

The Rev. Harvey Blume

October 5, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 993 Words OpenURL Link

May 16, 1936 - October 1, 2024

The Rev. Harvey Ludwig Blume, 88, entered the Church Triumphant on October 1, 2024. He was born in Concord, North Carolina, on May 16, 1936, and was adopted as an infant by the late Fred William Blume and Mary Belle Chambers Blume.

He graduated from Concord High School in 1954, and he received an AB degree in English from Lenoir-Rhyne College in 1958. At Lenoir-Rhyne, he was a member of Theta Chi fraternity, Alpha Tau Kappa, Pi Kappa Delta, and Kappa Chi. He was in the marching band for four years, and was named to "Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities." He worked in the college dining hall for two years and was head waiter for one year. He was a member of the Debate Team and a participant in the South Atlantic Forensic Tournament.

On stage at L-R, he played the role of Ali Hakim in "Oklahoma!" and the role of Stosh in "Stalag 17." He was in "The Male Animal," presented in the round in Cline Gym, as well as "The Story of the Old Shoemaker," a one-act play presented to students.

As long as he could remember, his mother commented that she would like for him to become a minister. She never overdid it, but she never let him forget that she would like him to follow through on the suggestion.

"I listened, heard what she was saying, and I guess it was always on my mind," Pastor Blume once said. "Between God and my mother, the way was paved to enable me to choose the ministry."

When his brother joined the Navy, the money that their parents had saved for college expenses all went to Pastor Blume. He attended college and seminary on the \$5,000 his parents had saved.

In 1961, he graduated from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, with a Master of Divinity degree. He was ordained June 11, 1961, by the North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He married Susanne Carol Snyder on August 20,

1960. She worked as a teacher to support them during his final year of seminary. Pastor Blume served North Carolina parishes in Lincolnton (St. Luke's Salem, 19611963), Lumberton (St. Mark's, 1963-1970), China Grove (St. Mark's, 1970-1991), and Hickory (Sardis, 1991-1998) until his retirement in 1998. After retirement, he served a number of congregations as interim or supply pastor.

Pastor Blume served the North Carolina Synod as chair of the Youth Committee, the Campus Ministry Committee, and the Special Committee on the Election of the President of Synod. He also served on the Synodical Stewardship Committee and the America Missions Committee. He served as president of Rowan Cooperative Christian Ministry (RCCM), now Rowan Helping Ministries, which he named. He also served as dean of the East Catawba Conference of the North Carolina Synod. In 1982, he was named Fraternalist of the Year in North Carolina, primarily for his work with Lutheran Brotherhood Branch 8142 (now Thrivent).

During his ministry, Pastor Blume did graduate work at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, and Drew University in New Jersey.

Throughout his life, Pastor Blume and his wife enjoyed taking their daughters and later on, their daughters' families, on annual trips to Myrtle Beach, as well as numerous trips to Disney World. Their frequent travel companions often

included their son-in-law's parents, Diane Everhart and the late Howard Everhart. Not only were they related through their children's marriage, they were true friends.

After their daughters were grown and married and he had more time to devote to family, Pastor Blume was a devoted "Pop," and he and Susanne enthusiastically attended all of their grandchildren's activities and sporting events. In retirement, he faithfully photographed and documented his and Susanne's family trips, sports, and grandchildren, as is evidenced by the plethora of photo albums that fill many bookcases in their home.

In addition to his parents, Pastor Blume was predeceased by his brother, Harry William Blume of Concord.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years and their three daughters, Karen Elaine Blume Feezor and husband Kevin Feezor of Charlotte, Carol Diane Blume Everhart and husband T. Kelly Everhart of Spencer, and Lara Susanne Blume Dellinger and husband Ramsey Dellinger of Hickory. He is also survived by four grandchildren and three stepgrandchildren, Nolan Snyder Garrett of Durham and Peyton Samuel Garrett of Hickory; Spencer Cole Everhart of Charlotte and Anna Claire Everhart of Spencer; and Tanner McNeill Dellinger, Garon Thomas Dellinger, and Jayna Alexia Dellinger.

