

## As Helene's devastation mounts, insurance commissioner candidates meet in debate

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For years, the race for North Carolina's insurance commissioner operated mostly under the radar.

Not anymore.

As billion-dollar-loss events become more common - like this week's "biblical devastation" in western North Carolina from the remnants of Hurricane Helene - premiums are skyrocketing. Denied claims and nonrenewals are also on the rise. The role of overseeing these markets is suddenly more critical than ever, and voters are paying attention.

Two-term Republican commissioner Mike Causey is up for reelection on Nov. 5. (North Carolina is one of 11 states that elect their commissioners. The rest appoint them.)

His challenger, Natasha Marcus, a Democrat, is a three-term state senator from Mecklenburg County.

Less than a week from a scheduled Oct. 7 hearing on a new proposed rate increase - and 33 days until the election - they faced off for the first and only time in a candidates' forum at Caffe Luna in Raleigh on Tuesday night.

Sponsored by the North Carolina Justice Center, they answered pre-screened questions in a timed, debate-style format.

051623-SENATE-VETO-TEL-12.jpgSen. Natasha Marcus, a Mecklenburg County Democrat, speaks about the abortion restrictions bill that was up for a veto override vote on Tuesday, May 16, 2023, at the Legislative Building in Raleigh, N.C. Republicans have a veto-proof supermajority in the General Assembly, with the ability to overturn a veto from Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper.

Here are some takeaways:

Hurricane Helene and NC's vulnerabilities

Causey said he'd toured the storm's damage in McDowell and Burke counties in western North Carolina hours before the forum. He also continues to receive reports of damage and insurance claims, he said.

"I've been on the phone ever since last week. We have people on the ground, and we've gone door to door to 144 homes. It's truly devastating," he told those gathered as recovery efforts remain underway. (Moody's Analytics' estimate Hurricane Helene's losses could be \$34 billion; other outlets say it could be upwards of \$100 billion.)

Marcus also cited the state's losses and drew a contrast with Causey by directly linking the disaster to climate change.

"Climate change is real; we ought to admit and tackle it. My opponent and his party refuse to do that," she said, adding: "More storms [like this] are coming. North Carolina is particularly vulnerable."

She also pointed out that flood insurance is not included in standard homeowners' insurance policies. That means a "million-plus people" likely don't have coverage, she said. She also faulted outdated flood maps from 2010 in places like Buncombe County as aggravating factors.

"We have to do better," she said.

COUNCIL16-010924-EDH.jpgNorth Carolina Commissioner of Insurance Mike Causey, a Republican, is up for reelection in November, facing Democratic state Sen. Natasha Marcus.

A court hearing on a proposed rate increase will go ahead

Despite doubt cast by his opponent, Causey said he plans to hold a hearing on a proposed rate increase for homeowners' insurance on Oct. 7.

In January, the N.C. Rate Bureau, which represents companies that write insurance policies, asked for a 42.2% average increase across the state. Since then, the department's actuaries, attorneys and consultants have been working to negotiate a new rate.

Causey said they've failed to reach an agreement. At this point, a hearing is the "best solution."

"It's happening," he said Tuesday night, though he and his office have yet to confirm a time or release details. It's expected to be held at his office headquarters in Highwood Towers at 3200 Beechleaf Court in northeast Raleigh. State law gives the insurance commissioner 45 days to issue an order once the hearing concludes.

Marcus said she welcomed the session. "It's all about transparency. Without a public hearing, there's no way to pick a fair number," she said.

But she also suggested that Causey could still cancel at the last second. In eight years as the commissioner, Causey has raised property insurance rates 16 times - all without a public hearing, she pointed out.

Challenger spotlights commissioner's record

A week after dropping an attack website, RateHikeMike.com, Marcus continued to shine a spotlight on Causey's record.

Among her charges is the percentage of homeowners subject to "consent-to-rate" notices. (The state's current threshold, written into law, allows insurance companies to charge rates higher - up to 250% more - than the state-approved rate.)

In Wake County alone, roughly 46% of policies were subject to consent-to-rate notices in 2023, according to the Marcus campaign. "It makes a mockery of a regulated market to allow insurance companies to charge you 250% above the maximum rate," she said.

Marcus also questioned his campaign-funding ties to the industry and his transparency. "That's part of the problem here," she said.

Commissioner is proud of his record.

Causey defended himself against attacks and used his rural upbringing to appeal to voters. "I was born on the dirt road produce farm in Guilford County where I still live today," he said.

Under his watch, he maintained that he's worked to ensure that any proposed increases are "reasonable and as low as possible."

"I'm proud of my record. North Carolina is in good shape. We have one of the most healthy, stable insurance markets in the nation," he said.

To be clear: Premiums don't automatically increase by the percentage of the finalized approved rate. That depends

on the insurer's assessed risk. Many policy holders may see "little to no impact" from a change because they're already paying above the current base rate, say experts.

The average cost of homeowners' insurance in North Carolina is \$1,975 per year, or about \$165 per month, according to a NerdWallet analysis. That's close to the national average of \$1,915 per year, even with the state's consent-to-rate threshold.

Causey added the insurance commissioner doesn't set insurance rates. "I follow the law," he said.

North Carolina is one of the few states - if not the only one - where a Rate Bureau still exists. In almost every other state, each carrier files its own homeowners' rates independently. But here, the Rate Bureau, created in 1977 by the General Assembly, has the responsibility to file and negotiate rates on behalf of the entire industry.

The challenges are real, he said. "Insurance companies don't want to write homeowners' insurance because they're losing money. We don't want to end up like Florida or California [where companies start to leave]."

Hearings should be the exception when negotiations fail, he said. "It's very expensive."

Many voters feel sidelined from the process.

Mark Kuhn, 70, from Durham, was one of the voters who attended the forum.

He's worried about Causey's ties to the industry. "He receives a significant amount of financial support. That creates an inherent conflict of interest," he said.

His wife, Cindy, 74, added that she feels shut out of the process. "We have family here, a daughter and granddaughters. It's not just about us. It's about all the people who don't have the resources that we have and are facing these big increases."

As for the upcoming hearing, she said: "I think he will be shamed into it."

Rebekah Brock recently moved to Harnett County from Colorado. She doesn't understand why rate negotiations are conducted behind closed doors. "Rates just magically get approved. Why doesn't the public have more input in that?"

The News & Observer filed a public records request seeking more information on May 15. The request is still undergoing "legal review," said Barry Smith, a spokesman for the state's Department of Insurance.

Check the Department of Insurance website for updates on the storm and the hearing: www.ncdoi.gov/helene Copyright 2024 The News and Observer

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# Under the Dome: What's lacking in Speaker Tim Moore's disclosure statements for Congress

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Good morning. Today's Under the Dome newsletter starts with a dispatch from The News & Observer's Dan Kane:

Last year, the law firm of state House Speaker Tim Moore, who is running for Congress, earned more than \$590,000, his financial disclosure reports to the U.S. House show.

But when it came to disclosing those clients in a separate box on the report, Moore only listed one "confidential" client from Kings Mountain, his Cleveland County hometown. He gave no reason why that client should be kept secret.

That's not in line with the U.S. House's disclosure rules, two experts told The News & Observer. Any legal client who has paid more than \$5,000 over the past two calendar years needs to be disclosed, unless a candidate cites one or more of five reasons for not disclosing.

"He did not state the specific reasons for that nondisclosure," said Danielle Caputo, a legal counsel for the Campaign Legal Center, a nonpartisan nonprofit in Washington.

The disclosure statements help the public and the House Ethics Committee identify "real and perceived" conflicts of interest that might affect candidates' votes if they are elected.

The five reasons for confidentiality, according to the committee's instruction guide, are:

"Law barring disclosure of the client's identity and/or payment and remittance history, such as HIPAA." "State bar rule provision." "Confidentiality agreement entered into with the client at the time your services were retained." "Court order." "Grand jury investigation or other non-public investigations for which there are no public filings."

Moore is running to represent the 14th district, which the Republican-led state legislature redrew in 2023 to favor GOP candidates.

The N&O asked Paul Shumaker, a veteran campaign consultant who has Moore as a client, about his disclosure reports. Shumaker checked with Moore, who acknowledged multiple clients had paid his firm more than \$5,000. But Moore told Shumaker all of them are confidential, citing North Carolina State Bar Rule 1.6 on client disclosure.

That rule speaks to lawyers protecting confidential information from their clients, including not making them public, said Christopher McLaughlin, a professor of public law and government at UNC-Chapel Hill's School of Government.

Shumaker pointed to U.S. Rep. Dan Bishop's filings when he successfully ran for the 9th district special election in 2019. Bishop, a Charlotte attorney, cited Rule 1.6 in keeping clients confidential.

Caputo and Brett Kappel, an attorney who specializes in federal campaign law, said candidates don't face penalties for incorrect information on the forms unless they intend to mislead or withhold information that should have been disclosed. In most cases, congressional ethics staff work with the candidates to file corrected statements, they said.

If Moore wins the election, he will have to give up working as a lawyer. An ethics law passed in 1989 prohibits lawyers from working while serving in Congress because of the profession's potential for causing conflicts of interest.

What else we've been working on

President Joe Biden took an aerial tour Wednesday of the destruction wrought by Tropical Storm Helene, then stopped in Raleigh, Adam Wagner reports. Sen. Ted Budd also viewed the storm's damage, then talked to Danielle Battaglia about what Congress needs to do. Soldiers from Fort Liberty will deploy to Western North Carolina to help reach areas cut off by Helene, and deliver food, water and other supplies. More from Adam here. The Biden administration is connecting counties with Elon Musk's Starlink satellites, but Musk is giving credit to former President Donald Trump. Emily Vespa and Brian Gordon explain. Helene battered North Carolina's prisons, too. After water and electrical damage to the state facilities, at least 1,200 inmates were taken by bus to other prisons. Joe Marusak of the Charlotte Observer has the details. The candidates for insurance commissioner debated, focusing on Helene and homeowners' insurance premiums. Chantal Allam has a rundown. And read on for what the two of them said in candidate questionnaires.

What else we're reading

Gov. Roy Cooper needed approval from the Council of State for his declaration of a state of emergency as Helene closed in on the state. And the majority-Republican council gave it, WRAL reported – but GOP Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson didn't vote.

Poll watch

The latest poll from the Cook Political Report finds Democratic Attorney General Josh Stein's over Robinson in the governor's race jumping to a massive 24 points. The survey was taken just as the CNN story broke linking Robinson to racist and explicit online posts, which he denies writing.

The Cook Political Report says Stein is winning independents by an even larger margin, 40 points.

Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris leads Republican former President Donald Trump by 3 points in North Carolina when third-party candidates are included, according to the poll.. Trump and Harris are tied in a head-to-head matchup.

