- that Harris has been avoiding journalists and sticking to scripted events.

As well as Stern's show, the vice president has appeared this week on ABC's daytime show "The View," CBS's flagship "60 Minutes" program, comedy hour "Late Night with Stephen Colbert" and influential women's podcast "Call Her Daddy."

Harris will join Biden virtually for briefings about Hurricanes Milton and Helene before heading to Nevada later for a campaign event in Las Vegas on Thursday. She then hits Arizona, where she will campaign in Phoenix on Friday.

Wednesday marks the first day of early voting in Arizona, which had the closest margin of any state in the 2020 presidential election, and the vice presidential nominees -- Republican J.D. Vance and Democrat Tim Walz -- are due to hold rallies in Tucson.

ft/sst

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Frankie TAGGART, 'Trump heads to Biden country as US election heats up', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 9 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1B7DEACFB2EB8



Satellite photos show enormity of Florida-bound Hurricane Milton

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Talker News| Section: National | 114 Words OpenURL Link

By Dean Murray via SWNS

Newly released satellite pictures show the enormity of Hurricane Milton as it approaches Florida on Tuesday (Oct. 8)

They were captured by the U.S. government's scientific weather forecasting authority, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Ahead of the hurricane, the state has declared a state of emergency, and residents were ordered to evacuate, leading to one of Florida's largest evacuation procedures on record.

Hurricane Milton is an extremely powerful tropical cyclone active in the Gulf of Mexico, currently impacting the Yucatán Peninsula.

The storm underwent explosive intensification into a Category 5 hurricane on Monday and is expected to impact Florida less than two weeks after Hurricane Helene devastated its Big Bend region.

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Talker News, 'Satellite photos show enormity of Florida-bound Hurricane Milton', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 9 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1B7DF9BB92330



Florida Hospitals Brace for Hurricane Milton's Arrival

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Health | 497 Words OpenURL Link

WEDNESDAY. Oct. 9, 2024 (HealthDay News) -- As Hurricane Milton barreled toward the west coast of Florida, hospitals in its path were making ready.

Milton is projected to make landfall a bit south of the Tampa area late Wednesday night. Long-term care facilities in counties where mandatory evacuations have been issued have taken their patients elsewhere, while some hospitals prepare to stay open through the storm, the Associated Press reported.

According to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' website, 10 hospitals had reported evacuations as of Tuesday afternoon. Meanwhile, 300 health care facilities have evacuated -- 63 nursing homes and 169 assisted living facilities.

Steve McCoy, chief of the Florida Department of Health's Bureau of Emergency Medical Oversight, called it the state's "largest evacuation ever."

But not all hospitals will evacuate.

Tampa General Hospital has more than five days of supplies, including food, linens and 5,000 gallons of water, the AP reported. The hospital also has an energy plant with generators and boilers perched 33 feet above sea level.

During Hurricane Helene just two weeks ago, Tampa General deployed an "aquafence" that prevented storm-surge flooding. The same barrier will be resurrected for Milton and can withstand a storm surge of 15 feet. The U.S. National Hurricane Center estimates Milton's surges will be 10 to 15 feet high at their peak, the AP reported.

Sarasota Memorial Hospital is also preparing for the worst. The facility, about an hour south of Tampa, isn't evacuating because it's the largest and the safest hospital in the area.

"We're probably on the highest ground in Sarasota and we're the largest hospital," David Verinder, president and CEO of the Sarasota Memorial Health Care System, told NBC News. "We just have way too many patients to take care of."

To prepare for the hurricane and its aftermath, the hospital system has ordered enough food and water for at least seven days.

"We have linens, you know, everything that you'll need," Verinder said. "We can't guarantee that we'll have anybody be able to make any deliveries through the weekend. So we're at least planning for seven days."

Hospital staff members will work in two main shifts, NBC News reported.

The A team, which includes a couple hundred physicians, will stay at the hospital through the storm, Verinder said. "They're going to be prepared to sleep and rotate shifts for three days."

Once the storm has passed, the B team arrives, but that shift switch is what always makes Verinder nervous.

