

Travel to NC mountains sharply restricted

October 2, 2024 | Thomasville Times, The (NC) Author: SHARON MYERS PAXTON MEDIA GROUP| Section: Thomasville Times | 266 Words OpenURL Link

TRIAD — Anyone who wants to bring relief supplies to the flood-ravaged communities of western North Carolina may not be allowed into the region if they don't check in with state officials before they leave, the N.C. Department of Emergency Management said.

Officials with the department's Business Operations Emergency Center say that most roads west of Hickory remain closed except to emergency vehicles and registered volunteer organizations, and people will not be allowed into the area if they haven't notified officials in advance about what they are bringing and where it is going.

"We must secure these routes for responders and critical partner assets needed for response and recovery efforts," a notice from the center said. "There is a high likelihood that your teams will be turned away at various checkpoints."

Anyone wishing to travel to the area to drop off donations can email requests to BEOC@ncdps.gov with the subject line "Logistics support." The emails should include what is being moved and why special access is needed. It should also include where you are traveling to and from, as well as the expected arrival time.

The N.C. Department of Public Safety said the most-needed donation at this time is money, which can be sent to the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund at www.nc.gov/disaster-relief-fund-fags.

There are also many churches, businesses and other organizations that are registered Volunteer Organization Active in a Disaster that are collecting donations to be delivered. A list can be found at www.ncvoad.org/members/

Those wishing to volunteer in person can sign up with a Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster at https://www.ncvoad.org/volunteer/.

NCDPS also has a list of resources at www.ncdps.gov/our-organization/emergency-management/hurricane-helene.

Copyright (c) 2024 The Thomasville Times, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

SHARON MYERS PAXTON MEDIA GROUP, 'Travel to NC mountains sharply restricted', *Thomasville Times, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFF8538ECDD350



Natural disasters 'don't feel natural anymore' - Helene's wrath beyond residents' calculated risk

October 2, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Trevor Hughes; USA TODAY | Section: News | 944 Words Page: A10 OpenURL Link

CEDAR KEY, Fla. – The Cedar Key innkeeper wonders whether it's worth rebuilding this town dotted across a small archipelago – again.

"Natural disasters are natural disasters," said Ian Maki, who has lived through five hurricanes since moving in 2018 to the island community southwest of Gainesville. "But these don't feel natural anymore."

Tens of thousands of residents of Florida's Big Bend region are confronting the same fears in the wake of Hurricane Helene. And those feelings are increasingly shared by coastal residents all the way to Maine and from Alaska to California as stronger, more frequent storms and rising ocean levels upend their lives and livelihoods. Many insurers already have curtailed coverage or withdrawn entirely from some areas, indicating their long-term perspective risk.

Officials have not yet released official damage estimates from Helene, but financial services company CoreLogic initially estimated commercial and residential damage in just Florida and Georgia to be \$3billion to \$5billion. That number is expected to rise substantially with the extensive flood damage across Tennessee and South and North Carolina.

A 2022 USA TODAY investigation warned the United States is facing a climate catastrophe as natural disasters accelerate: Since 1980, the U.S. has typically suffered eight disasters a year with more than \$1billion in economic damage.

Scientists who study the Earth's climate and weather say storms like Helene are more likely to occur in the future. Hurricanes are powered by heat, and the Gulf of Mexico has been unusually warm for years.

"The fact that the storms are so intense when they make landfall because they have rapidly intensified in the Gulf of Mexico almost certainly has a climate-change contribution to it," said Jim Kossin, an atmospheric scientist and science adviser at the nonprofit First Street Foundation.

No more hurricane parties as storms' strength rises

For coastal communities like Cedar Key, Horseshoe Beach, Key West and other geographically isolated areas, quick-moving storms make it harder for residents to board up and leave, potentially raising the likelihood people will choose to stay home and ride out the storm. In years past, many storms were mild enough that people held "hurricane parties" to mark their passage through their communities.

That was the kind of calculation Bill and Debbie Dotson made when they retired in spring 2021 to Horseshoe Beach, a town of about 170 full-time residents. They've now been through five hurricanes, including Helene, which hit on Bill Dotson's 67th birthday.

The Dotson's home sits atop 14-foot-tall concrete pillars, and last year's Hurricane Idalia destroyed one set of stairs and damaged the other. They had just gotten both sets fixed – at a cost of \$15,000 – before Helene swept both away.

Zoning laws across Florida increasingly recognize storm risks, and most new-built houses in danger zones must be set atop tall pillars. Apart from the stairs, the Dotson's house was otherwise undamaged. But a few blocks away,

the concrete pillars of a home closer to the beach were bent flat like grass

"We came out here and saw this beauty and wanted to go fishing in our retirement," Debbie Dotson said. "We had the discussion about hurricanes, but you never imagine something like this. You just don't."

More people are moving to storm-prone coastal areas

Last month, the real estate firm Redfin reported a net increase of 16,000 people moving into high-risk flood areas last year, most of them in Florida, drawn by sunny skies, a lack of snow, great fishing and plentiful beaches. There's also no income tax in Florida.

Because the state is so big, the likelihood of experiencing a damaging hurricane is statistically low.

That's the calculation Maki and his husband, Darrin Newell, made before they bought the Firefly Resort on Cedar Key. Maki had worked in public health for years in the Pacific Northwest, and they wanted a new adventure in Old Florida.

Maki, who has a master's degree in public health, analyzed historic hurricane data and concluded Cedar Key would only suffer a damaging hurricane every seven years on average, giving them plenty of time to recover and rebuild between storms. But hurricanes keep trashing their cottages.

"I've bought more appliances in the past year than I have in my entire life," Maki said. "I'm afraid that decisions are being made for me by consequences of nature, consequences of man's influence on nature, so that now the place that I had chosen to live may be uninhabitable in my lifetime."

Unlike most coastal communities in Florida, Cedar Key depends primarily on aquaculture – commercial clam harvesting – rather than tourism. "Clambassador" Michael Presley Bobbitt, a commercial clam farmer, author and playwright, said he worries Helene has irrevocably altered the island he calls home.

Building resilience to protect the future

Doug Lindhout, 71, considers himself one of the lucky ones: Although there's water damage, his rowhouse on A Street is still standing. Less than 24 hours after Helene moved north, Lindhout and his wife were assessing the destruction and trying to figure out what to do next.

"It feels like we've been kicked in the teeth and punched in the kidney," he said.

As the president of Cedar Key's Chamber of Commerce, Lindhout is deeply committed to the 700-person island community. That means seeking good publicity when they can get it – last year's negative Idalia coverage caused an 18% decline in tourist interest, he said – while strengthening the island's aquaculture and other businesses.

For Cedar Key, he said, resilience can mean making the shorelines better at reducing wave impacts, which helps protect the clam harvests. It could also mean a community effort to relocate the grocery store, which frequently floods even in minor storms.

Contributing: Dinah Voyles Pulver, USA TODAY

 $Copyright\ 2024\ Times-News,\ The\ (Hendersonville,\ NC),\ All\ Rights\ Reserved.$

Citation (aglc Style)

Trevor Hughes, USA TODAY, 'Natural disasters 'don't feel natural anymore' - Helene's wrath beyond residents' calculated risk', *Times-News, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 A10 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF46BAD978EB78>



WNC high school football - WNC coaches aren't sure what's next

October 2, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Evan Gerike; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: Sports | 791 Words Page: B1 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE – Days after Helene ravaged through Western North Carolina, flooding communities and leaving much of the area without cell service, power or water, high school football is at a loss at the moment.

All but one school canceled their Week 6 games, and in the days following the storm, few coaches have any idea when they'll play again. As Western North Carolina continues to struggle to communicate amidst mass cell service and power outages, most of the area has not set a plan for moving forward. As power remains out, with Duke Energy estimating a return on Friday for most of the community, there's little sense of what comes next.

"I'm connected because I'm a head football coach," Erwin coach Rodney Pruett said. "People look to me to find answers, but I'm at a loss. I don't know. And that's the hard part. That's what leaders do; they lead. But I feel helpless at times."