## **VOTER GUIDE**

In the latest candidate questionnaires from our 2024 NC Voter Guide, see what candidates for insurance commissioner have to say about the issues, and learn more about their biographies. Two candidates answered our questions:

Mike Causey, Republican

Natasha Marcus, Democrat

Check your inbox tomorrow for more questionnaires, and lots more #ncpol news.

You can sign up to receive the Under the Dome newsletter at newsobserver.com/newsletters. Want your friends to get our email, too? Forward them this newsletter so they can sign up. We want to know what you would like to see in the Under the Dome newsletter. Do you like highlights from the legislature? Political analysis? Do you have a question you'd like The News & Observer team to answer? Tell us here. You can also email us at dome@newsobserver.comDon't forget to follow our tweets and listen to our Under the Dome podcast for more developments.

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# Chef José Andrés and World Central Kitchen distribute thousands of meals in Western NC

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Two thousand meals were on their way to Banner Elk Wednesday when a closed road rerouted them to Boone.

"The most amazing thing happened - 2,000 meals were just dropped off from Raleigh," said Emily Brinker, who coowns the Rhode's Motor Lodge in Boone.

The meals were part of World Central Kitchen's massive feeding mission in Western North Carolina in response to the region's devastation from Hurricane Helene. Prepped in the Raleigh kitchen by Rocky Top Catering and driven across the state, the trays of pork barbecue, mac and cheese and baked beans will later be airlifted and possibly driven or walked into the hands of someone in need of a warm meal.

As the region continues reconnecting the broken wires and pipes that have unmoored the western mountains from normalcy, a meal remains the most essential need and can mean the first step forward.

"I think this is all you can do, to try and understand why you're okay," Brinker said. "We're okay so we can help everyone who's not okay."

Rhode's Motor Lodge was expecting World Central Kitchen on Thursday, but the detour meant a helicopter was on its way to her boutique hotel in Boone and the meals would be air-lifted to a hospital site in Banner Elk. This is an expansion of the feeding operation the group had already set up in downtown Asheville.

Comparatively unscathed by the storm, Brinker said once her family was able to get from their house to the hotel she had a better sense of the storm's toll on the region and what it might take to recover.

"It's complete and total destruction," she said. "You can't get many places, most roads are collapsed, most people have zero cell phone service....Everybody who can wants something to do, something to contribute. It's the only thing that makes you feel okay - to help."

6C5A4829.JPGWorld Central Kitchen founder José Andrés is in Asheville as the aid group partners with local restaurants to feed those in need following storms in Western NC.

World Central Kitchen has become a global leader in humanitarian aid, a stabilizing symbol in the midst of disaster. The group, founded and led by world-famous chef José Andrés, was last in North Carolina in 2018, responding to Hurricane Florence with about 150,000 meals in and around a flooded Wilmington area.

Operations for World Central Kitchen typically look to the restaurant kitchens in impacted areas as sites to prepare and distribute meals.

This week the group has a presence in North Carolina, Georgia and Florida, where Hurricane Helene made landfall before weakening into a still-punishing tropical storm.

## Andrés in Asheville

In the early morning hours on Monday, Andrés posted a video from a Waffle House in Abingdon, Va., saying that he was on his way to Asheville.

The video has been seen 1.7 million times that, along with others he's shared since landing in Asheville, speak to

the chef's role in shining a light on a crisis as much as lending a helping hand. Since he's been on the ground in the mountains, he's surveyed flooding from a helicopter, delivered meals to fire departments working the disaster and sent food to cut-off communities.

The World Central Kitchen site in Asheville has been set up at Bear's Smokehouse downtown. On Wednesday, a line of tanker trucks sat parked on the street with 100,000 gallons of potable water to hand out.

Bear's co-owner Cheryl Antoncic said that with the power out Saturday, but the restaurant unharmed, workers made the decision to start cooking what was in the walk-ins for anyone who might need a meal. When World Central Kitchen landed later that weekend, operations escalated.

Antoncic said World Central Kitchen isn't the sort of help you want your community to need.

"It's been very surreal; honestly there aren't really words for it," she said. "There's this sense of gratitude that World Central Kitchen brings, but also, 'Oh my gosh,' I don't want you here because I know what that means. It means mass devastation."

By Tuesday night, more than 60,000 meals had been served by WCK between North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Florida.

Beyond World Central Kitchen, numerous groups and restaurants in the Triangle have collected donations and supplies, prepared meals and shopped for groceries to deliver to the Western mountains. For a complete list of aid groups you can help, follow this link.

Triangle businesses and organizations collecting donations for Helene storm victims in NC

A county by county look at Helene's devastation in Western NC

Social media videos capture devastating damage in NC after Hurricane Helene

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# 'Help is on the way.' A town-by-town look at how the Triangle is aiding Western NC

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Author: Tammy Grubb, Lexi Solomon and Mary Helen Moore, News & Observer Section: politics government | 2481 Words
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Hundreds of law enforcement officers, firefighters and emergency workers from the Triangle fanned out this week, packing in food and supplies to their emotionally fatigued counterparts in the Western North Carolina mountains.

A group of Henderson County 911 telecommunicators had been on duty three days without a break when Orange County Sheriff Charles Blackwood said he and Chatham County Sheriff Mike Roberson checked in on them Sunday.

The average person may experience the kind of "critical incident exposure" those workers have been under a few times in a lifetime, he said. The typical emergency worker sees it daily, and it can leave them emotionally and physically drained.

"The devastation and anguish in those deputies and those telecommunicators' voices and in their hearts are much like those who've been at war," Blackwood said.

The sheriffs drove in from the south through Kings Mountain and Shelby, where they saw piles of trees along the road, ones from atop the mountain uprooting others as they cascaded to the bottom.

Even the rooftops were covered in mud and silt. Where the water had receded, a muddy line marked where the floodwaters had reached 13 to 14 feet above the aptly named Mud Creek, downhill from the Henderson County Sheriff's Office in Hendersonville.

They urged Henderson County Sheriff Lowell Griffin, whose own house was flooded, to eat some food and asked what he needed.

"I don't know," Griffin responded.

As they sat, a team of deputies came in covered in mud from their knees down, Blackwood said.

They had just pulled the bodies of a family from their home, where they all had drowned, he said.

"They all looked as if they had been pushing a rock up a hill," he said.

In the county's 911 center, the staff tried to remain hopeful, but exhaustion was in their eyes, Blackwood said.

"I listened to some of the stories about hearing people take their last breaths on the phone call, where they were calling them for help, and all they could tell them was that nobody was coming to help ... that they couldn't get to them," he said.

As they returned home, Roberson, the president of the N.C. Sheriff's Association, activated the Sheriffs Helping Sheriffs network to round up even more deputies and equipment from across the state.

The response was swift, marshaling nearly 400 public safety personnel from Durham, Wake, Orange and Chatham counties.

"In times like these, it's important for communities to come together and support one another," Roberson said. "I

want the people of Western North Carolina to know that help is on the way."

DFD-4.jfifAt least a dozen Durham Fire Department employees have shipped out to Western North Carolina to assist with Hurricane Helene recovery, including this four-person crew sent to Asheville on Monday, Sept. 30, 2024.

## **Durham County**

The Durham County Sheriff's Office sent 10 employees and multiple vehicles Tuesday to help with search and recovery, as well as security. Deputies also drove a week's worth of food to sheriff's offices in the region over the weekend.

Durham County sent a handful of staff to Asheville, plus a heavy-duty truck and driver to make deliveries. Other staff may rotate in over the next few weeks.

Two volunteer fire departments also sent resources:

- « Bahama Volunteer Fire Department sent a three-person crew and a brush truck.
- « Lebanon Volunteer Fire Department sent a fire engine and three firefighters to Bakersville for two weeks on Wednesday.
- '.jpgThree volunteers with the Lebanon Fire Department shipped off to Bakersville, a small town in Mitchell County dealing with the impacts of Hurricane Helene, on Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2024. They will spend two weeks there before returning home to northern Durham County.

## City of Durham

- « The Durham Fire Department sent 12 people. Eight traveled to Haywood County before the storm hit, helping evacuate people and pets. Four were sent to Asheville on Monday.
- « The Durham Police Department is working with the Avery County Sheriff's Office to collect aid for the region. The most needed items are shelf-stable boxed milk, manual can openers, canned foods and bottled water, the agency said in an email. Drop off donations at the Police Department headquarters, at 602 E. Main St.

DFD-4.jfifAt least a dozen Durham Fire Department employees have shipped out to Western North Carolina to assist with Hurricane Helene recovery, including this four-person crew sent to Asheville on Monday, Sept. 30, 2024.

# Duke hospitals

Duke Health deployed 25 team members to Shelby and is assembling a second team. Duke hospitals are ready to take patients from Western North Carolina as needed.

Officers in Hendersonville 2.jpegOfficers from the Rolesville Police Department help with debris removal in Hendersonville in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. The department sent five officers Sept. 29 to assist with recovery efforts.

#### Wake County

More than 200 personnel from North Carolina's most populated county have been deployed. That includes at least 56 police officers, 179 firefighters and 13 utilities employees.

In the Triangle, that means adjusted shifts and additional costs to maintain normal service, Holly Springs Police Chief Paul Liquorie said. While FEMA could reimburse those costs, "municipalities now will have to incur the immediate cost, because that will be somewhat of a lengthy and sometimes bureaucratic process to go through the federal government," he said.

Liquorie will lead a caravan of 47 officers from five towns on Friday to Asheville, where they'll assist with policing duties and disaster response. Zebulon Police Chief Jacqui Boykin, who sent three officers Sunday to Hendersonville, urged civilians to stay home.

"People want to go, they want to volunteer, they want to donate, and I would say, try to connect with a well-defined program that you're familiar with," she said. "As great as it is that everybody wants to fill their car and drive up there, now you're adding to the issues that they're having with traffic congestion and crashes, and maybe causing more issues."

FuquayVarinafirefighters.jpgFuquay-Varina firefighters Caleb Thompson, left, and Hunter Hartley, right, pose in front of their fire truck. Thompson and Hartley were sent to Polk County on Oct. 2, 2024, to assist in Hurricane Helene recovery efforts.

- « Wake County EMS: Three staff members as part of an Urban Search and Rescue team, four crew members and an ambulance.
- « Wake Fire Services and Emergency Management: A logistics team will spend two weeks in Buncombe County.
- « Wake County Sheriff's Office and Wake County EMS sent therapy dogs to support State Emergency Operations Center personnel and affected residents.
- « Zebulon: Three police officers, three firefighters.
- « Apex: Six utility personnel; four firefighters sent to McDowell County
- « Knightdale: The Knightdale Police Department sent a team to Asheville to help with policing duties, giving local officers a break. The town also sent a group of firefighters to Mitchell County, including part of the water rescue team that includes both Knightdale and Wake Forest firefighters. The team is clearing roads and helping with searches and emergency calls. A fresh group of water rescuers were sent on Sunday, Oct. 6.
- « Wake Forest: At least 12 firefighters sent to Bakersville are helping with search and rescue efforts, emergency calls and road-clearing.