"We hope they're safe," he said. "We hope they're safe and that they can come in and relieve the A team. And if they can't get through the roads, the downed power lines, the A team will continue to work until they're relieved."

Farther south, in Fort Myers, Fla., the A team at Lee Health hospitals, part of the Southwest Florida Hospital System,

reported to their locations on Tuesday, a spokesperson told NBC News.

More information

The Florida Hospital Association has more on dealing with hurricanes.

SOURCE: Associated Press; NBC News

What This Means For You

Hospitals across Florida prepare for the aftermath of Hurricane Milton.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Florida Hospitals Brace for Hurricane Milton's Arrival', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 9 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1B7DE8D2C8B18



Election 2024: Hunt, Weatherman in a tight race for lieutenant governor

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Elyse Apel | The Center Square | Section: State | 481 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) - Republican Hal Weatherman and Democrat Rachel Hunt remain statistically tied in the race for North Carolina's lieutenant governor.

Hunt, a state senator and daughter of former two-time two-term governor Jim Hunt, has made abortion access and health care a priority for her campaign. Weatherman, a political newcomer, has labeled himself a "principled conservative" and has prioritized school choice, "deporting illegals," and putting North Carolina back to work.

The candidates are hoping to succeed Republican Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, a candidate in the politically-heated race for governor.

While Hunt faced off against just two other primary candidates and won with over 70% of the vote, Weatherman won the spring Republican primary with just 20% of the vote, in a race that had nine other candidates.

This put him in a primary runoff with Jim O'Neill, where Weatherman won by over 70%.

According to recent polling, both Weatherman and Hunt have taken turns slightly leading. In the latest poll from The Carolina Journal, Hunt led by 2%. In the previous poll from the same organization, Weatherman led by a 2% margin.

On the other hand, a High Point University survey found that nearly 70% of registered and likely voters were not familiar with either candidate. Perhaps surprisingly, Weatherman had slightly more name recognition.

Weatherman was willing and Hunt was not when the nonpartisan North Carolina Institute of Political Leadership asked for participation in their Hometown Debate Series.

Both candidates have spent time since Hurricane Helene working in disaster relief, as many counties throughout North Carolina were left devastated.

Weatherman, endorsed by former President Donald Trump, has called out Hunt for her alignment with the Biden administration.

"The Biden-Harris Administration, endorsed by my opponent and Josh Stein, released 13,000 murderers and nearly 16,000 rapists into the United States," he posted on social media. "How many are headed to North Carolina? How can the Democrats call themselves the champions of women while releasing men into our country who are going to rape our women?"

Hunt has attacked Weatherman for his anti-abortion positions.

"We cannot let radical politicians take us backward and put North Carolina's women and families in danger," she said.

Hunt has been endorsed by a number of abortion-rights organizations, including Planned Parenthood Votes! South Atlantic and the progressive group Lillian's List.

The North Carolina Fraternal Order of Police has endorsed Weatherman.

Going into the final stretch before the election, both candidates have rallied their supporters to push through the final month.

"In the closing days of this campaign season, I am asking those people who support my campaign and who are Believers to pray. Amidst all the TV commercials attacking and character assaulting, pray," Weatherman posted on social media. "My message today and for the remaining days of this campaign, is simple . . . Pray."

Hunt, following an appearance at a rally for Vice President Kamala Harris, posted on social media, "Together, we're building a brighter future for North Carolina. Let's keep pushing forward!

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Elyse Apel | The Center Square, 'Election 2024: Hunt, Weatherman in a tight race for lieutenant governor', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 9 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1B7DFD95D35B8>



'The Vampyre's Ball' benefit production is Oct. 19

October 9, 2024 | Courier-Tribune, The (Asheboro, NC) Author: COURIER-TRIBUNE STAFF | Section: Entertainment | 152 Words OpenURL Link

ASHEBORO — J.J. Brown Productions will be in Asheboro on Saturday, Oct. 19, for its fall production of "The Vampyre's Ball," at Carolina Tap House, 141 Sunset Ave.