Erwin's field largely survived damage, Pruett said. The goalposts were bent, and the roof came off the ticket booth, but it otherwise stayed intact.

Other stadiums got it worse – Pisgah, for the second time since 2021, saw its stadium completely underwater. East Henderson's visitor side bleachers got destroyed as the stadium suffered significant damage. At Asheville Christian Academy, in the devastated Swannanoa community, the first three floors of each of its buildings flooded and its fields and tennis courts were destroyed.

In Yancey County, Mountain Heritage coach Joey Robinson said most of his staff is accounted for, but they're still trying to contact many of their players.

Though Burnsville is largely fine, the outskirts of Yancey County are severely damaged. Robinson said roads have been wiped away and people are still stranded in more remote parts of the county.

Like Asheville, the water and power situation is severely limited in Yancey County, Robinson said. He isn't sure when school will be able to return. Robinson watched houses and cars floating away near his home in Spruce Pine, the largest town in neighboring Mitchell County.

On Monday, Robinson and several of his staff headed into Mountain Heritage High School to help with distribution of aide, taking food down to the line of cars waiting for supplies. He's spent the last few days taking chainsaws to trees to help free people from their homes.

As for resuming play, Robinson doesn't know when - or if - the Cougars can take the field again.

"I certainly hope we can, because it would be unbelievable for the healing process of communities," Robinson said.
"But that's the last thing on our minds right now. We just want to make sure all of our players are accounted for."

Pruett has been traveling back and forth to Shelby, where he can communicate better to reach his players and help coordinate assistance to the Erwin community.

Pruett said his players want to know if they can continue playing football, saying it matters to both the players and the communities who will have a place of hope to rally around.

Helene didn't hit the Smoky Mountain Conference as hard. Murphy coach Joseph Watson said their stadium is fine. The field, which is grass, isn't any more wet than a regular rainstorm, he said.

"We just got rain," Watson said. "It basically split us. It went to Asheville, and it went to the Chattanooga area. We really didn't get anything."

Hayesville practiced Monday, as Clay County schools remained open, one of the only ones in the area. Watson said he expects the Bulldogs to practice again this week and play the Yellow Jackets in Hayesville on Friday. As of now, Watson said, with school closed, they were unable to practice because communication is still a potential issue.

The Yellow Jackets also picked up their first win of the season last week as the lone WNC team to play, traveling to Concord Christian School in Knoxville, Tennessee, and leaving with a 37-16 victory. Moving forward will take more than a week, and there's no plan set by the NCHSAA. Commissioner Que Tucker said the decision on how to proceed will be made by the NCHSAA Board of Directors, which includes Enka athletic director Brian Carver and Jackson County Schools Superintendent Dana Ayers.

"I don't know if we can play football," Pruett said. "But I can promise you it's going to take time. It's going to take time to figure it out, and a lot of work."

Evan Gerike is the high school sports reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times. Email him at egerike@citizentimes.com or follow him on X, formerly Twitter, @EvanGerike. Please support this type of journalism with a subscription to the Citizen Times.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Evan Gerike, Asheville Citizen Times, 'WNC high school football - WNC coaches aren't sure what's next', *Times-News, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 B1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF46BAE37D3098



A quick reference guide to help you navigate Asheville after Helene

October 2, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 1146 Words Page: A3 OpenURL Link

Here's a list of essential information that may help Asheville-area residents in the aftermath of Helene and extensive flooding.

Asheville Shelters

There are two shelters available at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College:

General Population Shelter: A-B Tech Conference Center, 16 Fernihurst Drive, Asheville, NC 28801 (Please use Victoria Road Entrance). No pets allowed

Medical Emergency Shelter for individuals dependent on medical equipment requiring power:10 Genevieve Circle, Asheville, NC 28801

Water Distribution

The city's water system was heavily damaged in the storm, and a boil advisory is in place for Western North Carolina. In a release on Sunday, city officials said "restoring service to the full system could potentially take weeks."

The City of Asheville will start water distribution at City Hall at 1 p.m. Monday, Sept. 30. Each person must bring their own container, none will be provided. Each person will be provided 1 gallon of water per person, with a maximum of 5 gallons per family. Beginning Tuesday, Oct. 1, Asheville opened a second distribution site at Asheville Middle School, 211 S. French Broad Ave, Asheville, NC 28801.

Buncombe County will start distributing bottled water starting at 2 p.m. today, Monday, Sept. 30. A one-day supply of bottled water will be available for each individual in a household, with distribution sites operating as drivethrough locations, but walk-ups will be accommodated. The locations are:

William W. Estes Elementary School - 275 Overlook Road, Asheville

Sand Hill Elementary - 154 Sand Hill School Road, Asheville (Please enter via Acton Circle)

North Windy Ridge Intermediate School - 20 Doan Road, Weaverville

Fairview Elementary School - 1355 Charlotte Highway, Fairview

The county is working on a mobile distribution plan to reach those who are not able to make it to the sites.

Pack Square Park at 1 p.m: . Drinking water will be distributed beginning at 1 p.m. until dark or when the supply runs out. Each person will be provided 1 gallon of water per person, with a maximum of 5 gallons per family. Each person who accesses the water distribution at Pack Square must bring their own container. For the safety of everyone involved, traffic will be directed around the park and the distribution site will be walk-up only.

The Asheville Dream Center is doing rolling updates on aid distribution sites on social media, Coleman told the Citizen Times. She encouraged all interested residents to reach out on social media or check for live updates. On its

Instagram, the organization indicated that it would be back again with aid from Global Empowerment Mission at the Asheville Mall off of South Tunnel Road distributing food and water at 12:30 p.m. Sept. 30.

Terra Nova Beer Co. is offering free water fill-ups until supplies last at 101 South Lexington Ave.

These stores had water on Sunday:

Lowe's: 95 Smokey Park Highway, Asheville, NC

Home Depot: 795 Fairview Road, Asheville

Home Depot: 127 Acton Circle, Asheville

Publix: 165 Weaver Blvd, Asheville

Fresh Market was to distribute free bottled water beginning at 6 p.m. Sunday: 944 Merrimon Ave., and 1378 Hendersonville Road

The State Emergency Operations Center planned to distribute water but had not received water and did not release distribution plans during a Sunday morning briefing.

Communications: Wi-Fi Locations

Duke Energy is working to restore power across Buncombe County. Cell service is also down throughout much of the county, with no known restoration timeline. Active Wi-Fi locations include:

Buncombe County Health Department: 40 Cox Ave, Weaverville, NC

Citizen Vinyl: 14 O'Henry Ave, Asheville, NC

DoubleTree Hilton Downtown: 199 Haywood St., Asheville

Asheville Shelter, Ferguson Building: 340 Victoria Road, Asheville

Curfews in effect

In effect from 7:30 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. within Asheville city limits.

Emergencies

For any life-threatening situations, always call 911. Buncombe County has a line for reports of downed trees, debris and other non-emergencies: 828-250-6650.

Food Distribution Sites

Monte Vista Hotel (Food and WiFi): 310 W State St, Black Mountain, NC

Bears Smokehouse: 135 Cox Ave, Asheville

Firestorm is operating as a food and supplies drop-off and distribution location for community members at 1022 Haywood Road in West Asheville.

Asheville Poverty Initiative's 12 Baskets Cafe is serving food to the community beginning at 10 a.m. on Sept. 30

Rosetta's Kitchen & The Buchi Bar will begin soup kitchen operations and donation-based meal distribution at Noon on Sept. 30 at 68 North Lexington Ave. downtown.

Flour began distributing free biscuits, other baked goods and hot coffee to the public on the morning of Sept. 30 and will continue until supplies last at S&W Market, at 56 Patton Ave., downtown.

Itto Ramen will distribute free food from 2:30 p.m. until supplies last at its West Asheville restaurant, 630 Haywood Road.

Groceries

Food Lion: 179 Paragon Pkwy, Clyde, NC

Trader Joe's: 120 Merrimon Ave, Asheville, NC 28801

Ingles Markets (Cash Only): 575 New Leicester Hwy, Asheville, NC

Walmart: 1636 Hendersonville Rd, Asheville, NC

Publix: 165 Weaver Boulevard

West Village Market is open with limited hours selling groceries, such as produce, meat and vegan and nondairy items at 771 Haywood Road.

