

Asheville wellness providers upended - Those who came to offer healing are now reeling

October 2, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Charles Trepany; USA TODAY | Section: News | 965 Words Page: A4 OpenURL Link

Taylor Houchens moved to Asheville about four years ago for healing.

The mountains, the forests, the lakes – they all called to the licensed professional counselor, as they have to countless others who've journeyed to the North Carolina city looking to relax, reset and rejuvenate. As a result, Asheville has drawn a thriving local wellness community, one that includes all manner of mental health practitioners, holistic coaches and healers.

Now, in the wake of Hurricane Helene, that community has been devastated — and Houchens says he isn't sure where to go from here.

"It's devastation. It's apocalyptic. It's tragic," Houchens, who specializes in trauma therapy, says on a phone call while driving to stay with his family in Savannah, Georgia, after flood waters threatened his apartment. "Honestly, I'm still in shock. There's different stages of trauma, and shock is the first one. Even my neighbors, we were kind of talking about it, and she was like, 'I still need a good cry, but I'm just not there yet.'"

'There's something in this land'

Tucked away in the mountains of North Carolina, Asheville's wellness roots run deep.

Throughout the early 20th century, the city grew as a hub for people looking to heal from tuberculosis. In addition to its hospitals, Asheville drew TB patients because of its mountainous climate – something locals thought aided in healing.

That same atmosphere continues to attract health and wellness enthusiasts today.

"There's something in this land," Houchens says, adding he was also drawn to Asheville for its wide range of healing modalities, including craniosacral, massage and somatic therapies. "There's something in these mountains. There's a beauty. There's a power. There's an essence that is its own kind of essence. And that can't be taken away by the hurricane or by the disaster."

Holistic health coach Brynn Barale moved to the Asheville area in 2006 from Florida. She actually relocated to escape the hurricanes.

But the healing community is what drew her in.

"The wellness community here in Asheville is part of the reason why I've lived here so long, to be honest," she says. "We trust one another, and it's a very robust wellness community here for the size of the town."

Settled in Arden, a small town about 10 minutes from the city, Barale says she and her family, which consists of her husband and their two young kids, haven't been as severely impacted as others. Sure, they lost water and power, but they still have a roof over their heads.

Many of her colleagues can't say the same.

"Everybody's closed indefinitely. Some people are like, 'I don't know how I'm going to rebuild from this,' because

the floodwater in some of the communities was just so much," she says on a phone call. "Even if you are able to have a remote business right now, there's nothing you can do. I mean, this phone call is a miracle to be happening, to be truthful."

Houchens says he went into fight-or-flight mode as flood waters rose around his apartment building. His mind immediately went to the worst-case scenario, wondering if he'd be able to swim to safety if it came down to it.

"I panicked," he says. "Just seeing devastation everywhere and hearing about people who have died and watching, looking at homes that have been flipped over, it's just too much. We're not designed to be able to take that kind of disaster in."

When healers need healing

Rachael Chatham, a licensed clinical mental health counselor in Asheville, says the wellness community, like the rest of the city, is still in disarray.

Like many others, she's waiting in dread to see what the aftermath will be once the hurricane damage is fully visible.

"It's a very disorienting time in Asheville right now," she says. "There's so much uncertainty, and there's no communication. I think they're really trying to restore that, but without the communication, it's just so hard to know what's going on and where can we get help and who needs help and who needs what."

When natural disasters strike, people's priorities get streamlined quickly according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, says Stephanie Sarkis, a psychotherapist in Florida, whose neighborhood also flooded due to the hurricane.

First come the essentials: food, water and shelter. Once those get sorted, other needs start to come to the fore, particularly ones stemming from trauma and grief. Sarkis says it can take months — even years — before people who've been through a tragedy like a major hurricane can process what they've been through.

Chatham says it's strange being a therapist living through a traumatic situation. She plans to open office hours for clients who need extra mental health support following the hurricane, but she understands she needs help and support, too.

"You have this kind of surreal feeling moving through the world," she says. "On the plus side, I've seen really beautiful extensions of community and people reaching out and trying to help one another, even in their own state of really struggling."

In the coming weeks and months, mental health treatment and wellness may prove more crucial than ever for the people of Asheville. Houchens says you don't need to be a licensed professional to help someone struggling either.

"There's something really simple but powerful around just holding space for someone," he says. "We don't have to always provide something or have an intervention or have a therapeutic technique. It's just as simple as someone being seen and being heard and being listened to. That is sometimes all we need."

As Asheville recuperates, Barale believes its wellness community will thrive once again. It may take time to rebuild, but they will.

"I see it just getting even stronger," she says. "I feel like times like these make the community stronger. ... I just see it being even more robust."

Copyright, 2024, The Gaston Gazette, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)



Area residents donate food, supplies after Helene

October 2, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Sam Dietrich| Section: Local | 585 Words OpenURL Link

Rick Flowers traveled a half hour from Newton Grove to Pikeville Tuesday to deliver donations to help western North Carolina heal from the widespread devastation from Hurricane Helene.

Flowers dropped off boxes of supplies, including Ramen noodles, pet food, paper towels, heavy-duty gloves and garbage bags, to Fairwinds Aviation at Wayne Executive Jetport, at 240 Aviation Drive, in Pikeville, Tuesday afternoon.

Flowers is one of many area residents who are collecting and delivering items to the jetport to be sent to the mountains.

"The people in western North Carolina are in need," Flowers said. "We must be thankful that we here have got a roof over our heads and food to eat. There's always someone out there who needs help."

Flowers said he encourages more people to donate and fill up any nearby donation site "until the cup runneth over."

Fairwinds Aviation has partnered with the United Way of Wayne County and Wayne County to collect, send and distribute donations to people in need in western North Carolina, as part of Operation Airdrop.

Helene roared ashore late Thursday in Florida's Big Bend region as a Category 4 hurricane, with 140 mph winds. A weakened Helene quickly moved through Georgia, then soaked the Carolinas and Tennessee with torrential rains that flooded waterways. Widespread damage is the worst western North Carolina has weathered in half a century. The storm brought catastrophic and deadly flooding and mudslides.

Christina and Justin Sargent, president and vice president of Fairwinds Aviation, said they had a "steady flow" of people show up and drop off donations on Tuesday. Donations are being accepted through Thursday prior to deliveries that start on Friday.

At the main office building, the lounge area was filled with boxes of clothes, food, water, gas cans, diapers and disinfecting wipes, Justin Sargent said.

"We've gotten a lot of water, diapers and baby wipes lately," he said.

The donations will be packed into several planes that plan to fly the items to western North Carolina where they will be dropped from the air.

"We usually send three or four planes at a time," Sargent said. "We've been doing lots of airdrops this morning and afternoon."

He said an average plane can handle about 450 pounds at once, including the cargo and one pilot.

Airplanes have been doing supply drops this week in areas including Rutherford, Buncombe and Iredell counties Sargent said. The deliveries are planned to continue.

Fairwinds Aviation will also be accepting donations this week from Wayne Community College, where a collection site has been set up for students, staff and visitors to drop off items, said Meredith Futrelle, WCC communications officer.

WCC is storing the items in an office located in the student lounge in the WCC Learning Center.

Brandon Jenkins, WCC vice president of academic and student services, said he and Paige Ham, WCC director of student activity and recruitment, have coordinated the donation site that opened on the college campus Monday.

Jenkins said students and faculty have brought in boxes of supplies to fill up an office inside the student lounge. Donated items include water, food, paper towels, hygiene products, batteries, and even Pepsi and Kool-Aid.

"We're collecting all that we can," Jenkins said.

WCC donations will be collected through Thursday. On Friday morning, the items will be taken to Fairwinds Aviation at the jetport.

Even though eastern North Carolina, including Wayne County, was spared the brunt of the storm, many residents have experienced their share of the widespread devastation that hurricanes bring to the area.

"We are no strangers to tornadoes or other storms in eastern North Carolina," Jenkins said. "They need the bare necessities."

Copyright 2024 The Goldsboro News-Argus, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Sam Dietrich, 'Area residents donate food, supplies after Helene', *Goldsboro News-Argus, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA1ED43738798



HELPING PROVIDE RELIEF

October 2, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Author: JENNY MOORE Second Harvest Food Bank Section: Main 753 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

WINSTON-SALEM - Governor Cooper has requested an Expedited Major Disaster Declaration for 39 North Carolina counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, which will bring much-needed resources to areas of our state impacted by Hurricane Helene, including Public Assistance, Individual Assistance, hazard mitigation, and more.

The state's Feeding America Food Banks, including Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina, in conjunction with their state association, Feeding the Carolinas, are working with emergency management organizations and mobilizing drinking water, food and cleaning supplies to address the immediate needs of families who lives have been upturned by the devastating impacts of this historic storm.

Counties served by Second Harvest Foodbank affected by Hurricane Helene include Alexander,

Alleghany, Ashe, Caldwell, Forsyth, Iredell, Surry, Yadkin, Watauga and Wilkes.

Initial response plan for Second Harvest service area

Second Harvest is contacting its partner food assistance network in communities hit by the storm to assess impacts to operations and other immediate needs.

Second Harvest will be deploying food, including ready-to-eat meals, in collaboration with its partners who are still able to operate, with a focus on the highest need areas.

Financial donations will enable Second Harvest to purchase large quantities of necessary food and supplies for direct distribution to residents impacted by the flooding, food pantries, and shelters.

Across Second Harvest Food Bank's service area, 10 of the organization's 18 service area counties have been severely affected by the storm.

Major road and highway closures caused by flooding, downed trees, and mudslides, particularly in rural and mountainous areas, pose challenges to Second Harvest response efforts. Second Harvest and our collaborating partners ask that the community members avoid driving into affected areas for your safety and to allow emergency response vehicles and our delivery trucks clear access to impacted areas.

Food pantries affected in Second Harvest Food Bank's service area

Early reports are that food assistance organizations within our network are experiencing operational disruptions due to road closures, power outages, and damaged facilities. This has and will continue to affect their ability to distribute food to neighbors in need at a time when our network is already experiencing sustained high requests for help.