According to the release from J.J. Brown Productions, profits from the event and cash donations received will go to BeLoved Asheville, a non-profit helping provide relief for people affected by Tropical Storm Helene.

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Before the show starts at 7:30 p.m., guests may get their Vampyre portrait made. This event is an immersive and interactive experience. Attendees are encouraged to dress to impress, as one of them will be chosen as the leader of the Vampyres and participate in the show. Guests will also get to choose their Vampyre name and which one of the five covens to join.

Seating is limited.

Show tickets are \$30 each and can be purchased at www.jjbrownproductions.com. Guests may also donate to BeLoved Asheville through this website.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

COURIER-TRIBUNE STAFF, "The Vampyre's Ball' benefit production is Oct. 19', *Courier-Tribune, The* (online), 9 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C25F18745F2678



County delivers 8 pallets of supplies to WNC

October 9, 2024 | Daily Advance, The (Elizabeth City, NC) Author: Kesha Williams | Section: Local | 385 Words OpenURL Link

Perquimans County residents are all too familiar with the destruction from hurricanes and tropical storms. And although it's been more than 20 years since Hurricane Isabel roared through the county knocking out power and water infrastructure for days, many residents still remember that storm's impact and aftermath.

With those memories in mind, many county residents rushed into action last week to help residents of Rutherford County, one of the 27 western North Carolina hard hit by Tropical Storm Helene on Friday, Sept. 27.

According to Jonathan Nixon, Perquimans County emergency services director, eight pallets of supplies were collected over several days at Perquimans High School and the Perquimans County Emergency Services building. The donated supplies included everything from packaged snacks and plastic utensils to toilet paper and cleaning supplies.

After being packed tightly inside a 24-foot enclosed trailer, the supplies were transported from Hertford on Tuesday to a central receiving site set up in Rutherford. Driving the truck to Rutherford were Perquimans County Sheriff Shelby White and his wife, Jessica, a paramedic with Perquimans County Emergency Medical Services.

It's been nearly two weeks since Helene hit western North Carolina, sparking massive flooding that washed out roads, destroyed homes and businesses, and knocked out electric power, water distribution systems and communication towers across the region. As of Wednesday, the death toll from the storm had risen above 230 across six states. About half those deaths have been reported in North Carolina.

According to Julie Solesbee, assistant director for Perquimans County Emergency Services, Rutherford County was chosen as a drop-off point for the donated supplies for a specific reason.

"Rutherford County Communications serves as one of the backup 911 centers for Perquimans-Gates 911 Communications," she said in an email. "In the event that our center was unable to accept 911 calls, an agreement is in place that Rutherford Communications would assist the residents of Perquimans and Gates (counties) until operations could resume or staff were able to relocate."

No date has been set for the next delivery of donated supplies from Perquimans to Rutherford.

Nixon said the public can still help by dropping off canned goods and paper products through October at the Perquimans County Emergency Services building at 159 Creek Drive. Students attending Hertford Grammar, Perquimans Middle and Perquimans High School are also welcome to contribute to supply collection drives at their school.

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Kesha Williams, 'County delivers 8 pallets of supplies to WNC', *Daily Advance, The* (online), 9 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1F27B119B6E58



Perquimans sheriff delivers 8 pallets of relief supplies to WNC

October 9, 2024 | Daily Advance, The (Elizabeth City, NC) Author: Kesha Williams | Section: Local | 387 Words OpenURL Link

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Disaster Unemployment Assistance available in 25 counties, l Indian Tribe following Hurricane Helene

October 9, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 527 Words OpenURL Link

RALEIGH — Following a federal disaster declaration resulting from the devastating impacts from Hurricane Helene, the Division of Employment Security (DES) has announced that 25 North Carolina counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina have been approved for Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), according to a press release from the N.C. Department of Commerce.

DUA benefits are available for residents who live or work in the following counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey Counties as well as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina. Additional counties may be added to the list of those eligible for DUA at a later date, according to the press release.