Walls Wine Bar is open and selling beer, wine, vegan cheese and chocolate at its art gallery and wine bar at 38 Broadway St. downtown.

Gasoline

Arden Quality Plus: 2273 Hendersonville Rd, Arden, NC

Sheetz: 5440 Asheville Hwy, Hendersonville, NC

Money: Getting cash at ATMs

Many stores are unable to take credit or debit cards because of communications disruptions. If you need to get cash, note that lines at working ATMs can be long.

Missing persons reports

To report a person believed to be missing or unaccounted for, voicemails can be left for the Buncombe County Family Assistance Center at 828-820-2761. The county also created a form — bit.ly/3TLSLNK — to notify Buncombe officials of loved ones who aren't accounted for.

School closures

Asheville City Schools: Closed Monday, Sept. 30, and Tuesday, Oct. 1

Buncombe County Schools: Closed Monday, Sept. 30 through Friday, Oct. 4

A-B Tech: Closed until further notice.

UNC Asheville: All departments Closed until Monday, Oct. 7; classes suspended until Wednesday, Oct. 9

Western Carolina University: All departments closed through Friday, Oct. 4

Appalachian State University: Closed through Friday, Oct. 4.

Travel

Asheville Regional Airport's website is not updating accurately with flight information at the moment. Travelers are urged to contact their airlines about flight statuses.

Supplies: Construction

Ace Hardware: 800 Fairview Rd, Asheville, NC

Lowe's: 95 Smokey Park Highway, Asheville, NC

Home Depot:

795 Fairview Rd, Asheville, NC

127 Acton Cir, Asheville, NC

To donate to relief efforts

American Red Cross: redcross.org

GoFundMe: www.gofundme.com/c/act/hurricane-helene

The Salvation Army: www.disaster.salvationarmyusa.org

United Way: support.unitedway.org/page/Helene

World Central Kitchen: wck.org

Humane Society Disaster Relief: www.humanesociety.org

Text message updates

As a resource in these tough times, we are manning a text message service to bring you and your loved ones the latest updates on Hurricane Helene, connect you with resources and answer any questions you might have. This will give you you direct access to reporters and editors in the newsroom who can help you find information about ongoing weather warnings, local services and more.

To sign up, text 'Hello' to (239) 241-6343. If you have friends in the area, please feel free to share this phone number with them so they can sign up for updates as needed.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Asheville Citizen Times, 'A quick reference guide to help you navigate Asheville after Helene', *Times-News, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 A3 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF46BAB7E4E238



'It gave me a little bit more hope in humanity' - As Helene flooded their homes, residents rescued their neighbors

October 2, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Jacob Biba; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 939 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

HENDERSONVILLE – Last Friday, Sept. 27, Joey McNeely dangled his 9-month-old daughter, Lilah, from the secondstory window of his Hendersonville apartment before releasing her into the arms of a Henderson County Sheriff's Department deputy. His wife, Brooke McNeely, watched nervously from higher ground.

After torrents of rain from Tropical Storm Helene flooded nearby Clear Creek, residents of Universal at Lakewood apartment complex told the Citizen Times flood waters quickly rose and started pouring into a row of units located on the backend of the complex, nearly reaching first-floor ceilings.

On Sept. 30, just a few days after Helene cut a path of destruction stretching from Florida to the mountains of Western North Carolina, pounding the region with heavy rainfall and flash floods, residents were assessing damage to their homes and belongings.

Joey, 40, and Brooke, 33, were trying to salvage the belongings they stored on the second floor of the apartment before the family's rescue. Outside, Lilah was strapped to her stroller and Brooke wiped tears from her eyes.

"I was screaming and crying, and it was horrible," Brooke told the Citizen Times, recalling the family's rescue just a few days earlier.

Too frightened to jump from her apartment window to a paddleboard, Brooke said she scaled a portion of an exterior wall to a nearby overhang. She then lowered herself to a paddleboard, maneuvered into position by a woman named Faith, who took Brooke to higher ground where she watched the deputy rescue Lilah and bring her to safety.

Elsewhere in the region, others weren't so lucky.

Helene caused some of the greatest damage in Western North Carolina, with rivers sweeping away houses and crumbling bridges, and high winds felling trees. In Buncombe County, 40 deaths have been reported as of Sept. 30. In Henderson County, another six, though those numbers are likely to rise as the full scope of the tragedy becomes clearer.

Earlier in the day, two teenaged brothers, Malachi and Malek Barber, stood shirtless in the middle of Butler Bridge Road in Henderson County, near what used to be the banks of the French Broad River.

Before Helene, the French Broad snaked through the county's farmland.

Now. it covers it.

Less than 2 miles away, cars were lining up along Asheville Highway waiting to reach Mills River Town Hall, where the county was setting up a water and food distribution point.

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

Now, the family needed more.

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

With one of the highest rain totals in the region, 6 miles south of the city of Hendersonville received nearly 22 inches of rain following the impact of Tropical Storm Helene, according to National Weather Service Meteorologist Doug Outlaw. A mile south of Hendersonville, NWS measures indicate more than 16 inches fell. The storm followed days of torrential rain and light downpours.

On Sept. 30, a line crew from Ontario, Canada, worked to restore power to county residents near Edneyville. The crew, composed of retired linemen, arrived in Henderson County before Helene hit and said they expect to be in the region for much of October.

Stephen Sine, 62, told the Citizen Times he's been doing line work and responding to major storms for more than four decades. For Don Thompson, another crew member, it's been five decades.

Both said that destruction in the wake of Helene is the worst they've ever witnessed.

"Devastation," Thompson said.

'More hope in humanity'

Throughout the county Sept. 30, portions of roadways had been washed out. The football stadium at East Henderson High School suffered severe damage. Cars were totaled by flood waters. Oak trees lay uprooted upon homes. A man lumbered up Asheville Highway with two full gas cans in his hands.

But through devastation, the community came together.

Henderson County resident Jerry Mullins told the Citizen Times he's been going door to door with his portable generator, letting his neighbors plug in for an hour at time in hopes of keeping the food in their refrigerators and freezers from spoiling. But three days after the storm, he only had a little more than a gallon of fuel remaining.

Duke Energy said most customers in the region will have power restored no later than Friday evening, Oct 4.

But power won't help the McNeely family, who said they'll stay with family members in Gastonia.

On Sept. 30, a restoration crew was onsite waiting for residents like the McNeely's clear out whatever was salvageable.

Megan Guess, 24, and her fiancé Logan Sewell, 29, wore headlamps as they walked up and down the wet staircase to the second floor of their home, where they saved as much as they could before being forced to evacuate. Immediately afterward, like many of their neighbors, all the couple could do was help other residents in need.

Whether it was rescuing people and pets with paddleboards and kayaks or handing out dry towels or just offering a hug, Sewell told the Citizen Times the community really came together.

"It gave me a little bit more hope in humanity after that," he said.

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

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

rescued their neighbors', <i>Times-News, The</i> (online), 2 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF46BACE447358>



Cooper, FEMA bringing aide to Asheville

October 2, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Evan Gerike; Asheville Citizen Times | USA TODAY NETWORK Section: News | 645 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper said devastation in Western North Carolina was "beyond belief" in a press conference Monday, as he visited Asheville in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Helene.

"Even when you prepare for something like this, this is something that has never happened before in Western North Carolina," Cooper said. "Search and rescue teams are continuing to work."

Cooper said the government knew Tropical Storm Helene would be a significant event, with local officials telling people to get out of low-lying areas.

In Asheville, the first evacuation orders came on Sept. 26, advising residents of Fletcher and Biltmore Village, two areas prone to flooding from nearby rivers, to leave areas where flooding could be imminent. Around 7 a.m. Sept. 27, another evacuation notice urged residents near Swannanoa River to seek higher ground as the flooding had already begun.

Over 1,200 personnel from different federal agencies have joined the response efforts, according to FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell, including search and rescue teams, medical personnel and the Army Corps of Engineers, who are assessing water systems and power infrastructure.