Severe flooding in Watauga, Ashe, Wilkes, Alexander, Caldwell, Surry, and Yadkin Counties has caused severe damage to some partner pantry facilities, destroying cooling and refrigeration units, is expected to impact their ability to provide assistance for the multiple weeks. In more urban areas, such as Winston-Salem and Statesville, our partner pantries were already struggling to meet increased requests for food assistance. Power outages in some neighborhoods will most certainly have resulted in food spoilage and create a greater burden on these organizations' ability to assist our neighbors.

With the widespread destruction, it is reasonable to expect that food insecurity will further increase across the region due to the storm's impact. This includes families who have lost their homes or access to food, as well as those who will experience job loss due to business closures.

How you can help

Monetary Donations Are Essential. The most effective way to support our efforts right now is by making a financial donation. This allows us to quickly purchase food, water, and other essential supplies for the people who need them most. Please visit Second Harvest Food Bank's website to make a donation today. Local purchases, as possible, will also support local economies.

We do not recommend organizing activities to collect supplies or travel to the impacted areas since first responders - both government and nonprofit - are trained and prepared to execute action plans that create the best results for the communities affected. While such efforts are done out of a desire to help, the reality is that these activities can complicate relief efforts and take time and resources away from the efforts by groups tasked with response responsibilities.

Spread the word

Help us raise awareness of the need in our community by sharing information and updates from our social channels and website. Encourage your neighbors, churches, and community groups to contribute by donating or volunteering. Use the hashtag #HeleneReliefSHFB on social media to amplify our call to action.

Copyright (c) 2024 Greensboro News & Record

• Citation (aglc Style)

JENNY MOORE; Second Harvest Food Bank, 'HELPING PROVIDE RELIEF', *Greensboro News & Record* (online), 2 Oct 2024 1A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF47917A9CF588>



God's Pit Crew assisting Hurricane Helene victims

October 2, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Author: CARLY BRASHEARS Director, Media & Public Relations, God's Pit Crew Section: Main | 401 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

DANVILLE, VA. - Critical relief products traveled through the night and were delivered to Madison Church of God in Madison, Florida, early this morning. Additional God's Pit Crew trucks delivered miscellaneous loads of Blessing Buckets, bottled water, cleaning supplies, snack foods and other supplies to Mayo, Ocala, and Naples, Florida - as well as Sylvania and Valdosta, Georgia. Damage caused by Helene spans throughout the entire Southeast, with many affected areas still inaccessible due to flood waters and washed-out roads.

Local volunteers with the God's Pit Crew Immediate Disaster Response Team spent Saturday serving Dry Fork, Virginia, cleaning up damage caused by a confirmed tornado in the small community. An additional volunteer crew will be onsite in Galax, Virginia, beginning Monday, September 30, to assist with needs in that area caused by torrential rain and extreme wind gusts.

God's Pit Crew volunteers and truck loads of equipment will depart from the Virginia-based headquarters on Monday, September 30, and travel to Valdosta, Georgia, to assist with damaged tree removal and flood cleanup through Sunday, October 13.

The ministry continues to monitor flood ravaged areas in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and beyond. At this time, the majority of areas affected by flood waters are inaccessible as the currents recede, but God's Pit Crew intends to assist those areas when able.

"Millions of people are experiencing heartbreak from this tragedy, but we have faith that God will provide and lead us where we can help," stated God's Pit Crew Immediate Disaster Response Coordinator Chris Chiles.

All relief efforts by the nonprofit, for-impact organization are made possible through the generous contributions made to the ministry. As continuous truckloads of product deploy, the need is great for donations and volunteers to continue aiding as many people as possible.

For those looking to assist with God's Pit Crew's disaster response initiatives, volunteer and donation opportunities can be found by visiting GodsPitCrew.org or by calling and speaking to a representative at (434) 836-4472.

About God's Pit Crew

God's Pit Crew is a non-profit, faith-based disaster response team of volunteers who wish to serve others. When disaster strikes, God's Pit Crew is there to deliver hope, healing, and restoration to hurting people in times of disaster. God's Pit Crew is headquartered in Danville, Virginia, and provides disaster response around the globe.

James.Sands@greensboro.com336-349-4331 x6141

Copyright (c) 2024 Greensboro News & Record

• Citation (aglc Style)

CARLY BRASHEARS; Director, Media & Public Relations, God's Pit Crew, 'God's Pit Crew assisting Hurricane Helene victims', *Greensboro News & Record* (online), 2 Oct 2024 1A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF47918419BA78>



Main

October 2, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Section: Main | 70 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Searches underway as Helene deaths pass 150 NATION & WORLD, A7

Page announces 2024 athletics hall of fame inductees SPORTS, B2

Copyright (c) 2024 Greensboro News & Record

• Citation (aglc Style)

'Main', *Greensboro News & Record* (online), 2 Oct 2024 1A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF479674F83DE0>



'Biblical devastation' Biblical devastation'

October 2, 2024 \mid News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Section: Main \mid 690 Words Page: 8A

Page: 8A
OpenURL Link

OUR OPINION

A storm goes wherever it pleases.

The best 21st century science can muster is educated guesses about its path.

The rest, it seems, is up to the whims of nature and whether we happen to be lucky.

In the case of Helene, western North Carolina was not.

Who would have guessed that the mountains of this state, and not the beaches of Florida, would bear the brunt of a storm spawned by the Gulf of Mexico, even after it had weakened to below hurricane strength?

For North Carolina, Helene turned out to be a wicked witch of the West, swelling rivers and creeks with record rainfall and unleashing angry winds, floods and landslides.

The words "catastrophic devastation" didn't do this storm justice, Buncombe County Emergency Services Assistant Director Ryan Cole told the Asheville Citizen-Times.

"It would go a little bit further and say we have biblical devastation through the county," Cole said.

County Manager Avril Pinder called it "Buncombe County's own Hurricane Katrina."

As of Tuesday, the full extent of the death toll and the damage was still unclear.

But we know it's bad.

At this writing Helene had claimed 137 lives, 56 of them in North Carolina, more than any other state. That number is expected to grow, as hundreds remain missing.

It was still hard to assess the full extent of Helene's impact because it snapped power lines, blocked roads and disabled cellphone service. Many residents were isolated and helpless.

But experts already are calling it one of the worst storms in U.S. history.

And some of the stories that have already emerged are beyond heartbreaking.

A Texas woman frantically pleaded for help for her parents and her 6-year-old nephew, who were stranded on the roof of their house in Asheville as the floodwaters rose. But a rescue never happened. The roof collapsed and all three drowned.

Lake Lure, the setting for the movie "Dirty Dancing," was filled with splintered debris.

Asheville's Biltmore Village was inundated by floodwaters, the city's River Arts District turned into a tattered array of caved roofs, buckled walls and snapped phone poles. The village of Chimney Rock was all but erased from the

map.

Some area received as much as 30 inches of rain. Helene ripped houses off their foundations, uprooted trees and hurled them like spears, plucked fence posts out of the ground and triggered landslides.

Rebuilding will take time and money. The Washington Post estimates \$26 billion in property damage.

President Biden planned a visit Wednesday, to see the damage for himself. The president also said he would likely ask Congress to pass a supplemental funding bill provide relief to the states affected by Helene.

Gov. Roy Cooper noted ongoing efforts to reopen roads and provide emergency shelters. The National Guard has been deployed, he said, during a Tuesday morning briefing.

State lawmakers should tap North Carolina's \$5 billion budget reserves, called, by the way, "the rainy-day fund," to help provide relief for the ultimate rainy day.

Meanwhile, 22 states are sending personnel and providing assistance.

What painful lessons can we learn from this latest natural disaster?

Deny it if you wish, but climate fuels more frequent and severe storms that tend to move more slowly and dump more rain. Even the mountains, once thought to be insulated from the effects of hurricanes, are vulnerable.

"This storm has the fingerprints of climate change all over it," state climatologist Kathie Dello told The Guardian.

"The ocean was warm and it grew and grew and there was a lot of water in the atmosphere. Unfortunately, our worst fears came true. Helene was supercharged by climate change and we should expect more storms like this going forward."

Kudos, meanwhile, to the Greensboro and Winston-Salem police and fire departments for dispatching volunteers to help.

Triad pilots gueued up to deliver badly needed supplies.

Local nonprofits mobilized to collect supplies.

And, as communities usually do, even in this season of deep divisions, people came together to help and comfort one another, with rakes and shovels and chainsaws and kind words.

As USA Today reported, the very worst of times can often bring out the very best in us.

"We are going to check on the neighbors," a man in Red Hill who just happened to be named James Waters told his son. "That's what we do."

Copyright (c) 2024 Greensboro News & Record

• Citation (aglc Style)

"Biblical devastation" Biblical devastation, *Greensboro News & Record* (online), 2 Oct 2024 8A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF47967AFCEFD8



Main

October 2, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Section: Main | 458 Words

Page: 2A OpenURL Link

SAM keeps getting questions from people who want to help the people in Western North Carolina who were affected by Hurricane Helene.

Money is what is needed the most right now, the N.C. Department of Public Safety said.

"Cash is always better than stuff," according to NCDPS.gov. "Stuff requires storage, sorting, and distribution - which is costly in both time and money. Cash can immediately be put to use for what is most needed in the moment. Give directly to local, trusted nonprofits for the biggest impact."

The department is also asking that people not go to damaged areas on their own to help.

"There will be numerous ways for volunteers to help in-person in the coming days, weeks, and months, and we will keep you posted on how to do that when the time is right," NCDPS said.

If you want to volunteer to help, you can fill out an application by going to www.nc.gov/working/volunteeropportunities/volunteernc and clicking on Disaster Recovery Volunteer sign-up.

We do have several local drop-off points for donations.

In Winston-Salem, the Summit School, 2100 Reynolda Road, is accepting donations in conjunction with the Forsyth County Sheriff's office.

In Guilford County, residents can drop off supplies at Guilfordworks career centers and the branches of YMCA of Greensboro through Thursday.