Knightdale-Wake Forest water rescue team helene 2024Knightdale and Wake Forest sent members of their joint water rescue team to Mitchell County to help answer emergency calls and clear roads. The crews rescued a dog (pictured) with no collar and no apparent owner, and Lulu is now part of the team.

« Raleigh: Five water personnel sent to Asheville, 14 firefighters sent to Haywood County, eight firefighters sent to help the Asheville Fire Department. Sent three dump trucks and a pickup truck loaded with supplies, including 50 tons of pipes to repair water systems; a fire engine, a high-water rescue vehicle; and a logistics vehicle from the fire department

Update: On Friday, Oct. 11, nearly 40 members of the Raleigh Police Department are being deployed to Black Mountain, where they will remain until relieved by a second contingent of RPD officers and professional staff.

- « Cary: Eight firefighters from the swiftwater rescue team sent to Lenoir; nine firefighters sent to the Asheville Fire Department. Two utility managers and a deputy police chief sent to support State Emergency Operations Center in Hickory. Twelve police officers sent to Asheville.
- « Garner: Eight police officers sent to Asheville, four fire and rescue personnel sent to Mitchell County.

- « Rolesville: Five police officers sent to Hendersonville.
- « Fuquay-Varina: Two firefighters sent to the Columbus Fire Department in Polk County.
- « Holly Springs: IT Director Jeff Wilson was sent to the State Emergency Operations Center as part of an IT Strike Team programming radios for those in the field, coordinating dispatchers and setting up Starlink satellite dishes in areas without cell service. Four firefighters were sent to Mitchell County, and 12 police officers will head out Friday morning.
- « N.C. State University: Nine staff members sent to UNC Asheville.
- « UNC System Office: An unspecified number of IT experts were sent to UNC Asheville to restore internet service.

UNC Blue Ridge nurses 2024 heleneMegan McCormick, second from right, drove up with a group of nurses to Morganton, N.C., to help out in UNC Health Blue Ridge's emergency department. McCormick is the clinical leader of UNC Health Rex's emergency department.

#### **UNC Health**

- « Over 1,000 UNC Health employees from hospitals and clinics in Eastern North Carolina signed up to help their peers in Western North Carolina, at UNC Health Appalachian, UNC Health Pardee, UNC Health Blue Ridge and UNC Health Caldwell.
- « Hundreds of medical workers are already there and more will join them. "Their goal is to relieve some of the strain at those hospitals, and let employees who need to deal with their own storm-related issues at home get a break," UNC Health spokesman Alan Wolf said.
- « The group includes physicians, nurses and respiratory therapists. Another group of nurses drove up with an emergency department nurse from UNC Health Rex to help in the Blue Ridge hospital emergency department in Morganton.
- « IT experts were sent Friday to help restore power, phones and Internet at health facilities.
- « UNC Health is collecting supplies for the hospitals and surrounding communities, including water and nonperishable food.

Asheville Aldi-CHPDChapel Hill Police Department officers are helping the Asheville Police Department cover some shifts, answering calls and managing traffic on roads that remain hard to navigate, like this strip of U.S. 74 Business near the Swannanoa River.

# **Orange County**

Crews from across Orange County left Monday with cots, ready-to-eat meals and water, said Sarah Pickhardt, Division Chief of Emergency Management for Orange County Emergency Services.

Cash and supplies are needed, Pickhardt said, but people should donate through agencies already working in those communities, to avoid draining the limited resources available there.

It took Carrboro's fire crew seven hours to get to Transylvania County - normally a four-hour drive - because of closed roads and other people crowding the highway west, she said.

"I know the Orange County community is really, really gracious and giving, and there are a lot of supply drives going on, but right now, they're still very much in the response and trying to find people," she said. We really need to keep roads clear for critical commodities and first responders."

« Orange County sent two emergency managers and 11 EMS personnel to Buncombe County this week, joining four Orange Rural Fire Department firefighters sent Sept. 28 with a brush fire truck that can cover narrow roads, rough terrain and tight spaces.

Orange Rural Fire Dept chainsaws helene 2024Firefighters from the Orange Rural Fire Department arrived in Western North Carolina on Sept. 28 with a brush truck able to navigate narrow roads, rough terrain and tight spaces. The four-man crew will stay through Oct. 6, helping to clear roads and debris.

- « The Orange County Sheriff's Office sent eight deputies to Haywood County, west of Buncombe County.
- « Emergency Services Director Kirby Saunders, his team and the Sheriff's Office deputies are filling in so "completely exhausted" local folks can rest, Pickhardt said. EMS crews are helping out at the shelters, and firefighters are clearing roads with chainsaws and also covering fire department shifts.
- « The key mission for Orange County deputies is to boost public safety, Blackwood said. Local officials have already reported a murder and a "vicious assault" at the gas pumps in town, he said.
- "I expected bad, but I didn't realize it was going to be as bad as it was. It was just heartbreaking, and you're coming back trying to think about and analyze and try to make some sense of it all, but you're just kind of lost," he said.

CHPD Buncombe road clearingEmergency personnel and road crews were just beginning to clear this section of U.S. 74 Business through east Asheville this week. Chapel Hill police officers are helping Asheville police control traffic in areas where roads are unpassable.

#### Chapel Hill

- « Five Chapel Hill police officers went to Buncombe County on Monday to help the Asheville Police Department with traffic control and emergency calls. When they return home later this week, a fresh team could be dispatched.
- « Chapel Hill Police Department's Crisis Unit and an emergency management staff member are supporting first responders and staff at the state Emergency Operations Center. Another emergency management employee was sent to shelters in Asheville and Fletcher.
- « Chapel Hill Fire Department dispatched three firefighters to Haywood County, along with members of the N.C. Task Force 8 Regional Urban Search and Rescue Team, which includes firefighters from Chapel Hill, Durham and Raleigh. The rescue team moved out Sept. 26 to provide swift water rescue and help with structural rescues.

## Carrboro

« Four Carrboro firefighters and a fire engine headed out to Transylvania County, a remote area in the state's far west.

## Hillsborough

- « Hillsborough Public Works Manager Dustin Hill led a five-member team to Asheville on Thursday for a two-week stay during which they will clear roads and remove debris. The group includes a fleet mechanic and employees from the Public Works and Utilities departments.
- « The team packed food, water and gas, along with tools, two dump trucks and a backhoe, excavator, utility terrain vehicle and pickup trucks. They plan to sleep in a city building, town officials said.
- « Town Manager Eric Peterson is meeting virtually twice a week with other N.C. town managers experienced in

managing disasters to assist colleagues in affected areas. At least one town communications employee could also go.

Chatham Sheriff storm 2Four Chatham County Sheriff's Office deputies and a captain loaded generators, bottled water, ready-to-eat meals and cans of gas before leaving Pittsboro on Monday, Sept. 30, 2024, to join the storm recovery effort in Yancey County.

#### Chatham County

- « Five deputies and a captain from the Chatham County Sheriff's Office left Monday for Yancey County. The team took generators, bottled water and ready-to-eat meals with them.
- « Chatham County Emergency Management sent two staff members to help re-establish internet connectivity in emergency operations centers, and the Chatham County Department of Social Services is also helping where needed, a spokesman said.
- « North Chatham Fire Department sent firefighters with an engine truck.

"It's a statewide effort," Emergency Management Director Steve Newton said. "Every county that's not impacted is waiting to send equipment and personnel over. We'll have more personnel going west for the next several weeks."

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## • Citation (aglc Style)

Tammy Grubb, Lexi Solomon and Mary Helen Moore, News & Observer, "Help is on the way.' A town-by-town look at how the Triangle is aiding Western NC', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 3 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027CB7CBC0A0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027CB7CBC0A0</a>



# 'Incredible': Carolina Hurricanes raise \$300,000 for Western NC storm relief

October 3, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Chip Alexander, News & Observer | Section: carolina hurricanes | 533 Words OpenURL Link

Brendan Lemieux of the Carolina Hurricanes was gratified Wednesday to see Canes fans fill the Lenovo Center both to see a preseason hockey game, but more so to help others in need.

The Canes had announced that \$10 tickets would be sold to the preseason exhibition against the Nashville Predators. After Helene struck western counties in North Carolina last weekend, causing so much destruction and loss of life, Wednesday's game took on another meaning.

The Hurricanes said all ticket sales and donations would go to hurricane relief funds. Late in the game, it was announced almost \$280,000 had been raised and team president Doug Warf said after the game - a 6-4 loss to the Preds - that he expected the total to be closer to \$300,000.

Warf said Thursday the total had topped \$300,000. Some auction items are being offered on the Canes' website (nhl.com/hurricanes/) the next few weeks to continue to raise funds., he said.

Lemieux, who had a goal in Wednesday's game, called the overflow crowd of 18,700 and the financial support from the game "incredible."

"My mom's from Vilas, just outside of Boone," the forward said. "Our family is from there. My grandpa and my grandmother are buried there. We feel for all the people in Vilas and the surrounding areas.

"Western North Carolina has been hit so hard, and frankly I don't think there has been enough attention around it. It's sad because I was on the phone with a friend today and he said there's still people missing, still hundreds of unaccounted people presumed dead.

"It's mind-blowing to me that in our country something like this can happen. Obviously, I understand how remote and hard it is to access and for people to help. But it's scary and it's something we can all come together, whatever side of the aisle you're on, and get behind and support these people in dire need of help."

Lemieux, the son of former NHL forward Claude Lemieux, said neighbors of his parents had their house swept away by the flooding. He said he hopes to be able to find some time to go up and lend help.

Some former Hurricanes players, including defenseman Aaron Ward and goalie Cam Ward, joined the relief effort, gathering to help raise donations, food and other necessities. The group, Carolina NHL Hockey Alum, said Wednesday they would truck supplies to Hendersonville.

"I've been praying for these people," Lemieux said. "My family is very lucky to be safe. But the videos we got from our own porch, it's scary.

"I've never seen anything like it. I've never been around a hurricane of that magnitude or flooding like that. It's very scary."

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour also tried to put things in perspective after the game. Carolina, with a youthful lineup, played a Preds team packed with veterans and it showed in the play on the ice and the final score. But Brind'Amour, like Lemieux, praised the turnout and the financial support it provided.