Almost 800 National Guard troops are on the ground, according to National Guard Maj. Gen. Todd Hunt, with their primary goals being search and rescue, relocation and distribution of commodities. The National Guard also brought in 100,000 pounds of water and food through the air on Monday morning.

Nearly 300 roads are still closed in Western North Carolina, including I-40 East heading into Tennessee, which has had several miles of road wiped away, according to North Carolina Secretary of Transportation Joey Hopkins.

"The damage is severe," Hopkins said. "We're continuing to tell folks, if you don't have a reason to be in North Carolina, do not to travel on the roads of Western North Carolina. We do not want you here if you don't live here."

Over 600 employees are helping, with 73 contract crews working. Other states, like Florida, are also coming and bringing temporary bridges to help with temporary repairs.

For those who feel like the government did not provide quick enough support, Cooper said first responders were often cut off from access in some areas by rising flood waters, fallen trees and landslides, but they are working around the clock to provide services like food, water and shelter.

"This is our main mission right now," Cooper said. "This is a massive, coordinated effort to help this area both in the short term and the long term."

Response to the government's efforts have been critical. Frustration has grown over a lack of communication and the slow distribution of resources. The city set up distribution of bottled water, which was bought from a private provider in what was described as an "emergency purchase" of hundreds of thousands of dollars, two days after the city first lost water.

Cooper said there's been progress with cell service providers, with AT&T and Verizon bringing in deployable assets to provide temporary service while they repair fiberoptics lines which were cut in landslides.

Criswell, who has been directed by the Biden Administration to stay in Asheville until the situation is stable, called the storm "historic" and said it had "catastrophic impacts across many communities."

She stressed that FEMA has the resources in Buncombe County to help in response and will continue to bring in resources.

Criswell said FEMA will be bringing in additional Department of Defense medical teams as support for long term, sustainable needs at medical facilities. FEMA will also bring in debris removal teams and additional search and rescue teams.

"At the direction of the president, he has asked me to make sure that we have every federal resource available to support the people of North Carolina," Criswell said.

Evan Gerike is a reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times. Email him at egerike@citizentimes.com or follow him on X, formerly Twitter, @EvanGerike.

Where to find help after Helene

Asheville nonprofit sets up aid distribution site. 2A

A quick reference guide to help you navigate Asheville after Helene. 3A

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Evan Gerike, Asheville Citizen Times | USA TODAY NETWORK, 'Cooper, FEMA bringing aide to Asheville', *Times-News, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF46BAC9A0EB88



State prisons secure following Helene's effects in WNC

October 2, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Iris Seaton; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 377 Words Page: A3 OpenURL Link

In response to the destruction left by Tropical Storm Helene, the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction has released information on steps taken to ensure the security of correctional facilities and safety of inmates.

Toward the beginning of the NCDAC news release, the statement confirmed that all offenders are safe and asked that people not call prison facilities so telephone lines stay clear for emergencies. Though several facilities are operating on generator power, the statement also said that none have been flooded.

Calls left with individual prisons went unanswered.

In regards to communications to offenders at Western N.C. facilities, the NCDAC warned that, with massive damage to non-emergency communications in the area, it may be difficult or impossible to reach people incarcerated in state prisons for several days at least. Visitation at state prison facilities is suspended until further notice.

Prison evacuations

The NCDAC's first news release addressed the possibility of evacuations.

"NCDAC is prepared to evacuate facilities should that become necessary and move incarcerated persons to unaffected facilities," the statement said. "In the event of an institution evacuation, announcements will be made upon completion. Locations of incarcerated persons will appear on the NCDAC Offender Public Information application approximately 24 hours after relocation. Evacuated populations will return to their original facilities when it is safe to do so."

On Sept. 30, another news release said that the Western Correctional Center for Women in Swannanoa and the Black Mountain Substance Abuse Treatment Center for Women in Black Mountain were evacuated, a total of about 400 offenders.

The 360 minimum-custody offenders at WCCW were moved to either Anson Correctional Institution in Polkton or North Carolina Correctional Institution for Women in Raleigh. The 45 offenders receiving in-patient alcohol and drug treatment at the Black Mountain treatment center were moved to the North Piedmont Confinement in Response to Violation facility in Lexington.

As of Sept. 30, food and water inventories had been evaluated at every state facility, with additional supplies delivered to affected facilities. The release specifically mentioned a large shipment of water delivered to Avery-Mitchell and Mountain View correctional institutions on the evening of Sunday, Sept. 29, and water service restored to Marion and Foothills correctional institutions.

Iris Seaton is the trending news reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA TODAY Network. Reach her at iseaton@citizentimes.com.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Iris Seaton, Asheville Citizen Times, 'State prisons secure following Helene's effects in WNC', *Times-News, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 A3 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF46BABACD67E0



high school sports - How NCHSAA is handling athletics in aftermath of Helene

October 2, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: George Robinson; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: Sports | 365 Words Page: B1 OpenURL Link

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association has not had any discussions on how it will proceed with fall sports in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene's devastating damage that hit Western North Carolina.

NCHSAA commissioner Que Tucker said all decisions will be made by the organization's Board of Directors, some of whom the NCHSAA is still trying to contact. Communication has been difficult with unreliable cell phone service.

"We've used (Monday) to just reach out to those board members most affected to make sure they are OK," said Tucker. "Forget about sports at this moment. We need to know they are safe and OK."

What we know

Fall sports include football, cheerleading, cross country, men's soccer, women's golf, women's tennis and volleyball. Tucker said the NCHSAA needs input from areas hardest hit before making any decisions.

"Until we are able to talk to them, we can't say yet what we'll do about the fall season," Tucker said.

There have been 35 deaths reported in Buncombe County as of Monday.

The high school governing body's first priority is making sure member schools are safe and finding out where relief efforts are needed. East Henderson's football stadium suffered significant damage postponing its game against West Henderson indefinitely.

Nearly all high school football games were postponed in Western North Carolina last Thursday and Friday. Only Hayesville played, beating Concord Christian, 37-16, in Knoxville last Saturday.

What's next for NCHSAA?

"The easiest thing, right now, would be to say that yes, we're going to back up everything," Tucker said. "But what does that mean? We don't know that yet."

"Our football state championships are scheduled for Dec. 13 and 14. If we back that up a week, now you're bumping up against Christmas. Our boys soccer state championships is the Friday and Saturday before Thanksgiving (Nov. 22-23). If we back that up a week, now you're into Thanksgiving."

Tucker said organization will try schedule a Zoom call later this week.

"They need to be a part of this process so that whatever we decide, it's clear, well communicated and fair for everyone involved," said Tucker.

George Robinson is the High School Sports editor at The Tennessean in Nashville, Tennessee and part of the USA TODAY NETWORK. He can be reached at georgerobinsontheleafchronicle.com.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

George Robinson, Asheville Citizen Times, 'high school sports - How NCHSAA is handling athletics in aftermath of Helene', *Times-News, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 B1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF46BADCADB490>



East Henderson football stadium damaged

October 2, 2024 \mid Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC)

Author: Zachary Huber; Hendersonville Times-News | Section: Sports | 313 Words

Page: B1 OpenURL Link

East Henderson's football stadium suffered significant damage from Helene, which battered Western North Carolina late Thursday and early Friday.

Trees fell on the visitors' side, damaging the bleachers. Coach Colton Brackett said a fence they just put up around E.L. Justus Field was destroyed.

"Right now, our visitors' stand is shot," Brackett said Monday. "I've been going over there every day, looking and assessing, but we just got a brand new fence line that got put in around the stadium that is tore up."

The Eagles (3-2, 0-1 Mountain 7) were supposed to host West Henderson (3-2, 1-0) on Saturday. But that game is postponed with a make-up date to be determined.

East Henderson has an open week before traveling to face Tuscola (3-1). Brackett said he spoke to Tuscola coach Jonathan Crompton on Monday. Brackett said that Crompton asked him what they should do about the game. Brackett said he told him that he didn't know what the right answer would be.

He added he would like to finish the season for the senior class.