People in the above-listed counties who are unemployed as a direct result of Hurricane Helene may be eligible for unemployment benefits under the DUA program. Business owners and self-employed individuals affected by the storm may also qualify for benefits, according to the press release.

People in the 25 counties as well as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina have 60 days from Oct. 1, 2024 to file an application for DUA at des.nc.gov. The deadline to apply is Dec. 2, 2024, according to the press release.

DUA is available in these counties for weeks of unemployment effective Sept. 29, 2024, and may last for up to 26 weeks (or through March 29, 2025). Eligibility for DUA is determined weekly, and you must continue to be out of work as a direct result of the disaster each week to get unemployment benefits, according to the press release.

DUA is a federal unemployment program that provides temporary payments for people who, as a direct result of Hurricane Helene:

No longer have the job that provided their primary source of income. Are unable to reach their place of employment. Cannot work because of an injury caused by the storm. Were unable to begin employment or self-employment due to the storm. Have become the major supplier of household income due to a storm-related death of the previous major supplier of household income.

Applying for DUA

You must apply for state unemployment benefits. If you are determined to be ineligible for or have exhausted your regular benefits, then you may be eligible for a DUA claim. You will need the following to file for unemployment: Name and address of all employers you worked with within the last 24 months. County of residence. County of employment. Mailing address and ZIP code. Valid telephone number. Your Social Security number or your Alien Registration number. Have proof of employment and income if you're self-employed, a farmer, or a commercial fisher.

To get DUA benefits, all required documentation must be submitted within 21 days from the day the DUA application is filed. DES will work with people who cannot provide all documentation to ensure that their unemployment benefits are not delayed.

Claims are filed through the DES website at des.nc.gov. If you are not able to file through the website, you can call

the DUA Hotline at 919-629-3857 to apply for benefits, according to the press release.

For more information and an updated list of approved counties, go to our website at: des.nc.gov.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

STAFF REPORTS, 'Disaster Unemployment Assistance available in 25 counties, 1 Indian Tribe following Hurricane Helene', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 9 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1B363D4E332D0>



Alan Freeman

October 9, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Obituaries | 351 Words OpenURL Link

Alan M Freeman, a co-owner of Spindale Tire Service, passed away on the evening of September 25, 2024 at the age of 83 in the presence of his loved ones at Iredell Memorial Hospital in Statesville, NC.

Those left to cherish Alan's memories are: his wife, Barbara Connor Freeman; his children, Sherry Freeman Ashley and Robin Drummond (Scott); his grandchildren, Blake Emberton (Justin), Zachary Drummond, and Kolbi Drummond; his great-grandchildren, Mary Adalyn Emberton, and Alan Jay Emberton; and his brothers, Boyce Freeman (Mildred) and Wray Freeman (Jane). He was preceded in death by his parents, Charles and Geneva Freeman.

Alan loved nothing more than to be in the presence of his loving wife of 62 years and his daughters whom he loved more than anything. Alan's grandchildren thought the world of him and his great-grandchildren adored him. In their company, he was as happy as he could be and was the most wonderfully loving Papa to them throughout his 83 years.

Alan loved the Lord and served as a deacon, a member of the choir ensemble, and a standing member of many committees at Mt. Vernon Baptist Church. He committed to sharing the Gospel as a Gideon for many years as well. During his years of work at Spindale Tire Service, Alan enjoyed being in the presence of his fellow community members. He was a beacon of light in the lives of everyone he knew and loved.

His time spent with his loved ones will be cherished forever and his memory will live on in the hearts and minds of everyone he touched. He left a legacy of love and his presence will be eternally missed, but we rest in peace knowing that the Lord has called him to his forever home.

A Celebration of Life Service will be at 1p.m., Saturday Oct. 12, 2024 at Mount Vernon Baptist Church, 2676 Hudlow Rd., Forest City, North Carolina 28043. The family will receive friends following the service. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that donations be made to The Baptist on Mission organization for Hurricane Helene Relief.

https://baptistsonmission.org/Mission-Projects/By-Mission-Type/Disaster-Relief/Hurricane-Helene/Donations

Online condolences may be made at www.crowemortuary.com.

