



PRESTON JENKINS pjenkins@charlotteobserver.com

Charlotte Douglas International Airport is tracking conditions for Hurricane Helene.

As Hurricane Helene moves north, Charlotte airport passengers should brace for delays

BY CHASE JORDAN
cjordan@charlotteobserver.com

With Hurricane Helene turning into a major hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico, it may continue to spoil passengers' travel plans at Charlotte's busy airport.

Airlines at Charlotte Douglas International Airport could see problems as Helene makes its way toward the area.

At 10 a.m. Thursday, the airport was under a Helene-spawned tornado warning, along with Belmont and Mount Holly in Gaston County. Radar indicated a tornado, NWS meteorologists said, it's still unconfirmed.

Also on Thursday, there were 54 delays and 61 cancellations. That's a combined 471 flight disruptions over less than two days.

On Wednesday, there were 348 flights delayed and eight were canceled at CLT, according to FlightAware, an online website providing real-

time information. Forecasters from the National Weather Service said Hurricane Helene — which has escalated to a Category 2 level storm — could bring heavy rains to the Charlotte area.

It's expected to arrive in the western Carolinas and northeast Georgia Thursday night and Friday.

Charlotte Douglas is advising passengers to check with the airlines regarding the status of their flight before coming to the airport.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT FLIGHT CANCELLATIONS

American Airlines, which accounts for about 87% of all flights out of CLT, issued travel alerts on Wednesday for airports in the Southeast, with Charlotte Douglas among them.

The airline said passengers may rebook trips and will not be charged for change fees. Customers can reschedule their travel on aa.com or by calling 800-433-7300.

"American will continue tracking this system with our customers' and team members' safety top of mind," an airline spokesperson said.

Weather trackers are expecting Helene to cause life-threatening storm surge and hurricane-force winds for Florida's panhandle and western coasts, according to the National Weather Service.

N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper declared a State of Emergency on Wednesday.

Along with heavy rain, Cooper said threats include flash flooding, landslides and damaging winds to the mountains and Piedmont area of the state.

"Now is the time for North Carolinians to prepare, make sure emergency kits are up-to-date and pay attention to the weather alerts in your area," Cooper said in a news release.

Chase Jordan:
@ChaseJordanTCO

Half of NC Lt. Gov. Robinson's state staff quits, days after campaign staff exodus

BY DAWN BAUMGARTNER VAUGHAN
dvaughan@newsobserver.com

RALEIGH

Days after a scandal upended Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson's campaign for governor, most of his campaign staff resigned. Now much of his staff in the lieutenant governor's office have resigned, too.

Robinson is the Republican candidate in the North Carolina governor's race against Democratic Attorney General Josh Stein.

Robinson was the subject of a CNN report tying him to a series of vulgar, antisemitic, racist and sexually explicit posts on a pornographic website that included saying he was a "Black NAZI" and would buy enslaved people if slavery came back. Robinson denies that he wrote the posts.

Brian LiVecchi, who has served as Robinson's

chief of staff and general counsel for several years, confirmed his resignation to The News & Observer on Wednesday through Republican Sen. Benton Sawrey.

Sawrey, who represents Johnston County, also confirmed the resignations of Director of Government Affairs Nathan Lewis, Policy Director Jonathan Harris and Director of Communications John Wesley Waugh. That is half of Robinson's staff in the lieutenant governor's office.

The news comes the same day Robinson posted a video of himself on social media at a table in front of a laptop, saying that he met with top Republican state leaders about needing "all hands on deck" for the election. "Now is not the time for intra-party squabbling and nonsense," Robinson said in the video.

WRAL-TV first reported the resignations, citing an anonymous source.

It is unclear what day the resignations are effective.

The News & Observer has asked several Republican leaders for confirmation of the meeting described by Robinson. U.S. Rep. Dan Bishop, the Republican candidate for state attorney general, said through a spokesperson that Bishop did not participate in or know of a meeting with Robinson.

Some Republican governors have pulled their endorsements of Robinson. Others in the party have asked for Robinson to offer evidence for his denial of the allegations by the end of the week.

Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan: 919-829-4877, @dawnbvvaughan



ROBERT WILLETT rwillett@newsobserver.com

North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson lashes out at the news media on Wednesday, July 10, 2024 from an elevator in the General Assembly. On the right is Robinson's then-Chief of Staff Brian LiVecchi, who resigned in September 2024.



GRAEME SLOAN Sipa USA

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, center, arrives at the U.S. Capitol on Thursday with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., left, and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., for a meeting with bipartisan senators.

Biden to convene Ukraine allies, surge military aid

BY JENNY LEONARD AND VOLODYMYR VERBIANYI
Bloomberg News

President Joe Biden announced \$2.4 billion in military assistance for Ukraine on Thursday and plans to convene a leader-level meeting of key allies to coordinate additional support when he visits Germany next month.

The announcement, which came ahead of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to the White House later in the day, said Biden was directing the Pentagon to allocate the full remainder of Ukraine assistance before the end of his term. The Defense Department is also unveiling an initial package that included additional air defense systems, drones, and munitions.

Biden is also providing Ukraine with a new long-range munition known as the Joint Standoff Weapon, and has asked the Pentagon to refurbish an additional Patriot air defense battery and expand the F-16 training program for Ukrainian pilots.

Additionally, the U.S. is moving to disrupt a cryptocurrency network it says has been helping Russia to evade sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine. And Biden said he was working to ensure that restrictions on the drawdown of U.S. equipment didn't prevent Ukraine from receiving assistance.

"There is more work to do," Biden said in the statement. "That is why, today, I am announcing a surge in security assistance for Ukraine and a series of additional actions to help

Ukraine win this war."

The new steps are in addition to a new \$375 million weapons package that included rocket systems and artillery announced Wednesday as leaders met on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Still, the effort is likely to fall short of some of the security and economic guarantees Zelenskyy is expected to seek as part of his proposal, including NATO membership and promises of guaranteed access to certain advanced weapons systems.

Long-term prospects for Ukraine assistance have also been muddled this week amid a simmering dispute between Zelenskyy and Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump.

While the Ukrainian leader will meet with Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris during his trip to the White House, Trump declined Zelenskyy's offer for a meeting.

The snub came after the New Yorker published an interview in which Zelenskyy called Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance "too radical." Trump's campaign was dismayed that Zelenskyy visited the battleground state of Pennsylvania on his U.S. taxpayer-funded trip to the U.S., according to a person who requested anonymity to detail internal discussions.

At an event Wednesday, Trump said Zelenskyy was "making little nasty aspersions toward your favorite president" and criticized Ukraine for failing to broker a deal with Russia to end the war.

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