"If we're gonna have to play somewhere else, if that's what we got to do to get things rolling," Brackett said. "If we can get our stadium to at least have one side, the home stands full, then that's what we'll do. So I think it's still up in there."

Brackett said he hasn't been able to reach all his players due to most of WNC struggling to get cell phone service. But he said he has one player who has lost everything while others had a tree fall on their house.

"Right now, football's kind of on the back burner with everything," Brackett said.

Zachary Huber is a high school sports reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times and Hendersonville Times-News. Email him at zhuber@gannett.com or follow him on X @zacharyahuber.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Zachary Huber, Hendersonville Times-News, 'East Henderson football stadium damaged', *Times-News, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 B1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF46BADEF6D970



I-40 collapse - Are there alternate NC-Tenn. routes?

October 2, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC)
Author: Areena Arora, Angela Dennis , and Allison Kiehl; USA TODAY NETWORK Section: News | 531 Words
Page: A1
OpenURL Link

The Tennessee Department of Transportation plans to move quickly with repairs to infrastructure damaged by Hurricane Helene, notably the collapsed potion of Interstate 40 near the Tennessee-North Carolina border and the handful of bridges that have washed away. That fix will take "months at best," officials say.

The storm left 14 state bridges on state routes closed, and five of those are "completely gone," TDOT Deputy Commissioner Will Reid said during a Sept. 29 news conference. That means not just repairs, but entirely new builds will be necessary to reconnect communities.

A mudslide on the North Carolina side resulted in a partial collapse of the I-40.

"In general, we're going to prioritize the interstates and U.S. and N.C. routes ahead of the secondary routes, but also we've got to look at how much damage we have, like ... the one near the Tennessee line," N.C. Department of Transportation Joey Hopkins said Oct. 1. "That's a significant amount of damage and so even though it's a top priority of ours, it will take a long time to fix that. We're probably talking months at best. We've still got to evaluate that and do some assessments out there before we can determine what that solution is."

In Greene County, TDOT Deputy Commissioner Will Reid said, Bridge 107 is compromised, as well as bridges on state routes 340, 350 and 351. Some local bridges in the county are compromised as well.

TDOT wants to begin awarding repair contracts as early as Sept. 30, Reid said.

"We are still in the debris removal and assessment phase," he said.

I-40 repair a priority for Tennessee and North Carolina

TDOT is working closely with the North Carolina Department of Transportation to repair Interstate 40 between mile markers 443 and 451 near the Tennessee-North Carolina line.

Interstate 40, a major thoroughfare through the Southern Appalachians, is closed in both directions:

I-40 East is closed from mile marker 432 in Tennessee until mile marker 3 in North Carolina.

I-40 West is closed starting at mile marker 3 in North Carolina through mile marker 435 in Tennessee.

Officials from each state were assessing damage on their respective sides of I-40 this weekend but had no timeline for how long it would take to repair the roadway.

Interstate 26 between mile markers 40 and 43 is another major focus, as well as State Route 81 in Unicoi and Washington counties, Reid said.

Alternate routes from Tennessee and North Carolina while I-40 is closed

Interstate 81: Interstate 81 offers a bypass to I-40. From Knoxville, travelers can head north on I-81, which connects with Interstate 26, providing an alternate route to Asheville and other areas in North Carolina. This is the alternate route TDOT recommends.

Local alternatives: US Routes 11E and 25E: U.S. Route 11E runs parallel to I-40 for much of its distance and offers a scenic, slower alternative route through local towns and communities. It eventually connects to I-26.

U.S. Route 25E takes travelers from Knoxville northeast through Morristown, where it links up with Interstate 81.

You can check for road closure updates across North Carolina at drivenc.gov.

Allison Kiehl contributed to this story.

Areena Arora, data and investigative reporter for Knox News, can be reached by email at areena.arora@knoxnews.com. Follow her on X @AreenaArora and on Instagram @areena_news.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Areena Arora, Angela Dennis , and Allison Kiehl, USA TODAY NETWORK, 'I-40 collapse - Are there alternate NC-Tenn. routes?', Times-News, The (online), 2 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF46BAC5FE1E60>



Asheville nonprofit sets up aid distribution site

October 2, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Will Hofmann; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 840 Words Page: A2 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE – While Buncombe County had not yet set up aid distribution stations in the aftermath of the historic floods from Tropical Storm Helene, one nonprofit had taken it into their own hands — soliciting another national nonprofit to send aid.

Asheville Dream Center brought aid to the Asheville Mall on Sept. 29, likely becoming the first mass aid distribution site for necessities in the city. The nonprofit is the local arm of the nonprofit national Dream Center outreach ministry. The nonprofit Global Empowerment Mission was the first to respond to their call to distribute aid in the city, Asheville Dream Center Executive Director Michelle Coleman said.

"We just got them this place, but we're gonna have more of their trucks," Michelle Coleman said, noting that they had been told that FEMA was "coming out tomorrow" to provide aid.

Asheville Dream Center CEO Matthew Coleman indicated that two trucks had come to Asheville in time for aid on Sept. 29. The first one was full of a variety of resources like food, paper towels, cleaning supplies, tarps and pet food. The next truck, which was expected to be received around 5:30 p.m. on Sept. 29, was for just for one resource: water. It's expected to be the most important resource residents need as the city of Asheville attempts to bring their water grid back online.

The effort brought out volunteers from across the community. People of all ages, including children who had made a game by playing basketball with an empty cardboard box, were out helping distribute the aid to a line of cars so long that it stretched from the parking lot to Tunnel Road, where motorists were parking on the typically busy residential avenue.

UNC Asheville teacher Casey Watkins was one of the first volunteers to help respond, unloading the single, stark white tractor trailer full of community necessities.

The university has faced its own flooding, with cancellations and significant damage to university buildings. Watkins said that the building with her office was "OK" but a tree had fallen on the roof. Though the university has announced it's closed through Oct. 9, it's unclear when students will fully be back in the classroom, she said.

Watkins, who is from Wilmington, said that she had experienced losing power for two weeks from Hurricanes. However, she had never lost water for that amount of time. Currently living in Haw Creek, she said the neighborhood had suffered from fallen trees and flooding, as some areas of the neighborhood are "not even passable yet" due to fallen trees.

"We really don't know how long the water is going to be out," Michelle Coleman said. "I went through the line here, and I talked to so many people and their fear is how long. Is it two weeks? Is it more than a month?"

I've watched the community come together out here. It's encouraging one another and it's building hope," Michelle Coleman said. "We need that right now."

In line, fear sets in for local residents

Debbie Adrian joined her daughter and grandson as they volunteered at the distribution site. Adrian said that they had driven from the Cloister Condominiums in East Asheville, where they had seen the water rapidly rise up and

flood the self-storage site where they kept personal belongings.

Because the main connector to the Cloisters, Swannanoa River Road, has been damaged and blocked off by mud, the only way they've been able to get out is a small, rudimentary mud path that was created between the Beverly Hills neighborhood and the Cloisters. Once they escaped, they recalled joining others at the Tunnel Road Chili's to get cell service, a common occurrence as only a few spots around town have consistent cell or Wi-Fi coverage.

"I don't know when they're going to open up the Cloisters," Adrian said. "The mud just needs to be gone."

Waiting in line, Derek Faria and Lori Kent had arrived early and waited 40 minutes for aid distribution. Their worries turned to what the future looks like when they might run "out of everything" — from food to water. Kent, a local hairdresser, was worried about having the basic resources along with having a job to go back to.

Where to go, what to know

The Asheville Dream Center is doing rolling updates on aid distribution sites on social media, Michelle Coleman told the Citizen Times. She encouraged all interested residents to reach out on social media or check for live updates.

On their Instagram, the organization indicated that they would be back again with aid from Global Empowerment Mission at the Asheville Mall off of South Tunnel Road distributing food and water on Sept. 30 at 12:30 p.m. They've asked for volunteers to meet them there at 11:30 a.m.

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

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Will Hofmann, Asheville Citizen Times, 'Asheville nonprofit sets up aid distribution site', *Times-News, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 A2 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF46BAE78BD720



NHC tracking 3 tropical disturbances in Atlantic

October 2, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Gabe Hauari; USA TODAY | Section: News | 465 Words Page: A8

OpenURL Link

The 2024 Atlantic hurricane season continues to be active as the calendar flips to October, which is historically the busiest month for hurricanes for Florida.