"That's obviously the most important thing coming out of tonight," Brind'Amour said. "It's everyone coming

together and anything can help,." Brind'Amour said. "What's going on down there ... This is having fun. They're dealing with real stuff. Anything we can do to help is great."

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# • Citation (aglc Style)

Chip Alexander, News & Observer, "Incredible': Carolina Hurricanes raise \$300,000 for Western NC storm relief', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 3 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6955A37ADB920>



# They were in the basement frantically preparing for a flood. Then the landslide hit.

October 3, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Martha Quillin, News & Observer | Section: north carolina | 750 Words OpenURL Link

Kelli Ball felt the landslide in the bones of her chest before she could see it.

She and her husband, Dakota, were in the basement of their house on Stony Fork Road trying to move stuff out of the way of the rising water. The water was coming from the creek behind the house, normally a little trickle way down the hill, that had climbed the bank Friday morning with all the rain from the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

barnardsville\_08.JPGZach Banks places a bag of dog food inside Marty Dillingham's home in Barnardsville, N.C. on Wednesday, October 2, 2024.

Their boys, Canaan, 8, and Macon, 4, were upstairs on the couch.

It was around 10 a.m. The family had been awake since 5 a.m., and all morning, the mountains around them had been groaning in the deluge.

"If you've not experienced a flood in the mountains, you just hear these boulders rolling and trees breaking and it just rumbles in the mountains," Kelli said. "It echoes everywhere. We had been hearing that all morning."

barnardsville\_05.JPGDakota Ball looks out where a landslide came in next to his home in Barnardsville, N.C. on Wednesday, October 2, 2024.

The flooding was happening all around Barnardsville, a farming community in Buncombe County north of Asheville along the normally friendly Big Ivy River and laced with creeks that come down from the hills. The Big Ivy itself was coming out of its banks and spreading all over the lowland, snatching double-wide mobile homes and stick-built houses off their foundations and sending them downstream in shards. It emptied out a catfish pond. It blew out a wall of the local diner.

In the Balls' basement, the water was just coming up too fast, and Kelli told Dakota, "We've got to go. We've got to go!" And ran upstairs.

That's when she felt the vibration in her breastbone.

She reached the living room, with its big windows that look across Stony Fork Road at a hay field, then up at a mountain that's part of Pisgah National Forest, just as the mountain turned loose a river of boulders and trees and mud.

It was heading hundreds of yards downhill, coming for the Balls' house, with the potential to also take out Dakota's parents' house, on one side of them, or his grandmother's, on the other.

They had picked this site when they built the home in 2019 because it was on high ground.

"We thought it was the safest place," Dakota said.

barnardsville\_01.JPGDakota Ball, left and his wife, Kelli, stand in the area next to their home where a landslide came through in Barnardsville, N.C. on Wednesday, October 2, 2024.

When Kelli saw - and felt - the liquified mountain coming at her family, she screamed at Dakota, who was still in the

basement: "Landslide!"

She grabbed the boys and went out the front door just as a whole tree slammed into the house, jamming under the porch.

"It was like a runaway freight train coming down that mountain," Kelli said.

The boys jumped from the porch and first the family started to run to the right, "but the slide kept coming," so they decided to go the other way. By then, Dakota's parents had run outside. Separated by the flow of mud and debris several feet deep running between their two houses, "We formed a human chain and just passed our babies across that river," as rocks and branches ran across their bare feet in the flowing mud.

barnardsville\_06.JPGCanaan Ball, 8, looks at his grandmother's backyard from her porch in Barnardsville, N.C. on Wednesday, October 2, 2024.

Dakota Ball said the slide opened up two new springs in the front yard, and he and others had used a track hoe to reroute them into one stream running beside the driveway and toward the creek behind the house. The couple had stripped the drywall in the basement, and with the help of people of Barnardsville, had cut enough of the scattered trees to move around in the yard.

A few miles down the road, in Barnardsville proper, volunteers were sorting donations of canned corn and taco shells and bottled water at the old four-bay building that used to house the volunteer fire department. The community, routed by water, already was rebuilding its washed-out roads using equipment on loan from Brock Mountain, a local construction company.

Owners of ATVs were shuttling residents where they needed to go because cars and pavement had been washed away.

"We're lucky," Kelli Ball said. "We're alive."

barnardsville\_10.JPGA man rides on the back of a four wheeler in Barnardsville, N.C. on Wednesday, October 2, 2024.

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Martha Quillin, News & Observer, 'They were in the basement frantically preparing for a flood. Then the landslide hit.', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 3 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027CAEF17C90>



# 1 Morganton man killed, 1 injured in crash with tree downed by Hurricane Helene wind

October 3, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Chrissy Murphy| Section: Local | 152 Words OpenURL Link

A tree downed by winds from Hurricane Helene killed a driver and critically injured his passenger in a wreck on Sept. 27, near Drexel.

Nick Mitchell, 52, of Morganton, was driving on Summers Road near Drexel Road about 8:30 p.m. when he hit a low-hanging tree that had dropped across the road earlier in the day, said 1st Sgt. D.J. Wakefield with the North Carolina State Highway Patrol.

Mitchell was killed in the crash, Wakefield said. A passenger, 50-year-old Michael Sparks, was critically injured and taken to a Winston-Salem hospital for treatment.

Crews spent about 30 to 40 minutes trying to remove Mitchell and Sparks from the vehicle, Wakefield said. It wasn't raining at the time of the crash, but it was windy and dark because of the power outages in the area.

Wakefield said while troopers spent most of the day Friday responding to wrecks during the hurricane, this was the most serious crash.

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Chrissy Murphy, '1 Morganton man killed, 1 injured in crash with tree downed by Hurricane Helene wind', *News Herald, The* (online), 3 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFBEDBA5832A28>



# Burke County sets up distribution center for those in need

October 3, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: SHARON MCBRAYER smcbrayer@morganton.com| Section: News| 1322 Words OpenURL Link

Burke County hit the ground running Monday collecting and distributing items to residents in need after the remnants of Hurricane Helene impacted the area. A supplies collection and distribution center has been set up at Foothills Higher Education Center in Morganton. After some problems early in the week, the hospital system is fully operational as of Monday afternoon.

Burke County government

Burke County has set up a donation and distribution location at Foothills Higher Education Center in Morganton. The center is located at 2128 S Sterling St., Morganton. County officials said there has been an outpouring of donations.

Burke County Manager Brian Epley said two tractor-trailer loads of donations were handed out by Monday afternoon. Some of the donations included food, diapers, clothes, dog food and drinking water.

A dedicated team organized to manage all donation-related activity, from drop-offs to distribution for those in need.

Epley said donations are coming from across the country. He said donations are being accepted from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day and will be distributing needed items from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day.

"We are deeply appreciative of the continued generosity and support from our community as we work together in the recovery from Hurricane Helene," a release from the county said.

One tractor-trailer was dropped off by Person County Sheriff Jason Wilborn and several volunteers on Monday.

Wilborn started taking supplies to areas damaged by hurricanes in 2016, and the community in Person County, in eastern North Carolina, threw its support into the mission, he said.

"I know they would return the favor if I ever needed help," Wilborn said.

The supplies were carried over in a trailer owned by Dewey Jones, a retired sheriff of Person County.

"I've done 35 years in law enforcement, been a fireman for 43 years," Jones said. "It's just in my blood to help people when they need help. That's what its all about, is helping one another, helping your neighbors. We don't get in the job for money, we get in it to help people."

Wilborn first contacted Burke County Sheriff Banks Hinceman shortly after the storm hit on Friday.

"We've seen damage that we've never seen before," Hinceman said. "Both flooding and just damage to structures, infrastructure, highways, bridges. We've just never seen this."

For any questions or to reach the Donation Team, call 828764-3204.

If you are in need of volunteer services or would like to volunteer to assist, contact the volunteer hotline at 828-7647068. Phone lines will be open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily to ensure timely support for those requesting or offering help, the release from the county said.

Volunteer services include property cleanup, animal care and food assistance for those affected by the hurricane.

## Storm debris cleanup

Burke County asked residents to not take storm debris to the county landfill. The county has contracted with a hauler to manage debris collection directly from residential areas. The county said in a release that the contracted hauler will make two to three passes through affected areas throughout the county to ensure all debris is collected. Residents do not need to be present for pickup.

Residents are asked to separate the debris into three categories, which are:

- Vegetation
- White goods (appliances such as refrigerators, washers, dryers, etc.)
- Building materials (construction debris, wood, drywall)

That debris should be moved to the right-of-way on the road.

For help moving debris to the right-of-way, call 828-764-7068.

"Please be patient as the county works to manage the cleanup," a release from the county said. "While we are making every effort to remove debris as quickly as possible, the large volume of material may cause some delays."

Meeting, event canceled

The Burke County Board of Commissioners announced Monday that its pre-agenda meeting originally set for Tuesday has been canceled, along with the groundbreaking ceremonies for the EMS base headquarters and the animal shelter on Friday.

The commissioners regular meeting on Oct. 15 will go ahead as planned.

The Valdese Town Council also canceled its pre-agenda meeting that was set for Monday. Town officials said the council will hold its regular meeting on Oct. 7.

Town of Valdese

Valdese Mayor Charlie Watts said the water plant is back up running, and the boil advisory for Valdese customers remained in place Monday. Watts said that advisory should end Tuesday. The boil advisory remains in place for the rest of Burke County, according to alerts from the county on Monday.

Watts said people still need to be conservative with their water use because there is only one pump working at the water plant.

Watts is asking residents to be patient in getting their power restored. He said Valdese Public Works and Duke Energy are working to get power restored to the town.

Watts said he saw at least 15 power trucks in the town on Monday morning.

"They're working all over town trying to clear debris out of the lines and restore power," Watts said. "I'm just asking people to be patient because them guys and our town employees are all working as fast and as hard as they can."

Watts said when he saw the trucks, they were awaiting orders from Duke Energy.

The town recreation center and the Old Rock School are closed because of a lack of power. Valdese Town Hall is

open after power was restored on Monday. Lakeside Park is closed until further notice due to downed trees, Watts said.

The Old Rock School was set up Monday as a landing point for federal helicopters to get supplies further west.

It is not, however, a drop-point for donations from the community, Watts said.

Hospitals in Burke

Danette Brackett, a spokesperson and executive director of business development for UNC Health Blue Ridge, said the health system wants to reassure the community that the hospital remains fully operational and well-prepared to care for patients.

To address the impacts of Hurricane Helene, UNC Health Blue Ridge has established an incident command center at the Morganton hospital campus, Brackett said.

"Although we initially lost power at both our Morganton and Valdese campuses, our generators immediately took over, and power has since been restored," Brackett said. "We also experienced a temporary water outage at Morganton, but thanks to a contractual agreement, we are transporting potable water from Catawba County until the city of Morganton fully restores service. Importantly, this has not affected patient care."