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Staff Writer, 'Alan Freeman', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 9 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1B363E2A8FC60>



More than 200 people attend Lake Lure meeting; updates on debris removal water, sewer system

October 9, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: VICTORIA MCGUINN YOUNG vyoung@thedigitalcourier.com| Section: Archives | 1228 Words OpenURL Link

LAKE LURE — Debris clean up, the water and sewer systems and the dam were the three major topics of discussion during the well-attended Lake Lure Town Council special meeting Tuesday evening.

More than 200 people were crowded in chairs, plopped on the floor or lined the walls of the Lake Lure Inn's veranda as the town council and town department heads stood at the front of the room, ready to give updates on Helene storm recovery.

The veranda echoed with people retelling neighbors their experiences of the storm. Moms helped kids set up coloring pages on the floor as a distraction. And even a couple of dogs barked in the background.

Mayor Carol Pritchett — who usually has a wooden gavel to open regular meetings — banged a hammer on her table to bring the room to order.

"These are very trying times for all of us," she said after thanking the crowd for their attendance.

Debris clean up

Dustin Waycaster, the Lake Lure fire chief, was the first department head to give an update, and his set the tone for the meeting

"We will be under a State of Emergency for some time," Waycaster said. "We have a lot of resources at our disposal, but we need to use those resources now."

The State of Emergency, he explained, will help the town as it coordinates recovery and clean up efforts with local, state and federal agencies. And clean up of the lake is a top priority. There is a large mass of debris, Waycaster said, floating in the lake, and the biggest concern is if the mass makes its way to the dam and puts pressure on it. That could cause structural damage, he warned. He also noted that residents may have noticed the discharge rate at the dam shifting constantly — that is due to the debris mass.

After the storm passed Sept. 27, engineers inspected the dam and, while structural supports were compromised, the dam was deemed stable and has remained so.

The town needs to get the debris out of the lake as soon as possible, not only to remove the mass, but in preparation for the potential impact of other storms brewing in the Gulf of Mexico, Waycaster said.

Dana Bradley, the parks, recreation and lake director, said that town staff are removing boats from the lake that are leaking fluids or that are considered to be hazardous. The boats are moved to a secure location, and the town is contacting owners as boats are removed.

So far, Bradley said, about 100 truck-loads of debris have been removed from the lake, but so much more is needed.

"Debris removal is going to take weeks," Bradley said. "Please, stay off the lake."

One of the other reasons debris removal is so important is to regain access to the sewer system.

Town services

Dean Lindsey, the town public services director, said the water system is operational, although parts of the town hadn't seen water restored yet as of Tuesday evening, like the downtown area. Lindsey said the town hopes to restore water to that area soon, and the town is working to lift the boil water advisory as soon as possible. But for now, it is still in place.

As for the sewer system, the town lost all of the system that was below the dam, and the waste water treatment plant was 5 feet under water. The electrical system in the waste water treatment plant is being redone.

Lindsey also noted that the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality is aware if the situation and working with the town.

The no flush order is still in place, Lindsey said, and will be for at least a couple of weeks.

Emergency repairs are being made to the lift station, which, once completed, will enable the sewer system to be utilized.

Due to the issues with the water and sewer system, the town opted to halt water and sewer bills for residents until January 2025. The mayor said the town wants to help ease the burden for people as they try to rebuild.

"[The town is] working day and night to get everything fixed," Pritchett said. "This is already going to be costly to the town as a whole — including for the people that live here."

The town also approved a supplemental work order proposal with Schnabel Engineering for on-call professional engineering services associated with response and recovery efforts for Hurricane Helene at the Lake Lure Dam. The town already had a work order agreement with Schnabel, but this order detailed the scope of work Schnabel would do in response to Helene recovery. The initial estimated fee for the work is \$300,000. And while the actual fee amount may change, Schnabel will not exceed the estimated fee amount without prior town approval, according to the work order.

In line with debris removal, the council approved a local agreement which allows the town to receive aid with debris clean up from N.C. Department of Transportation.