Although the only named storm out there is distant Tropical Storm Kirk, the National Hurricane Center is also monitoring two other tropical disturbances, including one in the Caribbean Sea.

And it's that developing system in the Caribbean that most concerns people in the U.S., as it could become a named storm in the Gulf of Mexico by next week, forecasters said.

The storm activity is on the heels of the deadly and devastating Hurricane Helene, which made landfall last week in Florida and dumped heavy, flooding rains across the Appalachian Mountains. More than 1million were still without power Tuesday morning.

NHC tracking Tropical Storm Kirk

The hurricane center said Tuesday morning Kirk was located about 935 miles west of the Cabo Verde Islands and had maximum sustained winds around 60 mph. The system was forecast to continue moving to the west-northwest through Tuesday night before gradually taking a northwest course Wednesday and Thursday.

"Kirk is forecast to strengthen into a hurricane by tonight and could become a major hurricane on Thursday," the NHC said Tuesday morning.

Current forecast models show the system curving north into the middle of the Atlantic, well away from the U.S.

Caribbean system could develop

The first of the other two tropical disturbances is currently a "trough of low pressure" that is producing disorganized showers and thunderstorms in the northwestern Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico.

The hurricane center said Tuesday morning environmental conditions could support some gradual development of this system and that a tropical depression could form in the next several days as the system moves northwestward over the northwestern Caribbean and the southern Gulf of Mexico.

"Interests along the U.S. Gulf Coast should continue to monitor the progress of this system," the NHC said Tuesday morning, giving the system a 40% chance of formation through the next seven days.

System 'very likely' to form

The second system, currently designated as Invest 91L, was located a few hundred miles south of the Cabo Verde Islands. The system is producing showers and thunderstorms that show "some signs of organization in association with a broad area of low pressure," the NHC said Tuesday morning.

The hurricane center said environmental conditions appear conducive for further development of this system, and a tropical depression is "very likely" to form during the next few days while it moves slowly westward over the eastern tropical Atlantic.

The NHC said Tuesday morning the system had a 60% chance of formation by Wednesday or Thursday and a 90% chance within seven days.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Gabe Hauari, USA TODAY, 'NHC tracking 3 tropical disturbances in Atlantic', *Times-News, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 A8 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF46BAAA6EC718



Helene hits Sanctuary at Red Bell Run hard. Donations urgently needed.

October 2, 2024 | Tryon Daily Bulletin, The (NC) Author: Staff Reports | Section: Community | 454 Words OpenURL Link

The Sanctuary at Red Bell Run, home to over 130 special-needs equines, urgently seeks donations after Hurricane Helene left the 200-acre facility with significant damage and needing immediate repairs. While all animals and staff are safe, the sanctuary estimates repair costs to be over \$30,000, and ongoing challenges threaten their operations.

The storm that recently swept through the region uprooted trees, brought down fences, and knocked out the sanctuary's power. The sanctuary has had no power for five days and has been relying on generators to keep essential services running, but fuel is running low. The refuge also faces an uncertain winter, as the road to the offsite barn where their hay supply is kept has become impassable, leaving them unsure of whether they will have enough feed for the animals in the coming months.

One of the most critical issues is the sanctuary's limited propane supply. With thousands of dollars of essential medications and vaccines needing refrigeration, the sanctuary is racing against the clock as generators run dangerously low on fuel. They have submitted a request for a propane refill, but with resources stretched thin, the staff is calling on the community for help.

"This situation is challenging, and we need your help to recover," the sanctuary said in a statement. "Please consider donating to support our sanctuary during this difficult time. Every bit helps us get back on our feet for the equines who depend on us!"

The Sanctuary at Red Bell Run has been a vital refuge for equines with medical or behavioral issues that make them unadoptable. Many of the animals in their care have been rescued from abuse, neglect, or at-risk situations. In addition to providing lifelong sanctuary for these animals, Red Bell Run also offers educational and therapeutic programs that foster empathy and strengthen the bond between humans and animals.

With widespread damage to the facility and no clear timeline for power restoration, the sanctuary's resources are under immense strain. In order to repair fences, clear fallen trees, and ensure they have the necessary supplies to care for their animals, the sanctuary is appealing for donations from anyone able to help.

To donate and support Red Bell Run's recovery efforts, please visit their website or contact the sanctuary directly. Every donation, no matter the size, will help the sanctuary rebuild and continue their mission of providing a permanent home for special-needs equines.

The sanctuary expressed gratitude for the outpouring of support they have already received but emphasized the ongoing need as they continue to face the storm's aftermath. "We are confident we can get through this, but we can't do it alone," the staff said.

The post Helene hits Sanctuary at Red Bell Run hard. Donations urgently needed. appeared first on The Tryon Daily Bulletin.

Copyright 2024, The Tryon Daily Bulletin, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Reports, 'Helene hits Sanctuary at Red Bell Run hard. Donations urgently needed.', *Tryon Daily Bulletin, The*(online), 2 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF723A4EFE7488>



Image of American flag atop Chimney Rock lifts spirits for local residents and devoted fans across the globe

October 2, 2024 | Tryon Daily Bulletin, The (NC) Author: Staff Reports | Section: Community | 180 Words OpenURL Link

After days of heartbreaking images of the destruction at Chimney Rock, the photo of an American flag at the top of the rock outcropping for which the area is named is lifting the spirits of local residents in Rutherford County and people across the globe who have come to love the village and Western North Carolina.

The single image posted on the Facebook page devoted to Chimney Rock State Park has been shared nearly 8,000 times since it was posted Tuesday evening.

"Amidst the unimaginable tragedy our region and community are experiencing, we want to thank our State Parks team, who made it to the Rock and proudly raised the flag as a beacon of hope for all of Western North Carolina," the post said "This photo was taken by them on Monday, September 30th."

Chimney Rock was nearly erased by Hurricane Helene. The small town, home to 140 residents, was buried under sludge and debris.

The post Image of American flag atop Chimney Rock lifts spirits for local residents and devoted fans across the globe appeared first on The Tryon Daily Bulletin.

Copyright 2024, The Tryon Daily Bulletin, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Reports, 'Image of American flag atop Chimney Rock lifts spirits for local residents and devoted fans across the globe', *Tryon Daily Bulletin, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF723A518C5710>



Polk Update: Information about documenting damage, area supply distributions

October 2, 2024 | Tryon Daily Bulletin, The (NC) Author: Staff Reports | Section: News | 367 Words OpenURL Link

Officials with the City of Tryon and Polk County released the following update to residents on Wednesday, Oct. 2:

Damage Repair and Information

As we move forward, we understand everyone is eager to begin repairs and restore a sense of normalcy. To help us assist you effectively, please take photos and carefully document all damages and repairs needed. In the coming weeks, we will provide more information on the appropriate resources and contacts for reporting damages. Thank you for your cooperation and patience as we work together through this process.

Essential Needs Distribution:

The following drive-through locations will be open to distribute water and basic food. Distribution will be on a first-come, first-served basis and will continue on a day-to-day basis per availability and need. Distribution Locations and Hours October 2nd Time: 1 to 5 p.m.

25 International Blvd, Mill Spring, NC

95 Walker St, Columbus, NC

214 E Main St, Saluda, NC

301 N Trade St, Tryon, NC

86 Sunny View School Rd.

Mill Spring, NC 28756

Maximizing the Impact of Donations and Volunteer Efforts

To ensure that all donations and volunteer support are used effectively, we kindly request that you coordinate through NCVOAD.org or nc.gov/donate. This will help us manage resources properly and maintain a safe, efficient response. Please help spread the word: Unsolicited donations cannot be accepted due to logistical challenges and safety concerns. Your cooperation allows us to focus on what matters most—assisting those in need.

Meals on Wheels

We are dedicated to ensuring that all clients registered for Meals on Wheels in Polk County receive not only meals but also physical contact during each delivery. Our priority is to provide consistent support, care, and essential nutrition to every client.