The Guilfordworks centers are located at:

- 301 S. Greene St., Suite 200, Greensboro
- 2301 W. Meadowview Rd., Greensboro
- 607 Idol St., High Point.

Go to YMCAGreensboro,org to find the location closest to you.

Items that are being accepted include cleaning supplies, baby supplies, pet supplies, non-perishable food, hygiene products, children and adult sized socks, manual can openers, trash bags, tarps, hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, bottled water, plastic utensils, and powered sports drink packets.

As we hear of other groups accepting donations, we'll include those on future lists.

For groups who are considering collecting donations and taking them to the mountains, you must contact the Business Emergency Operations Center, a part of the NC Emergency Management.

"It's needs to be coordinated and a planned delivery," said Robert Reece, the coordinator and operations officer for

Winston-Salem Forsyth County Emergency Management.

"If you plan to move people, resources, or equipment into western North Carolina, you MUST coordinate plans and movements through the NCEM-BEOC," according to the NC Emergency Management website.

Notify the BEOC by emailing your logistics or movement requests to: BEOC@ncdps.gov.

The BEOC will need to know:

- What are you moving? Why you need special access.
- When do you plan to move and from where?
- Where are you going?
- When will they arrive at the "border to Western NC" and where?

"In summary, until further notice, roads in Western NC (generally anywhere west of Hickory) are closed to all traffic other than emergency services and pre-approved shipments coordinated through the BEOC," the BEOC said.

Email: AskSAM@wsjournal.comWrite: Ask SAM, 418 N. Marshall St., #100, Winston-Salem, NC 27101 Copyright (c) 2024 Greensboro News & Record

• Citation (aglc Style)

'Main', *Greensboro News & Record* (online), 2 Oct 2024 2A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF4795EE218260>



VYING FOR POSITION

October 2, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Author: JIM SANDS Staff Reporter | Section: Life | 1339 Words

Page: 1B OpenURL Link

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

For Rockingham, first place in the Mid-State 3A Conference is on the line. Meanwhile, Reidsville is looking to remain undefeated with a county rival standing in the way. On the other side of the coin, Morehead and McMichael are just hoping to stay relevant as the second half of the season begins. Let's take a look at what's on deck:

Rockingham (2-0) at Eastern Guilford (2-0, 2-3)

It took the Cougars a few days to dry out after pulling off a 9-6 win over Smith in the torrential, pouring rain from the approach of Hurricane Helene on Sept. 26

Sunny skies are forecast this week, however, as Rockingham gets set to face their toughest Mid-State 3A Conference opponent of the season to-date in Eastern Guilford this Friday night at 7 p.m.

After a losing their first three games of the season to Northern Guilford, Williams and Western Alamance, respectively - all nonconference opponents - the Wildcats have won their last two over Mid-State 3A rivals Northeast Guilford (1-1, 2-3) and High Point Central (0-2, 0-5) in impressive fashion. The Wildcats had a 54-24 road win over Northeast Guilford on Sept. 20, followed by a 64-0 shutout victory over High Point Central last Thursday.

Rockingham, Eastern Guilford and Dudley all enter the week tied for first place in the Mid-State 3A Conference with unblemished league marks. There is a lot on the line for the Cougars and Wildcats in particular, as they try and build post season worthy resumes.

Based on their current trajectories, a win for Rockingham could mean a great season and a shot at a home playoff game, while a loss could mean hitting the road in the postseason to face a top seed or missing the playoffs altogether.

For Eastern Guilford, a loss could mean a bubble spot, whereas a win could mean a showdown for first place.

This is all speculation at this point, however, because there are still several games left to play. Best case scenario for the winner, is a shot at a Mid-State 3A Conference regular season title if both continue the winning track and knock off undefeated Dudley (2-0, 5-0), and that's a tall order.

Rockingham enters the game battle-tested, however, following two consecutive wins.

"It's a big week ... you've got three teams vying for a chance at first, so obviously us and Eastern Guilford is a big game at their place. They are going to be ready to play. They are well-coached, but we are going to be ready to go, too," Rockingham head coach Doug Robertson said.

Ironically, it was Robertson that helped rebuild the Eastern Guilford football program as the Wildcats former head coach. This week, he and the Cougars will focus on beating his former team, a place that still holds a special place in his heart.

"I think what we were able to do over there from 2012 to 2019 was special, and I think if I had anything to do with that, we changed the mindset of what football needed to be there. Football wasn't real important when I got there,

but when I left, football became important and it stayed that way with the coaches they hired. It's certainly nice to see their program flourishing. I have a lot of great memories there and love for that place and it's still going. They are doing good things there, and Tim Bagamary is a heck of a head coach and he's got a really good staff. But we're at Rockingham now and focused on getting ready to go over there and beat an Eastern Guilford team that's going to be really well-coached and are a really good team," said Robertson.

Reidsville (1-0, 5-0) at McMichael (0-2, 1-5)

McMichael is probably not looking forward to this Friday's home game with undefeated Reidsville coming to town fresh off a bye week. The Phoenix (0-2, 1-5) are still smarting following a 59-0 shutout loss at North Forsyth on Sept. 26, a team the Rams defeated 37-0 the previous week.

McMichael is averaging 14 points per game, while allowing 34.1 on average defensively and have been shutout in their last two games.

Meanwhile the Rams (1-0, 5-0) are surging, averaging 40.2 points per game and allowing just nine per contest. They will enter the game supremely confident after the aforementioned win over North Forsyth in week five.

One of the questions for Reidsville entering the 2024 season was who would step into primary leadership positions with the graduation of several prominent seniors from the 2023 NCHSAA state championship team.

Two great ones have emerged, however, in senior running back Jariel Cobb and junior quarterback Dionte Neal.

Cobb emerged as the go-to guy in the 28-18 win over Clinton in the 2023 title game after rushing for 145 yards on 24 carries. That momentum carried over to 2024.

Cobb has already amassed 790 yards rushing on 75 attempts and scored 10 touchdowns. He's a vocal leader a lot of the young guys look up to, and his play on the field sets the example of what is expected of a championship team.

After making the transition from wide receiver last year to quarterback in 2024, Neal is obviously the voice and heart of the offense. He stepped into a difficult situation following the departure of 2023 2A NCHSAA MVP quarterback Al Lee, who broke multiple program passing records during his senior year. But Neal's decision-making has been superb, and he's got the numbers to prove it. He's completed 75 of 95 attempts for 886 yards. Neal has thrown a dozen touchdowns and only one interception this season. He's also spreading the ball around, evidenced by five different Reidsville receivers having scored touchdowns so far this season.

At this point, it looks like a three-horse race for the Mid-State 2A Conference championship with the Rams, West Stokes (2-0, 5-1) and Walkertown (1-0, 4-1) head-and-shoulders above the rest of the league.

History won't be on McMichael's side this Friday night when Reidsville comes to town. The Phoenix have never defeated the Rams since the two teams met for the first time in 1989.

Reidsville has had unprecedented domination within the county lines for nearly two decades.

The last county team to garner a win over Reidsville was Morehead in a 34-28 road loss to the Panthers in 2005 - 18 years ago.

Morehead (1-1, 1-5) at Walkertown (1-0, 4-1)

After finally getting the monkey off of their collective backs with a 27-0 win over county rival McMichael the previous week, Morehead suffered a 24-6 loss at West Stokes (2-0, 5-1) on Sept. 26. The Panthers will have their hands full once again with a very good Walkertown team on deck this Friday.

The Wolfpack is coming off a 14-6 win over High Point Central last Saturday. Walkertown could very well be undefeated after a fourth quarter rally came up just short in a 21-20 road loss to North Davidson on Sept. 13.

First-year Walkertown head coach Tripp Honeycutt is quickly climbing the coaching ranks, rebuilding the Wolfpack program after two seasons as the coach at South Davidson. Another win for Honeycutt and Walkertown puts him in serious consideration for Mid-State 2A Conference Coach of the Year, if he hasn't already done so.

Wolfpack sophomore quarterback Santana Garcia has thrown 8 TDs and completed 62% of his passes so far this season, while his number one target senior wide receiver Mitrend Curry has caught seven of those touchdown throws. Walkertown has put big numbers on the board with their running game, led by senior back Cam Kelly who has scored 11 touchdowns.

No matter who emerges victorious the week in the three county games, the playoff picture will certainly become more clear.

James.Sands@greensboro.com336-349-4331 x6141

Copyright (c) 2024 Greensboro News & Record

• Citation (aglc Style)

JIM SANDS; Staff Reporter, 'VYING FOR POSITION', *Greensboro News & Record* (online), 2 Oct 2024 1B https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF47920728AC10



Helene North Carolina death toll is rising, - but incomplete. What we know so far.

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Virginia Bridges; Staff Writer| Section: News| 691 Words Page: 9A OpenURL Link

Macon County Sheriff's Office officials on Sunday composed what they said was one of the most difficult press releases they ever released.

On Friday morning, Deputy Jim Lau left his courthouse security job for lunch, a Sheriff's Office Facebook post states. He never returned as the former Category 4 hurricane-turned-tropical storm dumped extreme rainfall in Western North Carolina.

Helene's death count in North Carolina is by no means final. But Lau was one of dozens known to have been killed after the hurricane's powerful remnants reached Western North Carolina, with more fatal tragedies yet to be reported or even discovered.

At least 38 people were confirmed killed in North Carolina as of Tuesday morning, including a 7-year-old boy in Buncombe County, according to information provided by state officials.

A second sheriff's deputy, in Madison County, is also known to have died in Helene's chaos, according to the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association.

And a faint outline of what havoc stole people's lives is coming into view.

At least 11 people died from drowning, along with four more who reported drowning in their motor vehicles, according to the public safety department. Nine people died in landslides, with five from dangers linked to high winds and damaged trees.

Three others died in motor vehicle crashes while the causes of five lives lost are unknown, according to information provided Monday by the North Carolina Department of Public Safety.

Toll still unfurling

At least 100 people have died and over 600 are unaccounted for across 10 states hit by Helene, President Joe Biden said Monday.