FEMA assistance

While the meeting focused on debris and the recovery of town services, there were two representatives from Federal Emergency Management Agency's Disaster Survivor Assistance.

Currently, there are two locations in or near Lake Lure where residents can find DSA representatives from FEMA.

They are located at the following:

Lake Lure Baptist Church: 6837 US-74 ALT, Lake Lure, NC 28746Ingles in Lake Lure: 276 NC-9, Lake Lure, NC 28746

There is another team in Chimney Rock as well.

The representatives also noted that residents can register for FEMA assistance either in person with a representative, through the FEMA app, by calling 1-800-621-3362 or online at https://www.disasterassistance.gov/

Residents have 60 days from the disaster to register, but that deadline might be extended later. FEMA will start canvasing Rutherford County soon going door to door to help people register for assistance.

The FEMA representatives gave tips as well to help people recognize an official FEMA representative, in light of scams where people impersonate FEMA workers. They said people should ask to see representatives' FEMA ID badges, which will be holographic with "FEMA" written on them.

They also addressed the rumor that FEMA assistance is only a loan. They stated that any monetary assistance given is a grant and does not need to be paid back.

Going forward

Many town department buildings were damaged in the storm. The Lake Lure Police Department is currently running out of the Parks, Recreation and Lake Department building — the LPD also lost four patrol cars. Other law enforcement agencies like the Rutherford County Sheriff's Offices, and some from farther away, have lent officers to the LPD while the town gets through recovery. Police chief Sean Humphries confirmed that 911 is active in the town and if a resident needs assistance, help will come.

The storm also brought down the town's servers, meaning communications for the town like email have been down since Sept. 27. While cell and internet services have always been an issue in Lake Lure, the situation is exacerbated now.

Duke Energy and Rutherford Electric Membership Corporation are still working to restore power to customers. There is Starlink internet access in the area of the Lake Lure Inn and at the Lake Lure Resource Center at Ingles on Highway 9.

Residents can find updates from the town on the town's Facebook page or on the town website.

Town hall is currently unusable, and because of this, the council agreed to use the Lake Lure Inn as the meeting place for the foreseeable future. All future town meetings will be held at the inn.

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TJCA end regular season with three-set loss to Cherryville

October 9, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: ETHAN BENFIELD ebenfield@thedigitalcourier.com| Section: Sports | 346 Words OpenURL Link

AVONDALE — The Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy ended the volleyball regular season with back-to-back home games Monday and Tuesday. The Gryphons split the pair of matches, beating Shelby in five sets on senior night Monday, and being swept in three sets by Cherryville Tuesday. Cherryville won by scores of 25-18, 25-17 and 25-6.

Coming off the big win Tuesday, TJCA was looking to close out the season with consecutive wins, but according to Head Coach Carlie Phillips, the Gryphons were not able to carry the momentum over from Monday.

"I feel like tonight our team connection was just not there, our energy was really low, we came off such a high with the win against Shelby, and I feel like tonight that same energy just wasn't there," Phillips said. "Last night was a great five set win for us, it was great for our senior night, I was really happy with them, I wish we carried that with us into today's game, but tomorrow is a new day"

TJCA's Brooklyn Twitty played well at the net, recording several blocks and kills on tips and spikes in the loss. Cherryville controlled the pace of the game, out-serving the Gryphons, with several service aces and quick points in the three-set sweep, including two late in the third set to end the match.

At the end of the regular season, TJCA has an overall record of 5-10, and a conference record of 3-9. The Gryphons sit sixth out of seven teams in the Southern Piedmont 1a/2a conference, ahead of Bessimer City. The regular season will be won by Highland Tech who are currently undefeated at 12-0 with one match left to play, with the closest team being 7-3 East Gaston.

As of press time Wednesday, it is unsure if TJCA will participate in any postseason tournaments. Athletic directors from various schools in Western North Carolina have been meeting throughout the week to discuss scheduling in all sports following the nearly two weeks of school that were missed due to Hurricane Helene. An update on the Gryphons post season will be provided when available.

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