For the safety of the community, Brackett said the hospital system has temporarily canceled non-emergency surgeries until it's safe to resume normal operations and staff can safely return to work.

She said the hospital is also assessing outpatient clinics for any damage or utility outages. The clinics will reopen as soon as possible.

On Monday, Valdese Express Care, Cajun Mountain Express Care and McDowell Express Care reopened.

"Thanks to the support of UNC Health, which has provided additional personnel and resources, our staffing has remained stable despite some team members being unable to work due to damage to their homes," Brackett said.

"We have not encountered any shortages of food or supplies. We are incredibly grateful for the way our community has come together during this challenging time. Please continue to check our website and social media for regular updates if you have internet access."

The hospital system also says adult residents 18 years old and older of western North Carolina can see a UNC Health primary care provider for mild symptoms without an appointment through UNC Health Virtual Care Now free of charge for those impacted by Hurricane Helene.

You can get in line for Virtual Care Now through My UNC Chart. Virtual services are available 6 a.m. – 10 p.m. seven days a week.

How to apply for FEMA assistance

Did you experience damage from Tropical Storm Helene? If you live in Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes or Yancey counties or are a tribal member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, FEMA may be able to help with serious needs, displacement, home repair or other expenses.

To apply, go online to DisasterAssistance.gov, use the FEMA app for mobile devices or call 800-621-3362.

# • Citation (aglc Style)

SHARON MCBRAYER smcbrayer@morganton.com, 'Burke County sets up distribution center for those in need', *News Herald, The* (online), 3 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA41A3A814798">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA41A3A814798</a>



# Hurricane Helene flooding left Marion restaurant caked in mud. "We're just at a loss."

October 3, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Chrissy Murphy cmurphy@morganton.com| Section: News| 789 Words OpenURL Link

J. Hartman's restaurant on U.S. Highway 70 in Marion closed up shop Thursday, Sept. 26, after emergency management officials came by the restaurant urging people to evacuate.

With Hurricane Helene headed toward western North Carolina, heavy wind, rain and flooding were in store. Owners Jennifer and Jon Hartman were at home on the lake trying to tie off their dock to keep it from floating away if flood waters rose too high.

"We had no idea," Jennifer said. "Just like anybody else, we didn't know the water was going to come up that high, and I felt like we were pretty safe."

The couple didn't see the restaurant again until photos started popping up on social media of flood damage.

"Someone sent me a picture of the aerial view of the restaurant. ... I was just like, 'Oh my gosh,'" Jennifer said. "I came in here the next morning. At that point, one of my daughters and my in-laws were here, and they were standing on the porch and I could just see the mud. ... My mother-in-law said, she said, 'Prepare yourself ... because it's bad.' I walked in and it was just a disaster ... I was absolutely devastated."

She said mud was covering the floor, booth seats and chairs were strewn around the restaurant.

"This restaurant's ran by myself, my husband, my two daughters, and we've got 60 staff members here," Jennifer said. "It's our livelihood, but it's the 60 staff members' livelihoods. That's been one of my biggest concerns, is how quickly can we reopen to get them back to work."

She said they've hit roadblocks ever since the storm hit.

"We just keep getting hit with more and more bad news," Jennifer said. "Insurance isn't going to cover any of the property damage. The building owner, their insurance isn't going to cover any of the parking lot cleanup. They're not going to cover any of the property damage inside. We're just at a loss."

The restaurant's next steps are unclear. She said they had to throw away about \$30,000 worth of food, filling up two dumpsters, and she doesn't know where to begin with the cleaning process for everything in the building after the water came in and contaminated everything.

"People are worried about their livelihoods," Jennifer said. "We've got an amazing staff and I don't want them to feel lost or worried. Everybody's got so much loss and worry as it is. Them coming back to work is one of our biggest priorities, and I don't know how to do it."

Her mom, Toni Hodge, came up from Albermarle to help with storm cleanup. Hodge said she was worried about small businesses like J. Hartman's after the storm. She said she felt like big corporations would be able to recover, but small businesses may struggle with little help from insurance and limited resources.

"You have to weigh so many options," Hodge said. "I think it can be done. I just think it's gonna be a long time."

While things seem bleak, employees and other community volunteers have been coming in to help clean up since Hurricane Helene hit Friday. By Tuesday afternoon, the floors were clear of any mud and most of the store's furnishings had been moved outside to be rinsed off.

"It's incredibly humbling," Jennifer said. "I don't know how else to describe it."

Pepper Strode, a manager at J. Hartman's, and Angeles Amable, a cook, were two of the employees who were helping with the cleanup at the restaurant Tuesday.

"It's how I pay my bills and I love this family," Strode said. "They're some of the best people I've ever worked for and I want to see this restaurant get back up and running."

Both cried when they saw the restaurant.

"My second home is here," Amable said.

Jennifer's sister, Laura Stotts, posted ways to donate on her Instagram account @diaryof\_abandonment. By Tuesday afternoon, Stotts said about \$1,000 had been donated to the restaurant and another \$1,000 had been pledged. Some of the donations came from people who have never met the Hartmans or visited the restaurant.

"There's a whole lot of good people out there," Jennifer said.

She said in the first few days after the storm she felt numb, but seeing all the volunteers coming to help clean up changed that.

"I've been very emotional today. ... The first couple days I was completely numb, no emotion whatsoever, just like a zombie," Jennifer said. "And then the last few days, I can't stop crying."

Brandy Pittman originally headed to Grace Community Church to volunteer, but when the church had enough volunteers for the day, she pivoted to J. Hartman's. She made a call to Nebo Crossing Academy Administrator Dave Likins to get more volunteers on the way for cleanup.

"They're our people," Pittman said. "You don't leave your people hanging."

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# Volunteers, military provide aid to western NC

October 3, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com| Section: News| 582 Words OpenURL Link

Hickory Regional Airport is seeing increased traffic as state and federal governments, nonprofits and local residents come together for western North Carolina relief.

Matt McSwain with Acme Aero in Maiden said he was coordinating with Operation Airdrop to take supplies to areas affected by the remnants of Hurricane Helene, which was a tropical storm by the time it hit western North Carolina on Friday.

"With us being local, they knew we were boots on the ground, so they contacted us to get this thing up and running until they get here," McSwain said. "We've got volunteer helicopters from all over the East Coast."

In addition to delivering supplies, McSwain said the organization is working on extracting people. On Sunday, McSwain said the organization took about 60 trips to the mountains and extracted about 50 people in need of medical attention.

Hickory Deputy City Manager Rodney Miller said injured survivors were being triaged at the Hickory airport before being sent to area hospitals.

On Sunday, evacuees from Lees-McRae College were brought to Hickory in military helicopters.

Helene dropped as much as 30 inches of rain on some communities in the western part of the state Thursday night and Friday, causing flooding and mudslides that have left some communities inaccessible by ground.

"Here's the truth: We're doing something that hasn't been done before, especially in this area," McSwain told volunteers at a meeting Monday morning. "We're basically taking a civilian rotorcraft operation and making it basically a military operation until the military get here for us to stand down."

Before releasing pilots, McSwain mentioned the difficulty of their mission due to the rugged terrain. He also warned those in the air about the dangers of drones trying to get pictures and videos of the devastation in the mountains.

Other organizations were at the airport to assist with search-and-rescue missions and extraction.

Members of the U.S. Army 82nd Airborne Division from Fort Liberty, North Carolina, were also on hand to assist pilots.

Chad Walton with Carolina Emergency Response Team, a North Carolina nonprofit, said his organization would assist in medical evacuations and providing wellness checks.

Gideon Rescue, an Oklahoma-based organization, brought four dogs and three team members to the Hickory airport. The team members were going to Newland for search and rescue.

Donations pour in

Catawba County United Way Executive Director Mark Bumgarner said the agency is collecting bottled water, infant and adult diapers, baby formula and wipes.

Donations were being dropped off at the Hickory airport over the weekend. Monday morning, the city of Hickory

said donations were no longer being accepted at the Hickory airport.

As of Monday, United Way has three drop-off locations and are working on securing other locations for donations.

Bumgarner said people should bring supplies to one of the designated sites because the airport was getting too busy.

Bumgarner said he understood people wanted to help, but it was imperative people only bring needed items.

"People are bringing stuff that's not helpful, and it's slowing down the process," Bumgarner said.

Bumgarner added first aid supplies, personal hygiene supplies and bar soap were critical needs. He said people should not bring heavier items, such as clothes, shoes and mattress covers.

"If you're going to bring food, the only food you should bring are individually wrapped snacks," Bumgarner said.

"The boxes of Lance crackers ... things you can unwrap, things that are single serving. Again, keep weight in mind.

The lighter the better."

Bumgarner said weight was a factor because supplies have to be airlifted into remote areas only accessible by air.

Billy Chapman is a reporter for the Hickory Daily Record. wchapman@hickoryrecord.com

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## Rev. David Hawkins

October 3, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Rev David Hawkins | 182 Words OpenURL Link

Rev. David Hawkins, 70, of Lincolnton, NC, passed away on Monday, September 30, 2024. He was born on June 27, 1954, in Burke County, to the late Perry Hawkins and Lila Ruth Greene Hawkins. He was a member of Oak Hill United Methodist Church and last served at Marvin United Methodist Church and Palm Tree United Methodist Church.

Rev. Hawkins is survived by his wife, Judy Hamrick Hawkins; daughter, Katy Waddell (Nathaniel); sister, Deborah Morgan (Randy); grandchildren, Bella Waddell and Davidson Waddell; mother and father-in-law, Bill and Carolyn Hamrick.

The family will receive friends from 2 to 3 p.m., on Thursday, October 3, 2024, at Sossoman Funeral Home. A memorial service will follow at 3 p.m., in the Colonial Chapel of the funeral home, with CLS Sahara Hamilton officiating.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Hurricane Helene Recovery Effort, https://my-site-105273-102975. square.site/. If you prefer to donate by check, please make payable to Ashe County Advantage Project and note "Hurricane Helene Recovery" in the memo, and mail to Ashe County Advantage Project, PO Box 31, West Jefferson, NC 28694.

## SOSSOMAN FUNERAL HOME www.sossomanfh.com

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# Hawkins, David

October 3, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Obituaries | 188 Words OpenURL Link

Rev. David Hawkins

June 27, 1954 - September 30, 2024

Rev. David Hawkins, 70, of Lincolnton, NC, passed away on Monday, September 30, 2024. He was born on June 27, 1954, in Burke County, to the late Perry Hawkins and Lila Ruth Greene Hawkins. He was a member of Oak Hill United Methodist Church and last served at Marvin United Methodist Church and Palm Tree United Methodist Church.