Leaders of western North Carolina counties, where Helene fed historic flooding that shut down roads and bridges, along with cell and internet connections, say people are unaccounted for across the region.

Buncombe County Sheriff Quentin Miller said Monday morning that 35 have been found dead in that county alone, but the body count will rise as search and rescue efforts continue. By 4 p.m., the death toll had risen to 40, a county official said. So far the county, which is home to Asheville, has the most reported Helene deaths in the state.

"Devastation does not begin to describe how we feel," Miller said during a briefing broadcast live on Facebook.

Buncombe County Register of Deeds Drew Reisinger said that his office has received 11,000 requests from people seeking help to locate their loved ones amid the spotty cell service and destroyed roadways.

In response to the thousands of calls, Reisinger's office opened a family assistance center and volunteers are supplementing search and rescue efforts going door to door of local residences, he reported in the briefing.

Tragic ending to a search

Officials in Macon County, which includes the town of Franklin and the Nantahala River, noticed deputy Lau didn't return to the courthouse after around 11:30 a.m. on Friday.

Witnesses called 911 reporting a truck being swept under water in a local river with a person inside. Officials soon made the connection to Lau not returning and his truck matched witnesses' descriptions, the post states.

Multiple agencies started searching on foot, with a drone in the air and with multiple swift water rescue teams, the post said. But as the sun started to set, they put the search on hold.

They found Lau's body the next morning.

"Jim was very liked and respected within our department. He was known to be a hard worker, dependable, and he jumped in wherever help was needed. His absence will truly be felt in our agency," the post said.

It also asked for prayers for his family, for the department and for all of Western North Carolina.

"The tragedy that surrounds our mountain communities is unimaginable," the post states.

To report a missing person or request non-emergency support, call NC 211 or 1-888-892-1162 if calling from out-of-state.

(Story updated at 1 p.m. on Tuesday.)

Virginia Bridges covers criminal justice in the Triangle and across North Carolina for The News & Observer. Her work is produced with financial support from the nonprofit The Just Trust. The N&O maintains full editorial control of its journalism.

Virginia Bridges: 919-829-8924, @virginiabridges

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Virginia Bridges, Staff Writer, 'Helene North Carolina death toll is rising, but incomplete. What we know so far.', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 9A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEEC56151CO>



Trying to reach a missing person impacted by - Helene in NC? What to - do and whom to call

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Chyna Blackmon; Staff Writer | Section: News | 275 Words

Page: 6A OpenURL Link

Days after Hurricane Helene swept through the southeast, recovery efforts are still underway for North Carolinians stranded without food, water and other supplies in the western part of the state.

According to Governor Roy Cooper, first responders have received hundreds of calls for rescue and more than 1,000 requests for welfare checks, with that number expected to rise.

How to report missing person or request welfare check

As crews work alongside local governments, state and federal partners and volunteer organizations to support victims impacted by the storm, officials say 911 calls should be made for emergencies only.

If you need to report a missing person or request a welfare check on someone potentially in danger, you should call NC 211 (1-888-892-1162), a information and referral service provided by United Way of North Carolina.

Available in most languages at all times in every county, NC 211 is used to provide residents verified resources across the state for basic needs, including housing, food and healthcare, its website says.

When disaster strikes, like Hurricane Helene, the service is part of the State's Emergency Plan for updates, storm-related issues or non-emergency related questions. Residents can dial 2-1-1 and speak to a trained Community Resource Specialist or use the online NC 211 search tool at nc211.org.

If you're struggling to contact someone who may need assistance, you can add loved ones to the United Way of North Carolina's search and rescue efforts by submitting a missing persons request, welfare check or rescue request online at unitedwaync.org.

Requests can also be made by texting 'PERSON' to 40403.

You can find more information about Helene-related information and resources, including power outages, open shelters and crisis cleanup,online at ncdps.gov/helene.

Chyna Blackmon: @chynablackmon

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Chyna Blackmon, Staff Writer, 'Trying to reach a missing person impacted by Helene in NC? What to do and whom to call', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 6A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEF268F5A68>



How Helene's destruction could affect voting in North Carolina's election

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Kyle Ingram; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1095 Words

Page: 12A OpenURL Link

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene's destruction in Western North Carolina, concerns have emerged about whether residents affected by the storm will be able to cast their ballots in the November election.

Disruptions to the postal service, destruction of polling places, missing or damaged IDs and more could all pose challenges to voters with only 36 days left until the election.

"This is all a cascading series of disasters," Gerry Cohen, a member of the Wake County Board of Elections, said.

Disruptions to postal service

On Sunday, the U.S. Postal Service announced it had temporarily suspended services in much of Western North Carolina, including any areas with ZIP codes starting with 286, 287, 288 and 289.

It also listed 39 post offices whose operations would be suspended until conditions are safe.

These closures could present challenges to voters in Western North Carolina seeking to vote by mail.

So far, nearly 250,000 North Carolinians have requested an absentee ballot for this year's election. Nearly 10,000 requests have come in from Buncombe County, which was severely impacted by Helene.

Corinne Duncan, Buncombe County's election director, said the county's main focus now is life, safety and basic needs.

"Personal safety of election services staff is currently our top priority," Duncan said in an email. "We are working to account for all staff and board members. Some are stranded due to road blockage."

She added, however, that the post office is running and election staff were able to drop 200 ballots in the mail on Monday.

Phone lines for several of the counties hit hardest by Helene were down on Monday as The News & Observer attempted to contact board of elections offices.

The absentee voting period has already been reduced this election.

While mail-in ballots were supposed to be sent to voters on Sept. 6, most were delayed another 18 days by a court order after third-party presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. sued to get his name off the state's ballot.

Most absentee ballots went in the mail just a few days before Helene hit Western North Carolina.

"I suspect if these things were in people's mailboxes Thursday and Friday, a lot of these counties, you can see stuff just completely washed away," Cohen said.

In addition to that, voters now have a shorter deadline to get their absentee ballots in. State lawmakers passed a bill last year that requires all mail-in ballots to be received by the county board of elections office by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day.

Previously, any ballots that came in within three days after the election would still be counted, so long as they were postmarked by Election Day.

Voters concerned about postal delays can deliver their absentee ballot in person at their county board of elections office. A voter who has requested an absentee ballot may also choose to vote in person instead, so long as they do not return the absentee ballot.

Polling places for early voting

Flooding and destruction may make polling places unusable as election workers prepare to begin in-person early voting on Oct. 17.

Duncan said that Buncombe County has not yet completed site assessments at polling locations. The facilities where election staff work, however, were not damaged but are currently without access to water.

Changes to a county's early voting plans can still be made, but state law sets out certain limitations.

Previously, the executive director of the State Board of Elections could exercise emergency powers to respond to the impact natural disasters might have on elections.

Last year, however, state lawmakers stripped the director of that power and instead gave it to the State Board of Elections itself. That board is currently comprised of three Democrats and two Republicans, who would have to use these emergency powers in an open meeting.

There also isn't much time left to make changes to early voting sites.

State law requires all early voting sites within a county to be open for the same number of days. That would appear to make any changes to polling sites difficult after Oct. 17.

Having usable polling sites isn't the only concern for counties conducting early voting. With many residents displaced by Helene, counties may have difficulty staffing polling sites.

"It's gonna have a likely enormous impact if all these polling places have been washed away and early voting sites are not available and poll workers are not available," Cohen said. "So I don't know what the solution is, but there's not much time to figure it out."

Voter ID

For the first time in North Carolina's history, voters will have to present photo identification to vote in a presidential general election.

However, state law provides an exception to this requirement for voters affected by natural disasters.

Anyone affected by Helene can fill out an affidavit, either in-person at a polling place or via absentee ballot, saying that they have been a victim of a natural disaster and are unable to produce their ID.

They will then cast a provisional ballot, which will be reviewed by the county board of elections before being accepted.

What can be done to help?

Counties could face heavy financial burdens as they attempt to recover polling places, fix damaged equipment and prepare for voting after Helene.

This also comes after counties were forced to foot the bill to reprint millions of ballots following the state Supreme Court's decision in Kennedy's lawsuit allowing himto withdraw his candidacy.

Cohen said the legislature, which will be back in session next week, should reimburse counties for those costs.

A law passed last year prohibits the use of any private donations for election administration.

Counties are also still accepting volunteers to work the polls during early voting and Election Day.

State grants flexibility to election workers facing closures, power outages

In an emergency meeting on Monday, the State Board of Elections voted to give local election workers greater flexibility in processing absentee ballots in the coming weeks, as western counties reel from Helene's impacts.

Executive Director Karen Brinson Bell said 14 of the 22 western counties contacted by the board reported that their elections offices are currently closed and could be for several more days.

"Our hearts really do go out to these people that we consider elections family," she said. "... At this time, many of them still don't have contact with family members. They're facing damages, some total losses at their own personal properties, and so we are trying to be as responsive as we can to what their needs are."

County election boards are typically required to meet every Tuesday to receive and process absentee ballots, but the state board's resolution will allow them to reschedule those meetings.

Brinson Bell also said the state is currently in the process of creating a webpage to answer questions about the hurricane's impact on elections.

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Kyle Ingram, Staff Writer, 'How Helene's destruction could affect voting in North Carolina's election', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 12A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEE2CCEB018>



Price gouging law is in effect following Helene. How to recognize - and report it in NC

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Renee Umsted; Staff Writer | Section: News | 324 Words Page: 4A OpenURL Link

A law against price gouging is in effect in North Carolina as a result of Helene.

When the state of emergency was declared, it became illegal for businesses to charge too much to make a profit.

The office of N.C. Attorney General Josh Stein is asking consumers to look out for price gouging and report it.

As of Monday, Sept. 30, the attorney general's office has received and is looking into 43 complaints of price gouging since Helene, Nazneen Ahmed, a spokesperson for Stein's office, told The News & Observer. Most of the reports are concerning prices of hotel stays and fuel stemming from businesses in western North Carolina, and particularly the Boone area, Ahmed said.

What is price gouging?

Businesses and industries that are heavily affected by storms like Helene or other severe incidents may need to raise prices to resupply, and they should disclose the increases so people can make informed decisions.