Laundry

Laundry services will be available at Polk County High School on Thursday, October 3rd, from 1 PM to 5 PM.

Landfill

Open Monday - Friday 8 AM - 4:30 PM / Saturday 8 am - 4:00 pm

Residential Trash

\$10.00 Service Fee Waived October 1st through October 8th

Important numbers

Moving Forward

"In the wake of Hurricane Helene, Polk County stands united in the spirit of rescue and recovery. Together, we will support one another, heal our community, and build a future grounded in hope and resilience."

The post Polk Update: Information about documenting damage, area supply distributions appeared first on The Tryon Daily Bulletin.

Copyright 2024, The Tryon Daily Bulletin, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Reports, 'Polk Update: Information about documenting damage, area supply distributions', *Tryon Daily Bulletin, The*(online), 2 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF9531B0269D48>



'I don't know if they're dead or alive': Missing persons, power, cellphone outages raise anxiety levels after Hurricane Helene

October 2, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Mike Sunnucks APG Newpapers | Section: Nc News | 449 Words OpenURL Link

Elizabeth Hyder is going through the anxieties, stresses and uncertainties that many others in western North Carolina are experiencing after Hurricane Helene brought biblical and life-threatening floods and knocked out power, water and telecommunications systems.

"I'm absolutely in panic mode because I can't get in touch with any of my family," said Hyder, who is Morganton,

Hyder said Wednesday the Haywood County Emergency Services had reached out to her and told her that her 10-year-old son and his father in Waynesville were safe.

She had been having trouble reaching them.

Hyder said she's started to have problems the past couple of days reaching her mom and siblings in Hendersonville.

Similar stresses and uncertainty are playing out across the Carolinas and other states in Hurricane Helene's path, with family and friends unable to reach loved ones after the storm with power, internet, and cellphone outages.

Hurricane Helene brought record storm surge flooding to Florida's west coast including the Big Bend, Tampa Bay and Sarasota areas. The Category 4 storm then rampaged through Georgia, the Carolinas and Appalachia bringing heavy and record rains and deadly floods and mudslides.

More than 180 people have been killed by Helene, according to CNN.

Search and rescue missions continue across western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee and other areas hit by the hurricane.

That hits home across the region.

"There's a ton of people that I don't know if they're dead or alive, and I'm terrified," Hyder said of her other friends and loved ones in the southeastern U.S.

The U.S. military has deployed aircraft and other assets to help with those efforts which are hampered by floodwaters, damaged bridges and roadways and down electrical lines.

More than 1.2 million households are without power in the southeastern U.S., according to poweroutage.us/, after Helene downed power lines and damaged transformers and other infrastructure across multiple states

President Joe Biden is visiting the Carolinas on Wednesday and Florida and Georgia on Thursday.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and relief groups such as Samaritan's Purse are on the ground in North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, offering assistance to those displaced and impacted by Helene.

Hyder said she and her friends and relatives face financial hardships with the storm's property damage and outages. She's started a GoFundMe page — https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-north-carolina-no-food-no-water — seeking charitable donations.

"It breaks my heart," she said of the situation.

The storm has flooded out homes, businesses and cars but also memories with family pictures, baby blankets and keepsakes all destroyed.

Hyder said her hometown of Chimney Rock was among the areas decimated by the storm and its floods.

"My hometown was destroyed," she said. "Chimney Rock was where my grandmother raised me, and I would go, and now it's completely gone, and those are just memories now because she passed away in 2021."

©2024 Watauga Democrat - Mountain Times Publications, All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Mike Sunnucks APG Newpapers, "I don't know if they're dead or alive': Missing persons, power, cellphone outages raise anxiety levels after Hurricane Helene', *Watauga Democrat, The*(online), 2 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA11C6EBAE400



'Ticking time bombs': Lithium-ion batteries blamed for Hurricane Helene fires, continued danger

October 2, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Mike Sunnucks APG Newspapers | Section: News | 875 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene's cataclysmic path brought historic storm surges, record rainfall and destructive flooding from Florida to the Carolinas and Appalachia.

But all the storm's wind and rain were accompanied by a surge of fires across multiple states that officials said appear to be caused by overheating and sometimes exploding lithium-ion batteries in electric cars, golf carts, electric bikes and scooters as well as other devices.

Lithium-ion batteries can catch fire if they are exposed to salt or freshwater, said Chad Hawkins, assistant chief deputy with the Oregon State Fire Marshal's Office.

"It doesn't matter. It shorts them out," Hawkins said of the batteries, noting that it takes "copious amounts" of water to put out lithium battery fires.

"It takes a lot of water to extinguish them," he said.

Florida State Fire Marshal Jimmy Patronis on Tuesday said there have been 16 fires during and after Hurricane Helene attributed to lithium-ion batteries used in Tesla and other electric vehicles, golf carts and other vehicles and devices.

Florida officials are investigating more structure and vehicle fires to see if more in storm-impacted areas were caused by electric batteries.

Patronis is worried that more lithium batteries could catch fire or explode after being exposed to floodwaters from the hurricane.

He urged owners to remove, properly dispose of or have towed away electric vehicle golf carts and other devices that have been exposed to floodwaters after record storm surges deluged communities and neighborhoods along Florida's west coast.

Patronis, who serves as Florida's CFO, said the hurricane's flooding can make "EV's a dangerous fire threat" and called storm surge-exposed lithium-ion batteries "ticking time bombs."

He stressed that electric batteries should not be put in the trash and to move EVs outdoors and roll down their windows and open doors to allow potentially flammable gas to escape.

Other hurricane fires may have been caused by downed power lines and flooded electrical systems.

North Carolina Fire Marshal Brian Taylor encourages residents and businesses to stay away from downed power lines and to unplug appliances to safeguard against power surges.

Fire and public safety officials in states hit by Helene are also encouraging residents and businesses to have electrical systems inspected before rebooting power after the storm and its outages.

The fires added to emergency workloads of fire and other public safety departments already responding to water rescues from historic storm surges and dangerous flooding.

"We responded to over 1,100 calls for service from the start of the storm until 4 p.m. yesterday," said John Klinefelter, division chief for Clearwater Fire Rescue in Florida on Wednesday. The popular tourist destination saw record storm surge from Helene, which was a Category 4 hurricane when it stormed ashore in Florida.

Klinefelter said his department responded to 37 structure fires with at least two involved lithium batteries with more incidents being reviewed for their causes.

"This information is based on the person who called 911 because we could not send fire inspectors out. One of the structure fires was an electric bicycle store located on the beach," he said.

Other communities in Florida and other states hit by the hurricane also saw fire during and after the storm.

St. Petersburg Fire Rescue responded to 47 vehicle fires and 7 structure fires from Sept. 26 to 28 on top of 86 water rescues and 1,744 emergency 911 calls, said spokeswoman Ashlie Handy.

She had some tips for avoiding electric fires — including those involving lithium batteries and electrical systems.

"When a storm is on its way, we encourage residents to prepare their homes by unplugging appliances from electrical outlets and moving them to a higher location. We recommend moving electric vehicles and other lithium-ion battery-powered devices away from areas that may see storm surge associated with the storm. We see most of our structure fires after the storm has passed. That is because when salt water comes in contact with exposed electrical systems, it becomes a fire hazard. The best thing someone can do to avoid an electrical fire is to turn off the main circuit breaker to their home," she said.

North of Tampa, Hernando County Fire Rescue responded to 7 structure fires, 4 of which involved lithium batteries, said Nick Brandt, communications manager for the agency.

"Tips for future storms would be to remove lithium batteries from flood prone locations and if batteries are submerged in salt water, move them to a location at least 50 feet away from any structures or vehicles to prevent further damage in the event they fail and cause a fire," Brandt said.

Handy and Hawkins also said lithium batteries should be moved away from potential flooding and unplugged from charging sources.

That might be possible with some golf carts and other devices but not with Teslas and other electric vehicles, Hawkins said.

He said overcharging lithium batteries in all types of devices — large and small — can cause them to catch fire.

"They can overcharge. They can overheat, they can pressurize and can explode," Hawkins said.