Rev. Hawkins is survived by his wife, Judy Hamrick Hawkins; daughter, Katy Waddell (Nathaniel); sister, Deborah Morgan (Randy); grandchildren, Bella Waddell and Davidson Waddell; mother and father-in-law, Bill and Carolyn Hamrick.

The family will receive friends from 2 to 3 p.m., on Thursday, October 3, 2024, at Sossoman Funeral Home. A memorial service will follow at 3 p.m., in the Colonial Chapel of the funeral home, with CLS Sahara Hamilton officiating.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Hurricane Helene Recovery Effort, https://my-site-105273-102975.square.site/. If you prefer to donate by check, please make payable to Ashe County Advantage Project and note "Hurricane Helene Recovery" in the memo, and mail to Ashe County Advantage Project, PO Box 31, West Jefferson, NC 28694.

Sossoman Funeral Home

www.sossomanfh.com

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Staff Writer, 'Hawkins, David', *News Herald, The* (online), 3 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA41A75FB5218>



# Roads, bridges in Burke and McDowell counties affected by Hurricane Helene

October 3, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: Sharon McBrayer | Section: Government Politics | 404 Words OpenURL Link

The North Carolina Department of Transportation said that travel to western North Carolina is limited to local and hurricane response traffic.

NCDOT said motorists cannot get from North Carolina to Tennessee via Interstate 40 or Interstate 26.

And there are some roads in Burke and McDowell counties that have been damaged or impacted by the storm.

Burke County roads closed

Daivd Uchiyama, a spokesperson for NCDOT, said bridges on U.S. and N.C. routes in Burke County have been inspected and officials are currently examining bridges on secondary routes.

The roads in Burke County that have been affected:

Clark Loop is impassable in both directions due to pipe failure. Rose Carswell Road is closed due to bridge failure. Oakland Avenue near Enon Drive is closed due to trees in the road. N.C. Highway 126 at the county line, the bridge over Old Catawba Creek is closed, on the south side of Lake James, around the corner from Lake James Community Church. N.C. Highway 126, near Benfield Landing Bridge is closed due to structural damage. The road is expected to re-open once repairs are made. That could be anytime through Nov. 30, according to NCDOT. N.C. Highway 126 near Parks Drive the westbound lane is closed due to shoulder failure. Work on it was expected to be done between Tuesday and Nov. 30, according to NCDOT. Enola, Near JP Hawkins Circle in Connelly Springs is closed due to power line utility work. Work started early Wednesday and is expected to be completed Thursday evening.

McDowell County roads closed

In McDowell County, bridges that have been affected are:

Interstate 40 near Parker Padgett Road east of Old Fort at mile marker 75 heading east, the right lane is closed. Interstate 40 east and westbound, near Catawba Avenue in Old Fort at mile marker 73 to 66 at Dunsmore Avenue, is down to one lane due to a mud slide and downed trees. The issue should be resolved by Oct. 10.U.S. Highway 221, near U.S. Highway 221 N in Woodlawn, is closed in both directions due to a mud slide and downed trees. The impact to traffic is considered high and the estimated date the issue should be resolved is Oct. 10.Tatertown Loop in Marion is closed in both directions due to a pipe repair. It is expected to be resolved by Oct. 10.Deepcove Spring Drive in Marion closed in both directions due to pipe failure going to water plant on Clear Creek Road. Issue expected to be resolved by Oct. 10.

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Sharon McBrayer, 'Roads, bridges in Burke and McDowell counties affected by Hurricane Helene', *News Herald, The* (online), 3 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA41A047EE8D0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA41A047EE8D0</a>



# Burke County Schools still closed Monday and Tuesday; Boil advisory still in place for Burke

October 3, 2024 | News Herald, The (Morganton, NC) Author: From staff reports| Section: Education| 687 Words OpenURL Link

Burke County Public Schools will be closed for students on Monday and Tuesday, according to an email from Public Relations Officer Cheryl Shuffler. Monday and Tuesday will be optional workdays for staff.

The schools have been closed all week after the remnants of Hurricane Helene hit the area.

"While most of our schools are back and up and running with power, water and internet, in talking with law enforcement, emergency personnel and other county leaders, we are concerned about the numerous roadways in the county that are still impassable, lack shoulders, are down to one lane or have power lines across them," Shuffler said. "It is not in the best interest of our county to add school traffic to these roads and already strained emergency response services."

Monday's Board of Education meeting will still take place at 6 p.m., Shuffler said.

"YMCA before- and after-school (care) will be open at Ray Childers, Hildebran, Salem, Valdese, Mountain View and Oak Hill," Shuffler said. "You must be enrolled at Mountain View and Oak Hill to attend those sites. You do not have to be enrolled to attend the other locations. ... These will be available on first-come-first-serve basis."

For more information regarding the YMCA, visit ymcacv.org, Shuffler said.

Burke County boil advisory

A boil water advisory remains in effect for water customers who get water from Burke County Government.

The boil water advisory is in place until further notice, according to the county. The advisory applies only to customers who get their water bills from Burke County. It does not include water customers of Morganton, Valdese, Brentwood or Icard, the county said Thursday. Morganton, Valdese, Brentwood and Icard water no longer have boil advisories for customers.

Burke County water customers should boil all water used for drinking, cooking and preparing food for at least one minute to make sure it is safe to consume.

Power outages in Burke County

As of Thursday at 1 p.m., 33% of people in Burke County were without power, according to poweroutage.us.

The city of Morganton said it would be working on several streets on Thursday:

Forest Hill StreetAsheville StreetRiverside DriveRaintree Lane off of Jamestown RoadCarbon City Road area

There are service trucks starting to hook power back to individual houses, a release from the city said. There were 2,200 still without power Thursday, down from the original outage number of 8,800, the release said.

The city has suspended utility late fees and disconnection utility fees before Oct. 1, the city said.

The city is also creating payment plans for customers.

Storm trash and debris

Garbage pickup has resumed a normal schedule for Morganton.

Burke County has hired a debris hauling service for the entire county to collect storm debris and trash. The debris can be placed on the side of the road in three piles: vegetation, white goods and building materials. The hauler will make two to three trips in each area, according to Burke County.

Debris should not be taken to the landfill.

Where to get food, water, supplies

Burke County established new points of distribution for emergency supplies throughout the county on Tuesday.

The supplies include water, nonperishable food, toiletries, diapers, baby wipes, batteries and other essential items. The items are available at no cost, the county said.

The county said there are no time constraints for accessing the items; if you see someone at the distribution point, you are welcome to stop and collect the items you need.

The new locations are:

George Hildebran Fire/Rescue, 7470 George Hildebran School Road, Connelly Springs.Longtown Fire Department, 7765 South Mountain Institute Road, Nebo.Enola Fire/Rescue, 2510 Enola Road, MorgantonJonas Ridge Fire Department, 8224 Buckeye Hollow Road, Newland.

Need a shower?

Phifer Family YMCA is open to the public for showers or to charge electronics. The center is opened from 5:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. No exercise or swimming activities are currently taking place at the center, according to the YMCA.

It is located at 2165 S. Sterling St., Morganton.

The Valdese Recreation Department has opened to allow the public to shower for free. People using the showers are asked to bring their own towel and toiletries, the town said.

The showers are available from 5:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Call 828-879-2132 for details.

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# 6,000 MREs delivered to Collettsville and other Helene recovery updates

October 3, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com| Section: Archives | 707 Words OpenURL Link

Caldwell County continues to recover from the impact of tropical storm Helene across communities and organizations. Here are some new developments from the recovery process.

#### Power

According to FindEnergy.com, which collects data from both Blue Ridge Energy and Duke Energy, 7,453 of Caldwell County's 41,100 energy customers remain without power as of 10:45 a.m. on October 3. 4,289 of these customers are Duke Energy's and 2,557 are Blue Ridge Energy's. FindEnergy also included 607 customers of Rutherford Electric in its numbers.

## Caldwell County

Caldwell County announced via social media that county crews were able to deliver 6,000 MREs, as well as supplies, to the Kings Creek, Patterson and Collettsville communities.

According to a Wednesday press release, debris pick up for all of Caldwell County will begin on Monday. Debris should be separated into three piles, vegetation, construction debris, and items like furniture or hot water heaters. Items should be placed beside of the road, but it should not block ditches, fire hydrants, or drains. Additionally, debris should not be placed under overhead utility lines. Those who have suffered storm damage can apply for FEMA assistance online by visiting disasterassistance.gov, by calling 800-621-3362 or by downloading the FEMA app.

In a social media post, the county urged residents to be wary of scams or frauds taking advantage of the situation post-disaster. The post directed users to nclbg.org to learn more.

An emergency meeting was held by the Caldwell County Board of Commissioners the evening of Oct. 2, in which the board authorized the county to enter into a contract for warehouse space, which will be used to store recovery materials and supplies, both for the county and for those regions farther west that have suffered greater damages.

The board also authorized a budget revision for \$2.31 million of spending for debris pickup, supplies and other emergency spending that either has been or must be made in response to Helene. The funds are anticipated to be reimbursable through the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The county has updated its website with links to information on volunteering in the county. Helene volunteers are asked to fill an application through caldwellcountync.org/497/Volunteer in order to assist with recovery efforts. . Caldwell County public information officer Paige Counts said the county is overwhelmed with individuals wishing to volunteer and is looking for appropriate placements for all volunteers.

Donation information can be found at caldwellcountync.org/496/Donations and donations are still being accepted at Lower Creek Baptist Church. Any donations the county cannot use will be distributed further west, Counts said.

"The generosity of our neighbors has been absolutely amazing," she continued.

"We can't say thank you enough."

The county continues to encourage residents to fill out the damage assessment forms found online at

caldwellcountync.org/494/Helene to help the county get an accurate understanding of the restoration work that needs to be done in the days to come.

#### Caldwell County Schools

Caldwell schools remain closed through Friday, Oct. 4, as optional teacher workdays.

Gamewell Elementary School, Hudson Middle School and William Lenoir Middle School are open as feeding sites on Thursday and Friday, Oct. 3 and 4. Hot meals will be served from 12 to 2 p.m. for anyone 18 or younger. The sites are primarily run by Caldwell school system faculty and staff.

#### **Granite Falls**

Granite Falls town manager Danial Cobb said that, although the town's electrical system was damaged, all but two power customers had power restored by 5 a.m. on Saturday. Most roads were reopened on Saturday and there were no problems with water and wastewater treatment.

Town parks saw flooding and fallen trees, but no damages to structors or the Lakeside Park boat access. Cobb noted that trees have fallen across walking trails. Cobb said there were no injuries to town staff throughout the event.