However, businesses can't "unreasonably raise the price of goods or services to profit from a state of emergency," according to a press release announcing the price gouging law.

The attorney general's office can seek refunds for people who paid too much, and courts may impose civil penalties against price gougers of up to \$5,000 per violation, according to the N.C. Department of Justice.

Stein has brought 12 lawsuits against 29 defendants under the price-gouging law since 2018, and has obtained 14 judgments or settlements totaling \$1.08 million against 25 defendants.

How to report price gouging in NC

North Carolinians may submit complaints of price gouging online or by phone.

To report potential price gouging, call 1-877-5-NO-SCAM or go to ncdoj.gov/pricegouging.

Be ready to provide your name, address and contact information, along with the name and address of the company against which you are complaining.

Also be prepared to share details of the product, item or service involved in the price gouging, including its current price and the reason given by the business for the current price, if provided.

Renee Umsted: +1 202-383-6008, @renee umsted

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Renee Umsted, Staff Writer, 'Price gouging law is in effect following Helene. How to recognize and report it in NC', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 4A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEEF8092378>



Residents feeding each other in Helene-devastated town

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Josh Shaffer; Staff Writer Section: News 445 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

In just a few hours, Big Horse Creek sent a 10-foot wall of water into the tiny mountain town of Lansing, destroying its row of quaint brick art shops, antique stores and cleverly named pizza parlor - Pie on the Mountain.

Hurricane Helene roared through Lansing's section of the popular Virginia Creeper Trail and left it strewn with mud, tree trunks and a Winnebago-sized camper turned upside-down in the water.

All along Lansing's main street, the shopkeepers pulled out soaking walls and floorboards already reeking with mildew, and they offered their canned goods and water bottles for all needy comers.

"This area has been devastated," said Jeff Pierce, a volunteer at the fire department, "Something we've not seen since the 1940s. You're familiar with Carter-Finley Stadium. Two of those, 40 feet high. That's how much water."

As rescue crews cut trees off roads and cleared branches and strips of sheet metal off bridges, the larger world began to see the extent of ruin in North Carolina's northwest corner.

'Caskets floating in the river'

While repairing a broken gas line in Boone, Steve Calhoun recalled the worst he'd seen in Ashe County since Friday.

"Caskets floating in the river," he said. "People in the water and nobody can get to them. Houses in the road. Cars in trees."

The water has receded, but locals do not expect all the area's power to be restored for months. The roads to many remote areas, including west of Lansing, are too washed out for crews to reach.

They worry about those still missing, unaccounted for in the chaos.

In Lansing, the Squirrel and Nut got walloped only four months after it opened. It sold local and vintage art, including pieces made by Lora Young, who spent Saturday, Sunday and Monday grilling donated food.

"A lot of us don't have power," she said, "so they're bringing us stuff out of their freezers. Need some food? We've got chicken grilling now."

Volunteers feeding hundreds

At the fire department, volunteers fed 300 people barbecue though the population of the town 33 miles northeast of Boone is only 128.

Pierce led a prayer over the pig cooker, giving thanks and asking for guidance.

"One thing you have to understand about mountain people," he said. "We're resilient. We keep fighting."

As he spoke, the shopkeepers moved up and down Lansing's main street, shoveling mud.

Young smiled at them over her grill.

"You have to," she said. "Once you get a chance to slow down, it'll all sink in."

Josh Shaffer: 919-829-4818, @joshshaffer08

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Josh Shaffer, Staff Writer, 'Residents feeding each other in Helene-devastated town', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 1A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEE6579A0C0



Western NC needs our help now and long after the waters recede

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Issac Bailey| Section: Editorial/Opinion| 704 Words Page: 8A OpenURL Link

The headlines will fade. Our focus will return to the presidential and North Carolina gubernatorial races.

The water will recede. Rivers will return to usual levels and flows. The tears will dry.

It's then residents of western North Carolina and other areas hit hard by Hurricane Helene will need our help most, for us to not forget their suffering.

They need an enormous amount of help today, too, of course, to just be able to survive. The rescues, the treecutting, the restoration of basic infrastructure - roads and electricity and schools and the like - must continue. Prayers and good will from those who can't assist directly are also invaluable.

But it's over the long-haul the suffering will need our help the most, just as the state's and nation's attention will once again be pulled in a thousand different directions.

I saw it happen as a high school student in the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo, which nearly wiped my native St. Stephen, S.C., off the map 35 years ago. At least that's the way it felt the morning after the storm passed. It took our house and kept us out of school for weeks as we tried to re-establish what little we had. My fondest memory are the hot meals we received from the American Red Cross. They remain the best thing I've ever eaten.

The rest of the world seemed to just get on with other more important things, things more important than us. That's the way it felt. Intellectually, I understood why it had to be that way. The Earth doesn't stop rotating on its axis because a group of vulnerable people are struggling. It still felt cold, though, made us in a sense feel forgotten.

I saw a repeat a decade later when I was a journalist covering the aftermath of Hurricane Floyd. There was the initial rush to help, to pray, to prioritize community above politics and partisanship. But as the Waccamaw River returned to its banks, that collective spirit began fading. Even the short drive between Myrtle Beach and Conway felt like leaving one country for another, the damage that starkly different. Helene left a similar haphazard path of damage.

In Asheville, flood waters nearly reached the roof of a Wendy's restaurant and dislodged a house from it foundation, sending it down the river until it crashed into a tree. There were reports from small communities such as Banner Elk in Avery County, Black Mountain and beyond that they were effectively cut off from the rest of the state.

Rescuers had to leave bodies behind to get the living to safety.

There was more death and extreme destruction in Florida, where Helene came ashore. In South Carolina, Greenville residents reported tree lines in their backyard being knocked over.

In my part of North Carolina, there was no death and little destruction. On the morning after Helene, I saw a large uprooted by the storm. It had been removed within hours. Oh, our power went out, for maybe 30 minutes.

That's typical of natural disasters. They don't care if we plan to vote for Kamala Harris or Donald Trump, don't care about the size of our house, how important the roads we need to get to work.

They are unimpressed by our business acumen or the number of degrees hanging on our walls.

They don't discriminate even if we do.

We are all always in the path of natural disasters. It's just that Helene's chosen path was through western North Carolina rather than the eastern part of the state - this time.

That's why this is a time to remember the fellow human beings who got hit hard will need our help long after we've begun debating who won Tuesday night's vice presidential debate.

The next Hugo, Floyd or Helene might come knocking on our door, if not knocking over our homes.

We should wise enough to want a strong infrastructure in place to help us when our time come. Because that time is likely coming.

Issac Bailey is a McClatchy opinion writer in North Carolina and South Carolina. Here's how to help flood and hurricane victims in North Carolina.

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Issac Bailey, 'Western NC needs our help now and long after the waters recede', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 8A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEEF2AFBD10



reality check - Biden says Trump lying about Cooper, Helene response

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan and Danielle Battaglia; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1364 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

RALEIGH Former President Donald Trump complained about North Carolina's disaster response on social media on Monday, claiming without evidence that Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper isn't helping Republican-leaning areas of the state impacted by Hurricane Helene.

President Joe Biden told reporters on Monday that Trump is lying.

The Republican presidential candidate targeted Cooper in a social media post about how he was going to Valdosta, Georgia, "in order to pay my respects and bring lots of relief material."

He goes on to say that he "was also going to stop into North Carolina, which has really been hit hard. I have a lot of supplies ready for them, but access and communication is now restricted, and we want to make sure that Local Emergency Management is able to focus on helping the people most affected, and not being concerned with me. I'll be there shortly, but don't like the reports that I'm getting about the Federal Government, and the Democrat Governor of the State, going out of their way to not help people in Republican areas. MAGA!"

In reality, federal, state and local governments are working together on relief. And relief is also coming from other states.

Trump did not explain where he was getting "reports" of some people not being helped because of their political party affiliation. In general, urban areas like Asheville have concentrations of Democratic voters while Republican voters are in rural areas.

Biden, asked Monday about Trump's comments on Cooper's Helene response, angrily interjected before a reporter finished asking the question, according to the White House pool report.

"He's lying, and the governor told him he was lying. The governor told him he's lying. I've spoken to the governor, spent time with him, and he told him he's lying. I don't know why he does it ... that's simply not true, and it's irresponsible," Biden said.

Cooper surveyed the damage Monday, joined by FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell and leaders of the departments of transportation, public safety and Health and Human Services, which are part of his Cabinet.

"People are working around the clock to provide help to them right now - food, water, working hard to make sure that we've got shelters open all across this area, and working to get power back on," Cooper told reporters in a press briefing at the Asheville airport on Monday, when asked about the speed of the response. "When you have a situation where communities are completely cut off, when first responders can't even get in, because water is still there, and rivers are rising right now, as we speak."

"A lot of work is done. What we want to tell people is that more help is on the way, and help is continuing. This is our main mission right now, and this is a massive coordinated effort to help this area, both in the short term and in the long term," Cooper said.

Rep. Edwards, Speaker Moore survey damage

Also at the briefing in Asheville with Cooper were Republican U.S. Rep. Chuck Edwards and Republican N.C. Sen.

Tim Moffitt.

Edwards and Republican House Speaker Tim Moore surveyed damage via a helicopter on Monday, Edwards said in a news release.

"We've had a very disappointing response from FEMA, and a very disappointing response, initially, from the North Carolina Emergency Management services," Edwards, who represents far western North Carolina, said in an interview with McClatchy.

"But we're seeing resources start to show up. Today, the governor has given us assurances that there will be more and I think we're on our way to a good solid recovery."

Edwards said he was frustrated because the storm ended at 10 a.m. Friday in the western part of the state.

"I'm only seeing resources brought into Western North Carolina today," Edwards said. "We lost, I'm going to say 80 hours - and we knew the storm was coming, so 80 hours ago we should have seen FEMA deploying resources to the perimeter of where we expected the storm to hit. But instead it looked like folks took the weekend off. They're just showing up today."

"The people in this district are hurting, and they're really disappointed with the response from the federal government, and our state government."