Hawkins also said consumers should make sure they are buying legitimately tested batteries and charges, warning that some overseas products can be faulty and cause fires.

He also said not to charge electric batteries in extreme cold (under 32 degrees Fahrenheit) or extreme heat (above 105 degrees Fahrenheit), not to just let devices always charge over long periods of time and to be at home when recharging vehicles or devices.

 $\hbox{@2024 Watauga Democrat -} \ Mountain \ Times \ Publications, \ All \ rights \ reserved.$

• Citation (aglc Style)

Mike Sunnucks APG Newspapers, 'Ticking time bombs': Lithium-ion batteries blamed for Hurricane Helene fires, continued danger', *Watauga Democrat, The*(online), 2 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA11C7685AFF8>



Helene forces cancellation of Banner Elk Woolly Worm Festival

October 2, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Jamie Shell editor@averyjournal.com| Section: Community | 463 Words OpenURL Link

BANNER ELK — Following the announcement of other closings and cancellations across Avery County and the region, officials announced on Wednesday, Oct. 2, that the 47th Annual Banner Elk Woolly Worm Festival, a tradition that attracts thousands annually to the High Country, has been canceled as a result of the devastating damage inflicted by the recent Hurricane Helene.

"It is with pure heartbreak that I bring you the official decision that the 47th Annual Woolly Worm Festival has been canceled," Festival Chairperson Victoria Bowman shared in an email to the community. "The main goal for this year's festival was to connect our entire community to showcase how wonderfully unique Avery County truly is. We wanted so badly to be able to share our magic with you all, but we simply can't do that justice when so many of our locals are suffering."

Bowman noted that the spirit that drives the festival is being exemplified by the connection and galvanized heart of Avery County and its people.

"I suppose the irony in this horrific circumstance is that we are indeed showcasing the county to the world, maybe not with racing worms and funnel cakes, but with the strength and resilience that our people have. Mountain folks are truly built differently; they take care of one another regardless of circumstance," Bowman added. "I experienced it firsthand as my neighbors sheltered and fed us as our property was destroyed before our eyes. Everywhere I look, I see examples of selflessness, determination and tenacity. From our county and town leaders to our first responders, linemen and local business owners, everyone has jumped in to help. We are simply blessed to call this place home and I know we will build back stronger than ever."

Bowman recognized the logistical complications of the festival's cancellation, but provided some insight to plans moving forward.

"We realize that there are financial ramifications for a lot of our attendees with this cancellation, but we do hope that you make plans to attend next year instead. When we are back on our feet, our businesses will need your full support to help regain what has been lost in this," Bowman explained. "The planning committee is dedicated to maintaining the magic of this weekend for our vendors, volunteers, locals and tourists alike. The 2025 festival will be all that more special because of what has transpired this past week. Please be patient as we navigate through the e-ticket refunding process. Vendors, Sponsors and Partners will be contacted directly with a move forward plan as our communication infrastructure is rebuilt."

The festival announcement joins other events, including the annual Valle Country Fair, to announce its cancellation due to the ramifications of Helene's storm path through the area. For more information on the annual Banner Elk Woolly Worm Festival, visit www.woollyworm.com.

 $\hbox{@2024 Watauga Democrat -} \ Mountain \ Times \ Publications, \ All \ rights \ reserved.$

• Citation (aglc Style)

Jamie Shell editor@averyjournal.com, 'Helene forces cancellation of Banner Elk Woolly Worm Festival', *Watauga Democrat, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA11C396855B8



STORM RECOVERY: Storm Debris Cleanup and Downed Power Lines

October 2, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Local | 263 Words OpenURL Link

Many in the community are venturing out to begin cleaning up from the devastating effects from Hurricane Helene. Boone Fire wants to remind everyone of a few important details to follow during this phase.

Chainsaws are dangerous and tree removal is hazardous. Please do not operate outside your skill level, training and ability. Death or serious injury could occur. Pile debris out of the roadway and in a way that does not block fire hydrants, roadways and ditches. 3 feet of clearance must be maintained around fire hydrants and they should remain visible from the street. Please ensure your address number is visible from the street to assist in emergency response. Open burning of yard debris and other waste is prohibited in the city limits. Information will be made available for the Town of Boone regarding debris pickup services.

The Town of Boone is requesting debris from Hurricane Helene be divided into five categories:

Construction materialsVegetative debrisAppliancesElectronicsHazardous waste

The debris should be brought curbside as close to the street as possible and in individual piles for collection. This pickup is for hurricane debris only and should not block roads, sidewalks and fire hydrants and don't place in a ditch.

Stay away from downed utility lines and damaged power poles. Power lines may still be energized or may become energized as utility crews begin to restore service in the area. Trees and limbs continue to fall across the region due to damage and unstable soil conditions from Hurricane Helene. This could lead to additional power outages or shorting of the electricity to the ground. Contact with these lines can lead to death.

©2024 Watauga Democrat - Mountain Times Publications, All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'STORM RECOVERY: Storm Debris Cleanup and Downed Power Lines', *Watauga Democrat, The*(online), 2 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA11C4C322588>



App State classes won't meet until at least Oct. 16

October 2, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Luke Barber luke.barber@wataugademocrat.com| Section: Local | 546 Words OpenURL Link

BOONE – Appalachian State University has announced that classes will not meet until at least Oct. 16 due to the impacts of Hurricane Helene.

The modality and locations will be determined based on conditions and infrastructure, and an update will be shared by Wednesday, Oct. 9, according to university communications.

Residence halls, dining facilities and campus medical facilities remain open. Off-campus students, faculty and staff in need of shelter should call 1-800-RED-CROSS (733-2767). Faculty, staff and students can visit the university resource web page at www.appstate.edu/disaster-relief/.

On Tuesday, Oct. 1, App State Interim Chancellor Heather Norris provided an update on the university's response to Hurricane Helene as part of a joint press conference between the university, the Town of Boone and Watauga County.

Norris began her remarks by noting the "tremendous acts of kindness" and support the university has experienced from neighbors, members of the local community and emergency responders before detailing the impacts of the storm on campus.

"This has been a disaster of monumental proportions," Norris said. "The main impact to our campus was unprecedented levels of flooding. We briefly lost power and internet service on Friday, but all residence halls remain structurally sound. By late Friday afternoon, power and internet service had been restored to campus. Several academic buildings have significant water damage, including Walker Hall, Rankin Science building, varsity gym and the academic areas of Holmes Convocation Center."

The university continues to provide support to its campus and to community members. Since Friday, Sep. 27, the university has served more than 40,000 meals at its Central Dining Hall free of charge to anyone who needs them and continues to do so.

Public wifi remains available at the stadium parking deck, the College Street parking deck, the student union and Central Dining Hall. Student recreation also remains open for students, and the university has partnered with the Red Cross to open an emergency shelter at Holmes Convocation Center.

All App State events scheduled in the Boone area, including athletic events, remain canceled. Athletes continue to play away games.

"We continue working together with local, state and national resource providers on establishing support resources for those with longer term needs," Norris said. "We greatly appreciate those who have contributed to the App State disaster relief recovery fund. This remains the best way to assist those in the mountaineer community."

As crews continue to improve road access and restore power, employees are making their way to campus as they are able to help relieve those who have been working around the clock and to begin retrieving items out of academic buildings that have been deemed safe.

Beginning Wednesday Oct. 2, for students, faculty and staff who need support and resources, university staff will be on-site in the Dean of Students Office (Room 324 of the Plemmons Student Union) from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

App State has also set up a university Disaster Relief Resources page at appstate.edu/disaster-relief/ to share information about campus resources. The site will continue to be updated as additional resources become available. This page also includes information about how to volunteer and where to donate goods.

"We remain so very grateful to everyone who has been able to do whatever they can to take care of their families, their loved ones, their neighbors and even strangers," Norris said. "Every effort makes a difference."

 $\hbox{@2024 Watauga Democrat -} \ Mountain \ Times \ Publications, \ All \ rights \ reserved.$

• Citation (aglc Style)

Luke Barber luke.barber@wataugademocrat.com, 'App State classes won't meet until at least Oct. 16', *Watauga Democrat, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA11C664F2100