"We sent Police Officers to Marion to provide additional support to their folks," Cobb said, "and a crew from our Electric Department has been in Morganton for several days assisting with their electric line repairs. We also sent a bucket truck to Lenior to help clear roads. Overall, we were very lucky, and our staff did a phenomenal job responding to the storm and keeping services going."

## Other Resources and Information

Shea Bolick of Caldwell County Schools has developed a list of resources offered by the community to ensure access to food, power, showers, laundry, communications and other important resources.

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# • Citation (aglc Style)

SHELBY POWELL spowell@newstopicnews.com, '6,000 MREs delivered to Collettsville and other Helene recovery updates', *News-Topic, The* (online), 3 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C04CA12B8EA280>



# Hurricane Helene and helping hands

October 3, 2024 | News-Topic, The (Lenoir, NC) Author: BO WAGNER Columnist| Section: Archives | 864 Words OpenURL Link

Where to even begin, with a column like this...

Hurricane Helene. The impact has been pretty devastating and over a massive area. The mountains of Western North Carolina, just a short drive up the road from me, seem to have been the hardest hit. Chimney Rock Village, an iconic little town I have enjoyed since my childhood, is simply gone. Other areas are cut off entirely as I write this, accessible only by air. Our area was hit, but not nearly so hard. Trees are down everywhere, and power to my town, the church I pastor, and my house is expected to be out for more than a week.

There have been reasons to smile through it all. We live on the Broad River, which flooded to a historic level. It did not reach our house. It did put my barn halfway underwater. We parked our vehicles at the top of our road so we could hopefully get out if needed — a massive oak tree from way across the road decided to kamikaze it. Our driveway ended up under a six-foot deep, sixty-foot wide flood of water from what is normally a tiny creek running under it and into the river. We used kayaks to get back and forth across it. My son, the perfect dog dad, kayaked himself and his full-grown German Shepherd across the water. Seeing that dog sit in his lap as he paddled across is a sight I will not soon forget.

Our twenty-year-old generator has performed like a champ. We can't run much off of it, but we have been able to have a few lights, internet, periodically run the fridge and freezer to hopefully save what we can, and charge phones and flashlights.

Sunday, September 29, though, was a banner day. With no power at the church, we nonetheless met at 10:00 AM and, using propane-powered griddles, made a pancake breakfast for anyone who came, which included a lot of folks from the community who had not been able to get a decent meal for a while. Then we worshiped the Lord; that is always appropriate. From there, we divided up into several different teams and headed out into the community with chainsaws, cases of water, and other supplies. At least two other churches had sent people down to help with this effort, which we had announced only the night before. We went to eight different homes and started cutting and removing trees from roofs and driveways and bringing supplies to those who needed them.

I had not even thought of lunch; it simply never occurred to me. But our ladies had. By about 1:00, when the first wave of work was done, we started heading back to the church to regroup. When we arrived, we found lunch ready and waiting for us. Then it was back out to other locations. One group of us went to a Children's Home to deal with two massive downed trees. Another headed for Hendersonville for a similar task.

I had not thought of supper, either. How is it possible to miss things like that? Our ladies, though, were way, way ahead of me. Not only had they thought of it, they had also put out a notice on social media that they would be serving supper to anyone in the community who needed a meal. By the time we got back, they had served more than 250 meals to our town and those from neighboring communities.

I am blessed; I have incredibly good people.

As I write this, other churches are gathering supplies to send our way for us both to use here and to forward on to areas harder hit than our own. People we know, and even people we do not know, have been sending money for relief efforts. And please pay close attention to what I say next because it is one of the main things I want to convey: we are not the only ones doing things like this. Churches all over the place are doing things like this. Some, in fact, are dwarfing our best efforts.

And this is why I so deeply love God's people in local churches all over the place. They are the hands and feet of Jesus in this world. They give selflessly, love unconditionally, and do so without seeking fanfare or applause. In all of the work done yesterday, I never saw a single person take a selfie; they just worked like dogs for others, not caring about the fact that they themselves would be going home to darkened houses with no power.

So, to churches and pastors everywhere who are both holding the line on Biblical truth and ministering to the daily needs of people around you, I say thank you. Both sides of that coin are part and parcel of what it means to be a Christian. James 1:27 put it this way, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Keep preaching the truth, keep spreading the gospel, keep doing right, keep serving and loving others, and know that I am for you, and I appreciate you.

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# UNC Health Southeastern supports Western NC health systems impacted by Hurricane Helene - Food, supplies, volunteers bring relief in western North Caroina

October 3, 2024 | Robesonian, The (Lumberton, NC) Author: The Robesonian | Section: developing-news news news-main top-stories | 980 Words OpenURL Link

LUMBERTON — UNC Health Southeastern was greatly impacted by Hurricanes Matthew and Florence, with challenges including access to water supply, flooding, and availability of personnel who were impacted by the storms

Knowing some of the challenges that are facing the western North Carolina hospitals and health systems who are working around the clock to provide health care to residents of that region so devastated by Hurricane Helene makes lending support an easy decision, hospital officials said Wednesday.

Hundreds of UNC Health Southeastern teammates have expressed a willingness to travel to the region to provide care. So far, a number of professional team members including physicians, resident physicians, nurses and respiratory therapists have been deployed to sister UNC Health hospitals to provide care, with more to be deployed in the coming weeks.

UNC Health Southeastern President and CEO Chris Ellington said he was overwhelmed with the number of teammates immediately volunteering their availability to assist those in need.

"Dr. Vincent Ohaju, a second-year family medicine resident, and I have been deployed to UNC Health Blue Ridge in Morganton for a three-day assignment," said Dr. Joseph Roberts, UNC Health Southeastern chief medical officer. "Their hospital had lost power and water for two days but now have services returned. We are assigned the emergency department and have allowed their outpatient providers to return to their regular jobs. We will have more residents and faculty volunteering over the next several weeks. Our presence here is a way of giving back after our experience in Lumberton in 2016 with Hurricane Matthew. It is a great learning experience for our residents."

In addition to providing personnel, UNC Health Southeastern's teammates are donating items that will be transported to the region as part of a larger initiative by UNC Health. Items being donated include water, first aid and infant supplies.

"The organization's supply drive is providing an opportunity for all of our teammates to give back and help others," said UNC Health Southeastern Senior Chief Operating Officer Lori Dove. "Many team members would like to volunteer, however, their circumstances will not allow them to be deployed away from home. The supply drive provides a mechanism to give back so that everyone has an opportunity to participate in helping our fellow North Carolinians."

With more and more images and news coming out about the devastation in the region, support will likely be needed for some time to come.

"This family that we call UNC Health Southeastern is always quick to respond to other people's needs and look for opportunities to provide care and compassion," added Dove. "We are blessed to work in an organization that truly embraces Here for You, Here for Good – despite where that location is or the circumstances in which we are providing the care. It is an honor to serve alongside these teammates."

Lumberton Answers Call

The City of Lumberton was more than happy to provide assistance to residents and local agencies flooded out in

western North Carolina.

Waye Horne, Lumberton City manager, said the city sent a fire truck and an electrical utilities crew to Kings Mountain, one of the hardest hit areas from floods generated by Helene.

Horne said that when Hurricanes Matthew and Florence flooded Lumberton, mutual aid agreements activated emergency crews and other agenceies from around the state to help locally.

Horne described the mutual aid agreements as a blanket policy statewide, because while the devestation my have happened far away, it's in the best interest to pay it forward should aid may be required locally one day.

"Luckily they (Lumberton crews) were able to get into Kings Mountain," Horne said. "Chimney Rock lost most of its infrustrue. They couldn't get into Cherokee."

Lumber River United Way

Earlier in the week the Lumber River United Way implemented a Hurricane Helene assistance fund.

Donations allow different United Ways in the affected areas to respond to urgent requests and continue to meet needs as they unfold in the coming weeks.

"As a community, we know too well the aftermath of a major hurricane," said Tate Johnson, LRUW director. "These critical donations will support ongoing needs for families that will go weeks without internet and potable water."

"As North Carolinians come together during this disaster, Lumber River United Way is committed to assisting those in need," Johnson said.

Donations may be mailed to PO Box 2652, Lumberton, NC 28359, or online by visiting lumberriveruw.org.

Robeson County Sheriff

Sheriff Burnis Wilkins and Hoke County Sheriff Roderick Virgil partnered this week to collect supplies headed to western North Carolina.

With the assistance of Mountaire Farms, Wilkins and Virgil collected supplies most needed to assist displaced families.

In doing so, both agencies collected supplies at their respective sheriff's offices and planning to send multiple deputies to to assist in law enforcement functions.

Getting there

Helene brought historic amounts of rain and wind to the western part of the state late last week.

The ongoing focus of the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has been to restore primary roads and access to isolated communities impacted by the destruction.

It has been a vital effort to keep the major roads and highways as clear as possible to provide swift rescue and repair by first responders, transportation and utility crews.

For continuous updates on road closures, you can visit drivenc.gov.

Crews head west

More than 1,600 NCDOT employees and contract crews from around the state have been deployed with tools and supplies to help clear roads of debris and repair others where possible.

These crews are working around the clock to assess road damage and prioritize efforts to reopen interstates, along with U.S. and state highways first before opening secondary roads.

But recovery efforts will likely take many months as damage to many roads and bridges is catastrophic, NCDOT officials said Friday.

## Volunteer Inquiries

If you would like to donate your time, money or resources to help with relief efforts in western North Carolina, visit ncdps.gov/Helene.

For more information about NCDOT Now, contact the NCDOT Communications Office at (919) 707-2660. Additional news stories from throughout the week can be found on NCDOT.gov.

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# High school football predictions for Week 7

October 3, 2024 | Robesonian, The (Lumberton, NC) Author: Chris Stiles The Robesonian | Section: sports | 770 Words OpenURL Link

Helene upended and ultimately overshadowed Week 6 in high school football, though locally we were far more fortunate compared to many of our western neighbors, who remain in all of our thoughts and prayers as they are just beginning what will be, frankly, a years-long recovery — one that we in Robeson County can, unfortunately, relate to from experience.

While what happens on the football field seems secondary, we had a mixed scheduling bag last week, with a Thursday game, a Saturday game, a forfeited game and two more local teams on well-timed by e weeks.

Now, everyone is back on schedule to play under the Friday night lights in Week 7. Conference play begins in the Southeastern Athletic Conference, and the sixth of this season's nine in-county matchups will take place at Hal S. Floyd Stadium.

Here's a guess on what will happen as those games take place this week:

Last week: 2-0

Season: 16-3

Red Springs at Fairmont

Someone will pick up their first win of the season when Fairmont (0-5) hosts Red Springs (0-5) to start conference play. Red Springs had a bye last week; Fairmont forfeited its game against Northside-Pinetown rather than play on Monday, choosing to focus on this in-county and conference matchup, and will take the field for the first time in 22 days on Friday after having had a bye the week before the forfeit.