Edwards said it was Cooper's responsibility to oversee North Carolina Emergency Management, which is responsible for the initial response in a disaster.

"I had a call from the White House earlier today, saying, Congressman, we know that the response from FEMA has been slow, but tell me what you need me to do," Edwards said. "And my response is, 'I don't need people to continue to ask me what I need them to do. I need people to do things."

Edwards said to White House officials' credit, they told him to put together a list of immediate needs and promised to help check things off that list.

Edwards asked for temporary cellphone towers, unprecedented amounts of water, meals ready-to-eat, a communication center and a grocery distribution warehouse to replenish stores.

"I'm giving the White House a chance to live up to their promise that they'll help us get the things on that list," Edwards said.

Republican Senate leader Phil Berger said Monday that he had been "briefed by Emergency Management officials on the impacts of Hurricane Helene and the emergency response efforts. This was an absolutely devastating storm."

"The General Assembly is evaluating what a disaster recovery package could look like and what other steps we can take. North Carolina has a healthy savings account that will help us respond to the catastrophic nature of this storm," Berger said on social media.

'Major access challenges'

N.C. Emergency Management Director William Ray said that state officials are using ground routes to distribute water and food that they can access "reliably and safely," including through Interstate 40 and Interstate 26.

"We know there are many areas of the western part of the state that still have major access challenges, which is why we put in place the operation you see here of moving, using aircraft to move commodities into those impacted areas," Ray said at the Asheville airport.

"Right now, we are trying to surge as much of the commodities into the entire impacted region. Yesterday as an example, either via ground or by air, 30 counties had commodities delivered to them yesterday," he said.

"We know that we're not going to be able to meet right now, out of the gate, the universal need that everyone has, that's why we are surging up both our distribution so we're putting additional drivers on, to be able to get more trucks on the road, to get commodities in faster," Ray said, as well as aircraft.

Emergency Management officials have 40 trailers a day of food and water they are trying to distribute to the "entire impacted area," he said.

National Guard response

Cooper activated more than 400 service members in the N.C. National Guard. The National Guard has rescued 422 people since the storm, out of more than 500 total rescues that includes search and rescue teams from 27 states and 18 federal teams. Of those rescued, 42 were critically injured people and four were infants. There were 64 animals rescued as well.

The Guard has also delivered 306 pallets of water and 230 pallets of food.

Republican U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx of Banner Elk said Monday she wanted to see more from Cooper's office. Only six members of the National Guard were on the ground in Avery County, she said.

"We don't have enough National Guard," Foxx told McClatchy. "Last night, they had sent out 400 National Guard for 25 counties. That's a very small number."

The North Carolina Department of Transportation posted several times on social media and on its website that "all roads" in Western North Carolina are closed and the only travel on them should be for emergencies, over the weekend and on Monday. NCDOT is a Cabinet agency of Cooper's administration.

On Saturday, the North Carolina National Guard shared photos of the work they had already begun, joined by other states' National Guard soldiers from Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Iowa and Maryland to support relief efforts by air.

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

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

Danielle Battaglia: @dani battaglia

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan and Danielle Battaglia, Staff Writer, 'reality check Biden says Trump lying about Cooper, Helene response', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 1A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEE949B9AB0>



Baptists on Mission among helpers at work in Western NC after Helene devastation

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Martha Quillin; Staff Writer | Section: News | 485 Words Page: 6A OpenURL Link

Until last week, Bill White had the kind of home in Arden, just south of Asheville, that real estate agents would describe as park-like, with a lot so dense with trees it was hard to see the house from the road.

Then destructive remnants of Hurricane Helene came through and did some unwelcome landscaping, dropping at least 10 mature trees, including a four-trunk oak that landed on the house.

White, 86, was just about to climb onto the roof and size up the damage Monday afternoon when a trio of men from the N.C. Baptists on Mission pulled into his driveway and started unloading chainsaws and limb loppers.

"This is unbelievable," White kept saying, his sea-blue eyes filling with tears. "It's unbelievable that they do this."

Craig Schomburg, John Miller and Mark Cantrell have been doing this together for years. They know each other from Apex Baptist Church, and now that they're retired, they have the time to travel to the places where people are the most relieved to see them.

Between them, they have done disaster relief in several states, and regularly volunteer at the Baptist on Mission's Rose Hill outpost, where workers still are rebuilding homes lost in Hurricane Florence n 2018.

This week, they're working with teams based at Biltmore Baptist Church, where several disaster-relief efforts have converged in response to the widespread need Helene created.

The Baptists have set up two of their mass-feeding kitchens behind the church and have been preparing meals for students and faculty at UNC-Asheville, a nursing home in Asheville and some of the shelters around Buncombe County where people are staying-because their homes are uninhabitable.

Feed the Hunger has delivered thousands of bags of pre-mixed rice and pasta meals that church volunteers were giving away Monday along with donated bags of ice and cases of water. Inside the church more volunteers were sorting gifts of baby diapers, formula and other items displaced residents will need.

Drinking water has been an urgent need since the storm. The city of Asheville had to shut off water to make repairs to its system and those on wells in rural communities need electricity to power pumps.

Biltmore Baptist's pastor, Jason Gaston, who used to serve Raleigh's Summit Church, has been working with Raleigh sources to bring in some of the water and other supplies. Monday afternoon, a line of cars wrapped around Biltmore Baptist's parking lot as residents rolled through and volunteers placed the items in their trunks or back seats.

The campus bustled with the work of more than 100 volunteers Monday.

"Hope showed up today," Gaston said. "Hope has been here, of course, but hope showed up tangibly for our community today."

Watching the chainsaw crew work in his yard a few miles away, Bill White agreed.

"It's here," he said.

Martha Quillin: 919-829-8989, @MarthaQuillin

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Martha Quillin, Staff Writer, 'Baptists on Mission among helpers at work in Western NC after Helene devastation', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 6A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEEDD2B8B68>



A county-by-county look at Helene's devastation in western NC

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Drew Jackson, Richard Stradling and Evan Moore; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1791 Words

Page: 13A OpenURL Link

The toll of the tropical storm that was once Hurricane Helene continues to unfold in North Carolina. The state's picturesque and mountainous western region was inundated with historic rainfalls, flooding, land and mudslides.

We're gathering what we know of the damage in each county in Western North Carolina. Here is an evolving snapshot of that toll as new information becomes available.

We'll update this in the coming days with more counties and specific details.

Alexander County

About 8% of the 19,000 homes and businesses in Alexander County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

The Alexander County Sheriff's Office said 7 main roads remain closed, including the Highway 16 bridge, which passes over Lake Hickory near the Oxford Dam, which saw water spill over its top during Friday's rainfall.

The county reports that phone, internet and cell service have improved and have been restored in most government buildings.

Alleghany County

About 22% of the 9,835 homes and businesses in Alleghany County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

Road closures include large sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway in this rural county along the Virginia border.

Ashe County

There has been one confirmed death in Ashe County.

About 45% of the 21,778 homes and businesses in Ashe County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

A long stretch of Highway 18 along the eastern border of Ashe County is closed. The New River State Park is currently closed.

The New River crested at 18.27 feet, higher than the 18-foot crest during the Great Flood of 1916. The historic record, though, for the Jefferson water station is 22.5 feet, from 1940.

Avery County

About 56% of the 1,803 homes and businesses in Avery County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

Three major road closures remain and many others are impassable in this mountainous county along the Tennessee border.

Grandfather Mountain, which includes Avery, Caldwell and Watauga counties, is closed until further notice.

Five shelters have been set up in Banner Elk, Beech Mountain, Ingalls, Newland and Minneapolis.

Curfew is in place from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. to keep roadways clear.

Buncombe County

Buncombe County officials said Monday afternoon that 40 people have been found dead in that county alone.

So far Buncombe, which is home to Asheville, has the most reported Helene deaths in the state.

Buncombe County Register of Deeds Drew Reisinger said Monday that his office has received 11,000 requests from people seeking help to locate their loved ones amid the spotty cell service and destroyed roadways.

Burke County

There has been one confirmed death in Burke County.

About 49% of homes and businesses are without power as of Tuesday morning.

The Burke County Office of Emergency Services said the number of fatalities and injuries are still being assessed.

The west-bound lane of Interstate 40 is entirely closed to travelers, but is open for emergency vehicles.

Boil advisories are in place for Morganton, Valdese and Icard Township.

Burke County's 911 system, which was down since the Friday storm, has been restored.

Caldwell County

About 39% of the 42,228 homes and businesses in the county remained without power as of Tuesday morning.

The Caldwell County Sheriff's Office reports the county's emergency system received 1,594 calls to 911 during Friday's storm.

A shelter remains open at West Caldwell High School in Lenoir.

Catawba County

There has been one confirmed death in Catawba County.

Around 12% of the county's 82,391 homes and businesses remained without power Tuesday morning.

The westbound lane of Interstate 40 is closed to non-emergency traffic throughout the county. The Oxford Dam bridge on Highway 16 also remains closed.

Clay

All of the power has been restored to homes and businesses in Clay County.

Cleveland

There have been two confirmed deaths in Cleveland County.

Around 53% of the 48,385 homes and businesses in the county remain without power.

An emergency shelter remains open at the Cleveland County Health Department in Shelby.

At least four main roads remain closed around the Shelby area.

Gaston

There has been one confirmed death in Gaston County.

Around 4% of the 115,000 homes and businesses in the county remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

At least eight roads remain closed throughout the county.

Haywood

There have been four confirmed deaths, according to the Haywood County Sheriff's Office.

Around 26 percent of the 39,200 homes and businesses in the county remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

A large section of Interstate 40 is closed in the county, as well as numerous roads and highways.

A curfew remains in place from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.

The Haywood County fair has been canceled for 2024.

Henderson County

There have been five confirmed deaths in Henderson County.

Lincoln County

About 8% of the 43,000 homes and businesses in Lincoln County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

The Lincoln County YMCA at 1402 Gaston St. in Lincolnton is open to the community for showers while officials navigate the county-wide power outages.

Macon County

There has been one confirmed death in Macon County.

About 10% of the 29,000 homes and businesses in Macon County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

"Parts of Macon County are still trying to recover from damages caused by Hurricane Helene and most of Macon County is experiencing poor cellular and other communication system coverage," the Macon County Sheriff's Office said on Monday. "Travel to our west is still limited and travel from other areas into our county is heavier than normal due to many interstate highways routes affected."

Among the roads closed Tuesday were N.C. 106 and U.S. 64 throughout the county.

Madison County

There has been one confirmed death in Madison County.

Around 18% of the 16,000 homes and businesses in Madison County remain without power as of Tuesday morning.

Parts of N.C. 209, N.C. 63 and U.S. 25 Business in Marshall were closed Tuesday morning.

Food, water and other supplies are available to county residents at A-B Tech Madison, 4646 U.S. 25.

McDowell County

Around 65% of the county's 30,262 homes and businesses remained without power Tuesday morning.

County offices will remain closed through Friday, October 4. Offices will reopen on Monday, October 7.

The westbound lane of Interstate 40 is closed to non-emergency traffic throughout the county.

The county has set up a donation site for water and emergency supplies at 634 College Dr. in Marion.

Mecklenburg County

There has been one confirmed death in Mecklenburg County.

Mitchell County

About 39% of homes and businesses in Mitchell County are without power as of Monday evening.

Numerous roads throughout Mitchell County are impassable, and "a good bit of the county infrastructure has been either damaged or destroyed by floodwaters and uprooted trees and downed power lines," according to the county. Bakersville, the county seat along Cane Creek, has been particularly hit hard.

The Red Cross opened a shelter at Mitchell High School in Ledger, while another opened at First Baptist Church in Spruce Pine. There's a county-wide curfew from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m.

A quartz mine in Spruce Pine owned by Sibelco has been temporarily closed due to flooding and damage in the storm.

Polk County

About 66% of homes and businesses in Polk are without power as of Tuesday morning.

The county has set up a phone line with a recorded message for those seeking information, at 828-722-5086. Polk County High School in Columbus is serving as a shelter, and the county is seeking places to distribute food and water.

In the meantime, it's asking people to "please stay at home or in a safe location."

Among the roads closed, the westbound lanes of U.S. 74 east of Columbus are expected to reopened until next week.

Rutherford County

There has been one confirmed death in Rutherford County.

About 63% of 44,499 homes and businesses in Rutherford County are without power as of Tuesday morning.

There is widespread damage throughout the county, including in Chimney Rock. The Lake Lure Dam, once thought in danger of failure, has stabilized.

The town of Lake Lure said firefighters and town workers went door to door over the weekend rescuing people in the most affected area, many on foot or via helicopter because of closed roads. The top of the lake was covered in debris, including floating propane tanks, that the Broad River swept up on its way through Chimney Rock.

Town officials have advised residents to leave town, if possible, and ask nonresidents to stay away.

"Please do not come to Town unless you absolutely need to be here as this is an ongoing rescue situation and the roads are not safe," town officials wrote Monday afternoon. "Your absence will allow first responders to focus on rescue operations."

A resource center with food, showers, restrooms, a tool trailer, charging stations and wifi will be available for residents at the Ingles on N.C. 9 Tuesday at 5 p.m.

Transylvania County

About 73% of the 24,008 homes and businesses in Transylvania County are without power as of Tuesday morning.

The sheriff's office said Sunday that Transylvania County had "received catastrophic damages, and we have still not been able to access all parts of the county." Phone and cell service was out in many places, and power may take two weeks to restore in some areas.

Roads that were closed due to downed trees had been at least partially reopened on Monday, but several roads remain closed due to slides and are expected to be closed for an extended period of time. Among the roads closed Monday were U.S. 276 in Brevard and U.S. 64 throughout the county.

The county has a curfew from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m.

Watauga County

About 40% of 29,118 homes and businesses in Watauga were without power on Tuesday morning.

Numerous homes and businesses were flooded in Boone, and the town's water pipes were broken in several places. Residents have been told to boil drinking water before consuming it.

The Red Cross is running a shelter for residents and Appalachian University students whose off-campus homes were damaged.

More than 100 roads were closed or partially closed in the county as of Sunday evening. On Monday, N.C. 105 near Boone was impassable, and U.S. 321 near Banner Elk and the Tennessee state line was closed.

County and local officials ask all leisure travel to the area be postponed.

Wilkes County

About 9% of 38,691 homes and businesses in Wilkes County were without power as of Tuesday morning.

A county official told MyFox80, a local TV station, that between 150 and 200 homes are inaccessible because of blocked roads. A landslide had closed N.C. 18 between Wilkesboro and Sparta, and the road will likely be closed for about a month, said Jason Reavis, the Emergency Services Director.

The county got up to 16 inches of rain, Reavis said, but wasn't as hard hit as others.

"We caught the side of it pretty much," he said. "We are very fortunate and very blessed."

A Red Cross shelter was opened at West Wilkes Middle School in Wilkesboro for those displaced or needing a meal or place to charge devices.

Yadkin County

There has been one confirmed death in Yadkin County.

Yancey County

There have been two confirmed deaths in Yancey County.

Around 81% of the 14,610 homes and businesses in Yancey County were without power as of Tuesday morning.

N.C. 97 partially collapsed near Burnsville and NC 80 collapsed south of Burnsville. Both roads are closed.

Drew Jackson: 919-829-4707, @jdrewjackson

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Drew Jackson, Richard Stradling and Evan Moore, Staff Writer, 'A county-by-county look at Helene's devastation in western NC', Herald-Sun, The (online), 2 Oct 2024 13A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEE25877F88>



Helene shuts down NC mine key to quartz production

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Brian Gordon; Staff Writer | Section: News | 550 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

The remnants of Hurricane Helene ripped through the Western North Carolina mountain town of Spruce Pine last week, disrupting a quartz facility integral to the global production of solar panels and semiconductor chips.

The largest Spruce Pine mine is owned by Sibelco, a private Belgium mineral company that is Mitchell County's top employer. Sibelco told The News & Observer Monday that the company has "temporarily halted operations at the Spruce Pine facilities" since Sept. 26.

"The hurricane has caused widespread flooding, power outages, communication disruptions, and damage to critical infrastructure in the area," the emailed statement said. "Many people in the area, including our employees and their families, are facing displacement and significant disruptions."

As of Saturday morning, the storm had dumped more than 2 feet of rain on the town, submerging its downtown buildings and overwhelming area roads, railways, utilities, and homes.

Sibelco's mines are north of downtown in an area called the Spruce Pine Mining District. From above, they look like giant white sandy beaches. The area is set back from the local North Toe River, which flooded.

But news reports indicate surrounding Mitchell County has experienced extensive damage to roads and rail lines, which could impact workers' ability to get to the site and the company's ability to transport materials.

The town is home to the purest quartz on the planet, a byproduct of continental formations that occurred more than 380 million years ago. High-purity quartz is essential to making the silicon wafers that get cut into chips. While there are other sources of quartz, the purity many producers demand is only found around the mines of Spruce Pine.

"It is rare, unheard of almost, for a single site to control the global supply of a crucial material," wrote Ed Conway in his 2023 book "Material World." "Yet if you want to get high-purity quartz - the kind you need to make those crucibles without which you can't make silicon wafers - it has to come from Spruce Pine."

Nowhere else matches the purity

Facility issues have hindered the global supply chain of quartz before. In 2008, a fire at a Spruce Pine quartz refinery "temporarily brought production to a halt and impacted the market," reported Global Risk Intel, a Washington D.C.-based consulting firm.

Throughout the 20th century, local miners extracted mica and feldspar from the Mitchell County sites, yet, in the past 30 years, escalating demand for newer technologies has made high-purity quartz one of North Carolina's most important exports. Last year, Sibelco announced it would invest \$200 million into the site by 2025 to double production. The company sells its quartz under the brand name IOTA.

"I've been sent to Brazil, I've been sent to Australia, and nothing matches the final purity of the Spruce Pine quartz," local geologist Alex Glover said during an interview last March.

More recently, a second company named The Quartz Corp has invested in mines around Spruce Pine. On Tuesday, the company announced it too had stopped operations on Sept. 26, adding "we have no visibility on when they will

restart."

"This is second order of priority," The Quartz Corp said in an online post. "Our top priority remains the health and safety of our employees and their families."

Compared to Sibelco's sites, The Quartz Corp location is closer to the North Toe River, aerial images on Google Maps show.

Brian Gordon: 919-861-1238, @skyoutbriout

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Brian Gordon, Staff Writer, 'Helene shuts down NC mine key to quartz production', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 1A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEE6B0BC680



Federal aid is available for North Carolinians affected by Helene. Here's how to apply.

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Luciana Perez Uribe Guinassi; Staff Writer | Section: News | 592 Words

Page: 13A OpenURL Link

When a hurricane such as Helene strikes, one of the first forms of federal aid available is through FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

This agency provides disaster assistance before, during and after a disaster, including via help for individuals and families affected.

Events declared disasters by the president are eligible for help from FEMA, and on Friday, North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper requested a major disaster declaration. President Joe Biden announced Saturday he had approved the declaration.

Cooper requested that declaration for federal help for 38 counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and Biden approved it for 25 North Carolina counties and the Eastern Band.

This declaration means that FEMA can expedite help for the state, reimburse local governments, state agencies and nonprofits for funds spent on repairs and provide individual assistance for people affected.

Forms of aid for individuals through FEMA can include funds for temporary housing (for rental assistance or covering hotel costs), repairs and rebuilding of homes, or other needs such as medical expenses, damage to an essential vehicle, funeral expenses, child care expenses and more.

The 25 counties approved for aid are: 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, according to a press release by Cooper's office.

How to apply for FEMA assistance

As for how to apply for individual aid, there are multiple ways you can do so.

Online at DisasterAssistance.gov.

Via the FEMA App

By calling the FEMA helpline at 800-621-3362 from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. ET daily.

If you use a video relay service, captioned telephone service, or other communication services, you should provide FEMA the specific number assigned for that service.