Fairmont has lost by 28 points ore more in each outing so far, while Red Springs has shown some gradual improvement with a 14-point loss to Purnell Swett and a one-point defeat in a tightly-contested game against Lakewood, their most recent contest.

Red Springs will take advantage of playing comparatively easier competition. While Fairmont should be able to put together some scoring drives, Red Springs' athletes will create some big plays leading to the Red Devils' first win of the season.

Red Springs 36, Fairmont 16

South View at Lumberton

Lumberton (3-2, 0-2 United-8 Conference) will look for a better start against South View after a couple of tough first quarters the last two weeks in losses to Cape Fear and Jack Britt, with South View (3-2, 1-1 United-8) visiting Alton G. Brooks Stadium Friday.

The Tigers boast a balanced offense, putting up 48 points or more twice this season and even scoring 22 points at Seventy-First, impressive in itself against the Falcons' defense. Lumberton, meanwhile, has struggled to score since starting conference play, with six points through two games against the United-8.

With starting well a point of emphasis for the Pirates, I think they'll keep this game closer early compared to recent

weeks. But they'll ultimately struggle to keep up blow-for-blow with the Tigers.

South View 34, Lumberton 21

Jack Britt at Purnell Swett

Purnell Swett (2-3, 0-2 United-8) returns to Pembroke for its first United-8 home game after losing at Gray's Creek and Cape Fear by a combined total of 76-7. They'll do so against a Jack Britt (4-1, 2-0 United-8) side whose only loss is to Piedmont Triad power East Forsyth, with wins in all their games against Sandhills-area competition, including a 28-0 win over Lumberton last week.

While Purnell Swett's opposition has scored a lot of points, the Rams defense has been in a tough spot with an offense that has scored one touchdown in its last two games. They've moved the ball, coach Josh Deese says, but haven't been able to finish.

Jack Britt won't dominate the Purnell Swett defense. But against a Buccaneers defense that's allowed 33 points in its last three games, the Rams may very well continue struggling to score, which will make for another tough night.

Jack Britt 30, Purnell Swett 14

West Bladen at St. Pauls

With a bye last week, St. Pauls (3-2) last played in a disappointing 19-14 loss at Charlotte Latin, with several scoring opportunities missed including a late goal-line fumble. The two weeks since have given the Bulldogs a chance to refine some of those problems, and they should be ready for the start of conference play against West Bladen (1-3).

- St. Pauls has shown the capability to score half a hundred, doing it once and nearly twice, and to hold the opponent to single digits, doing that twice including one shutout. While West Bladen did win its last game, a 26-19 victory against East Columbus, that was three weeks ago and came against a winless Gators team.
- St. Pauls has not only won eight straight meetings, but none have been close. And while the "transitive property" is sometimes overused every game is different, after all St. Pauls won by 55 against West Columbus, who beat West Bladen by 34. It's hard to see the Knights making this game competitive.

## St. Pauls 49, West Bladen 6

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Chris Stiles The Robesonian, 'High school football predictions for Week 7', *Robesonian, The* (online), 3 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA6DD844F9F58">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFA6DD844F9F58</a>



Mark Robinson blasts state's Helene response, touts his own recovery efforts: Lt. Gov. predicts he'll be called a 'hero' in aftermath of hurricane, defends missing emergency declaration vote

October 3, 2024 | Salisbury Post (NC) Author: Staff Report| Section: News | 713 Words OpenURL Link

Mark Robinson blasts state's Helene response, touts his own recovery efforts: Lt. Gov. predicts he'll be called a 'hero' in aftermath of hurricane, defends missing emergency declaration vote

Published 12:00 am Thursday, October 3, 2024

By Staff Report

By Galen Bacharier

NC Newsline

LOUISBURG — North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson on Wednesday predicted that he would be called a "hero" in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, as he called the state's recovery response led by Gov. Roy Cooper "abysmal," while touting his own efforts.

Robinson, the Republican nominee for governor, also said that a Council of State vote to grant Cooper emergency powers in which he was the only member not to participate was "inconsequential."

"Our response has been to respond to the people who have need," Robinson told reporters outside the Franklin County Sheriff's office. "That's exactly what we have done. And again, I'm urging the governor to do more, more National Guardsmen, allow the energy of private industry to get involved."

Cooper, who will again be in western North Carolina today along with President Joe Biden, has mobilized the National Guard as well as emergency staff, and asked for federal assistance, which has been granted. He's led several public briefings alongside emergency response officials.

The lieutenant governor, whose office does not have any formal responsibilities for storm recovery, has opted to partner with the Franklin County Sheriff Kevin White to deliver supplies to impacted areas through private flights.

Asked whether his appearance Wednesday was official or campaign-related, he said it was a "campaign to bring relief to the people of North Carolina." And he later said that he wasn't attempting to be a "hero" or "big shot."

"The only thing I've ever sought to do is serve the people of this state well," Robinson said. "Going through this experience right now drives that point home, because I can guarantee you somebody out there, after all this is over, is going to look at me and say, 'you know, you are a hero for what you did.'

"I can guarantee you someone's going to say that, whether it's somebody I love, a constituent, no matter who. But I can tell you this, to quote a soldier from World War II, here in North Carolina, I am not a hero, folks. But I serve in a state full of heroes, and I have seen them over the last five days, folks."

Staff from both Robinson's official state office and his campaign were present in Louisburg on Wednesday.

The governor's spokesperson wrote on social media Wednesday that Robinson's criticism of the state response was "unhelpful" and "potentially puts lives at risk."

"An online disinformation campaign by the LG during an unprecedented crisis is unhelpful, causes confusion in areas with limited communications and potentially puts lives at risk," Cooper's communications director Jordan Monaghan wrote. "State, federal and local partners are leading a massive, coordinated response to a catastrophic storm."

Missed Council of State vote was 'inconsequential,' Robinson says

Cooper requested ahead of Helene that the nine statewide elected officials on the Council of State approve a state of emergency. WRAL reported Wednesday that Robinson was the only member not to cast a vote, a decision that former Republican Gov. Pat McCrory told the news station was "inexcusable."

Robinson told reporters the measure "was going to pass with or without my vote."

"It was absolutely inconsequential," Robinson said. "It didn't matter."

Robinson was not present on a virtual meeting of the Council of State on Tuesday.

Robinson says Biden and federal response are 'of little or no consequence to me'

Robinson wrote on social media Tuesday that the federal government "failed to act" in response to the storm.

"Joe Biden told the people of North Carolina they had no more supplies for us," Robinson wrote.

There is no evidence that Biden has said that. FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell has been on the ground in western North Carolina, and Biden is set to survey the damage by air with Cooper today.

More than 3,500 federal personnel are deployed across the impacted areas of Helene, according to the White House, and direct assistance is available to help pay for essential items like food, water and baby formula.

"Ask the people of western North Carolina if Joe Biden's response has made worth a hill of beans to them," Robinson said. "It has not."

Galen Bacharier covers North Carolina politics and government for NC Newsline.

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# John Hood: In Helene's wake, leadership is crucial

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John Hood: In Helene's wake, leadership is crucial

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By Post Opinion

By John Hood

I got it wrong. Deeply wrong. Embarrassingly wrong.

It was a few days after Hurricane Floyd struck the coast on September 16, 1999. I'd been covering North Carolina politics for more than a dozen years by then, penning my syndicated column and appearing regularly on radio and television. Our discussion program "N.C. Spin" had debuted the previous fall on the Triangle's Fox affiliate and was in the process of expanding to some two dozen TV and radio stations across the state.

During a segment of the show devoted to the destruction wrought by Floyd, I said something to the effect that North Carolina's emergency personnel, government agencies, utilities, private contractors, and relief organizations knew what to do and how to do it.

They didn't need politicians holding press conferences and yapping incessantly about matters beyond their ken.

I thought I was praising the skill and determination of those at the forefront of the response to Hurricane Floyd, which devastated much of eastern North Carolina and killed an estimated 85 people, including 51 North Carolinians. I thought I was championing policy expertise over political exploitation.

What I was really doing was exhibiting my ignorance.

One "N.C. Spin" viewer was particularly incensed: then-Gov. Jim Hunt. One of the targets of my criticism, he let it be known through a mutual acquaintance that he considered my argument poorly reasoned. I don't remember the specifics of what got passed on to me, but it was something to the effect that in times of crisis, political leadership is crucial.

Emergency responders aren't necessarily sure what to do when. Agencies butt heads.

Harried public and private actors misinterpret, miscommunicate and inadvertently misinform. Sometimes they move too slowly, making people wait too long for rescue and relief. At other times they react recklessly, misspending scarce resources on lower priorities rather than waiting to make wiser decisions with a firmer grasp of the facts on the ground.

It is the task of leaders, elected and appointed, to make such judgment calls, to focus minds and referee disputes, to comfort the suffering, and to offer hope and reassurance to a panicky public.

Now, as North Carolinians grapple with the tragic aftermath of another monstrous storm, Gov. Roy Cooper and other political and civic leaders must rise to the challenge Hunt helped me grasp a quarter of a century ago.

Helene has ravaged western North Carolina. Her path of destruction is broad, deep and jaw-dropping. Homes,

businesses, entire towns crushed or swept away. At this writing, hundreds of thousands of people remain without power, some trapped in place by gaping holes or raging rivers. The death count, already heart-rending, will grow as more of the missing are found.

North Carolina will recover. We will rebuild. We've done it before. But there's nothing automatic about the process. And we all have parts to play in it, whatever our roles, wherever we live.

If you have family or friends in the affected areas, keep trying to reach them. Once you do, offer help and comfort. If you'd like to contribute money, supplies or volunteer time to relief and recovery efforts, there are many organizations well-situated to deploy your gifts effectively, including Samaritan's Purse, Baptists on Mission, Catholic Charities USA and Operation Airdrop.

At the state level, lawmakers have prudently accumulated \$4.75 billion in our rainy-day fund plus billions more in unreserved credit balance. That rainy day is here. Localities will spend additional dollars from their own reserves, as will utility companies, cooperatives, and municipal agencies.

There are many tough decisions to be made, some now, some weeks or months from now as the full extent of the needs and priorities come more clearly into view. That's something else I learned from past disasters. Some funds originally earmarked for reconstruction after Hurricane Matthew in 2016 have still not been expended.

Through it all, North Carolinians will look to our leaders for guidance and reassurance.

Pray for them, and for us all.

John Hood is a John Locke Foundation board member. His latest books, Mountain Folk and Forest Folk, combine epic fantasy with early American history (FolkloreCycle.com).

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