FEMA does not provide aid for losses already covered by insurance, so the agency recommends immediately filing a claim with your insurance company if you have insurance. You do not need to file your insurance claim before applying for FEMA aid, but will be required to provide FEMA with insurance settlement details or denials for some forms of assistance, according to the FEMA website.

Be sure to take pictures of damage to your home and personal property before any cleanup or repairs. Document all the information you can.

FEMA aid is available for U.S. citizens, noncitizen nationals, or qualified noncitizens such as legal permanent residents, refugees and more.

Renters and small business owners may also be eligible for federal help through the U.S Small Business Administration (SBA), which provides disaster loans.

What is needed for the application

For the FEMA application, here's what you need:

Social Security number

Annual household income

Contact information such as your phone number, mailing address, email address and the damaged home address

Bank account information

Insurance information

After applying for aid, an inspection might be required, in which a FEMA employee comes to survey damage to your home and personal property. FEMA may also request more information. After the review, FEMA will notify you of any aid you are eligible for. You can appeal the decision.

The application deadline in North Carolina for this aid is Nov. 27, according to the FEMA website.

For more immediate emergency assistance, contact 911.

For shelter, visit the American Red Cross, or Salvation Army, or by texting SHELTER and your zip code (for example, "SHELTER 01234") to 4FEMA (43362).

For local aid options, call 2-1-1.

FEMA is just one form of federal aid. More aid is often provided by other agencies, including through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Be sure to be on the lookout for other federal aid and other local and statewide aid that may become available.

Luciana Perez Uribe Guinassi: @LucianaPerezUb

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Luciana Perez Uribe Guinassi, Staff Writer, 'Federal aid is available for North Carolinians affected by Helene. Here's how to apply.', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 13A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEE49DFEC70>



Cut off by Helene in Western NC, Rep. Foxx calls for more aid for her district

October 2, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Danielle Battaglia; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1609 Words

Page: 6A OpenURL Link

Rep. Virginia Foxx's husband used his last match on Monday morning to light a candle in their Banner Elk house.

Tropical Storm Helene had ripped through Western North Carolina, sending flash floods, mudslides and devastation throughout the region.

The storm didn't spare the Foxx family.

"My own husband is trapped because our driveway washed away," the Republican congresswoman said Monday in a phone interview with McClatchy. "He has no power, and he didn't have cell reception for a long time."

But if you thought a washed-out driveway was enough to stop the feisty 81-year-old congresswoman, you don't know her very well.

Foxx said she walked from her property until she could get into a car and drive around her district Saturday to assess the damage.

"The roads were closed everywhere," Foxx said. "I had to keep taking detours and detours. I drove under power lines, barely getting around fallen trees, over fallen trees and power lines down everywhere. And then, DOT trying to clear the roads, but being stuck in traffic, in what should have taken 10 minutes, for an hour and a half. It's a really bad situation."

For three days, Foxx worked from her office making calls to anyone she thought could help, from the White House to the National Guard to the Governor's Mansion.

News coverage has largely focused on areas in North Carolina's11th Congressional District to the west. There, photos and videos show two tourist destinations - Chimney Rock and Asheville - damaged by the storm.

"We know it's bad in Asheville, we know it's bad west of us, but it's very bad here in the High Country: Ashe, Avery, Watauga," Foxx said. "Watauga, particularly has been hit very, very hard."

For 19 years, Foxx has represented in Congress the counties around her Banner Elk home. Her 5th Congressional District currently encompasses Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Caldwell, Davie, Forsyth, Mitchell, Stokes, Surry, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yadkin counties.

Hurricane Helene reached the U.S. Thursday, near Perry, Florida, as a Category 4 hurricane. When it reached North Carolina, on Friday, it had been downgraded to a tropical storm, but dumped tens of inches of rain on the mountains.

As of Monday, at least 120 people had died from the storm throughout the Southeast. And many others remain unaccounted for. It is unclear if that's because they're isolated, have no means of communication or are dead.

Over Foxx's house, 2 feet of rain fell, she said. Banner Elk is home to Lees-McRae College, and has a population of just over 1,000 people.

The most rainfall was measured at Busick Raws in nearby Yancey County, where 29.5 inches fell, The News &

Observer reported.

That's close to Mount Mitchell, the highest peak in the Appalachian Mountains and east of the Mississippi River in the continental United States.

Helene's devastation

Rep. Chuck Edwards, a Republican representing the 11th Congressional District, also spoke with McClatchy on Monday about the devastation Helene left in its path through the state.

"It begins with the fact that so many roads are closed and impassable," Edwards said.

Edwards said traffic has to be routed around the region. Smaller roads and bridges have been washed out.

"We've got communities here in the mountains that are severed from civilization, and they also have no power, and they have no cell service. They literally are cut off from the rest of the world."

People who can get out lined up for more than three hours to get gas, and he worries that the region will run out. A few grocery stores can run on generators but their food supplies are low.

And then there are those who can't be reached.

"There's several we have not heard from yet," Edwards said. "We don't know their condition. Cell service is sporadic at best."

Cellphone outage

Foxx's cell phone cut in and out, and then cut off, as she spoke about the devastation.

She called back, sounding exasperated.

"One of the biggest problems that we have here is phone service," Foxx said. "We have people isolated, all over, who don't have phone access."

Foxx said she's been begging federal and state agencies to get her counties access to Starlink, a satellite internet company owned by SpaceX, that offers mobile broadband. On Monday, the White House announced that every emergency operations center in North Carolina would be sent Starlink satellite systems. On Monday afternoon, FEMA announced they delivered 40 Starlink systems to the state.

Foxx said lack of working cellphones was one of the biggest frustrations among lawmakers, first responders and residents. They aren't able to communicate about problems throughout the area.

In the 11th District, Canton Mayor Zeb Smathers posted on social media his "frustration and anger" with cellphone providers, saying they failed his community when they needed them the most.

"It is unacceptable and disgusting that in our time of need, cellular service for the entire region is blocked out," Smathers told The Charlotte Observer. "There's no excuse for that. I mean, we knew the storm was coming."

Canton, a town with fewer than 4,500 people, is located 17 miles west of Asheville.

In Foxx's district, she said, an information technology employee in Ashe County was able to connect to Starlink. But other counties had not.

And that concerns Foxx, where she says there there are places with no access to the outside world - like Beech

Mountain, home to around 700 people.

"The only way to get to Beech Mountain is by helicopter," Foxx said. "We've got communications with the manager up there, but it is a big issue, being able to talk to people and getting supplies to them."

Missing people

Mid-conversation, Foxx's other phone rang.

"I don't need to take that one," she said. "That is somebody calling to tell me they're worried about me and praying for me."

That's a constant for people living in Western North Carolina.

And something Foxx says she really appreciates right now.

When Foxx isn't assessing the damage, she's been in her office making calls.

Foxx and other members of Congress were among those who wrote to Biden asking for him to declare a major disaster. On Saturday, Biden announced he had approved the declaration, which offers grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property loses and programs to help individuals and business owners.

On Monday, Biden announced in a news conference that FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell would be staying in the Asheville area for the foreseeable future. He said he, too, plans to travel to North Carolina on Wednesday.

There's been some criticism that Congress left town Wednesday after passing a temporary funding measure but not the 12 appropriation bills needed to fund the federal government. Edwards noted how close Congress came to another government shutdown and where his district would be today, had that happened. Congress plans to be out until after the November election.

On Monday, Biden said he is considering calling Congress back into session. But Foxx said there's more Biden can do without Congress, like spending unused COVID-19 relief money on storm relief efforts.

Foxx said she wanted to see more from Gov. Roy Cooper's office.

In Avery County, only six members of the National Guard were on the ground, she said Monday.

"We don't have enough National Guard," Foxx said. "Last night, they had sent out 400 National Guard for 25 counties. That's a very small number."

She urged Cooper, a Democrat, to do more.

On Sunday, the North Carolina National Guard said more than 500 soldiers and airmen had been deployed. The U.S. National Guard said over 5,500 had been deployed from 11 states.

Edwards was also frustrated by the response.

"The people in this district are hurting, and they're really disappointed with the response from the federal government, and our state government," Edwards said.

He said he was only seeing federal and state resources brought into the region beginning Monday.

Volunteering

But Edwards added that Western North Carolina communities are resilient.

One of his own businesses was devastated in the storm, and it will take months to get it back up and running, but he said that it's nothing compared to what some of his neighbors are dealing with, with homes and businesses lost for good.

"I certainly see the community coming together," Edwards said. "Folks in the mountains are prideful and resilient. Our law enforcement and first responders are coming together in a big way. We're seeing more and more neighbors helping one another, checking on neighbors, seeing that they've got some of the basic things they need, sawing trees out of the way, so that their neighbors' cars can get by."

That uplifted Edwards, despite his frustration with state and federal leaders.

Next on Foxx's schedule was to go to Samaritan's Purse, a humanitarian aid organization based in Boone. There volunteers had come from across the country to help with relief efforts and she wanted to thank them for their work.

"We've very grateful to Samaritan's Purse," Foxx said. "It's one of the most effective relief organizations anywhere in the world, maybe the most effective. When Samaritan's Purse in on the ground, then we all feel better."

And Foxx said people looking to come to Western North Carolina tohelp should find an organization to volunteer with like Samaritan's Purse. She warned that people should not try to help on their own.

"We don't need people just going out on their own and trying to help because they don't know the situation here, and it's really dangerous for people to be trying to do things," Foxx said. "Roads are still caving in everywhere, and so it would be better for them to work through an established organization."

She suggested contacting the local emergency management agency where a person wanting to volunteer lives, to ask that county what is needed.

And she urged those wanting to help to donate to a reputable organization, and call their legislators or members of Congress to encourage the White House and Cooper's office to do everything needed.

Danielle Battaglia: @dani battaglia

Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

Citation (aglc Style)

Danielle Battaglia, Staff Writer, 'Cut off by Helene in Western NC, Rep. Foxx calls for more aid for her district', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 2 Oct 2024 6A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BF7CEECCB11988>