Survivors also include Bette Blume, sister-in-law; nieces Melissa Snyder and Kim Blume Suggs, daughter Dara and husband Jerry; nephew Steve Snyder and wife Constance and their daughters Catherine and Emily.

The family would like to offer our deepest gratitude to the caregivers who loved and cared for Dad in his last several months; Misty Elkins, Candy Atwell, Sheena Shell, Stephanie Hamlin, and Grace Brookshire. Ladies, you are our angels on earth. We also thank those at Kingston Residence who cared for him while he lived there. In addition, we offer heartfelt thanks to everyone at Trinity Ridge Senior Care Community in Hickory, NC, where Dad spent his final week. Every person there was kind and gracious, compassionately caring for him and treating him with respect and dignity. They not only ministered to him, but to us as well. And finally, we are so thankful to have had Hospice with us throughout this journey, especially Angela Herman and Angela Myers. Your assistance, knowledge, empathy and kindness are a blessing to us.

Pastor Blume was a member of New Jerusalem Lutheran Church (NALC), where on Monday, October 14, 2024, Visitation will be held at 11 a.m., followed by the Memorial service at 12 p.m. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial gift to one of the following: New Jerusalem Lutheran Church, 2120 Startown Road, Hickory, NC 28602, or Lutheran Disaster Response Carolinas, 1988 Lutheran Synod Drive, Salisbury, NC 28144 or www.secure.accessacs.com/access/oglogin.aspx?sn=96379. Select "Lutheran Disaster Response" and note "Hurricane Helene/ Western NC" on memo line.

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In Helene's wake, leadership is crucial

October 5, 2024 | High Point Enterprise (NC) Author: John Hood| Section: Columnists | 493 Words OpenURL Link

I got it wrong. Deeply wrong. Embarrassingly wrong.

It was a few days after Hurricane Floyd struck the coast on Sept. 16, 1999. During a television segment about 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 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 are not necessarily sure what to do or 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 25 years 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, many remain without power, some trapped in place by gaping holes. 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.

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 into view. Through it all, North Carolinians will look to our leaders for guidance and reassurance. Pray for them, and for us all.

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'WE'RE JUST AT A LOSS'

October 5, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: CHRISSY MURPHY Morganton News Herald| Section: Were Just At A Loss| 790 Words OpenURL Link

HURRICANE HELENE AFTERMATH

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 floodwaters 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 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 last 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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County sees 1st storm death

October 5, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: FROM STAFF REPORTS | Section: News | 897 Words OpenURL Link

One death caused by Hurricane Helene was confirmed in McDowell County on Friday. It was the county's first storm-related death

The identity of the person who died due to the storm's impact was not released as of Friday morning, McDowell County Emergency Management said in a release.

The family has been notified, emergency management said.

"Residents are strongly encouraged to exercise caution and avoid traveling through areas affected by flood damage," emergency management said. "Emergency services are actively working to ensure the safety of the community."

McDowell County said Thursday it has received 330 missing persons reports since Hurricane Helene brought heavy rain, wind and flooding to North Carolina on Sept. 27. As of Thursday morning, 309 of those missing people have been found.

The McDowell County Sheriff's Office, along with federal, state, and local law enforcement teams, have been working constantly to locate the remaining missing people, emergency management said. The search teams are working throughout the county.

"We won't stop until we account for all our citizens and visitors and ensure that everyone's basic needs are met. Every single day we are moving the needle protecting and saving lives. The spirit of this community is one of determination and resilience, and we will not fail," McDowell County Emergency Services Director Will Kehler said in a news release.

As of Friday, 600 emergency workers and hundreds of volunteers are still working on search and rescues, delivering supplies and providing shelter, the release said.

Search-and-rescue operations

The county is still prioritizing search and rescue.

"Our primary search efforts focused on locating individuals who were easily contactable and visibly in need of assistance," emergency management said. "Now, our teams are conducting secondary searches, utilizing specialized resources such as search dogs and drones to thoroughly check areas that were previously cleared, ensuring that any missing or hard-to-reach individuals are located."

Power outages in McDowell

As of Friday morning, about 46% of people were without power in McDowell County, according too poweroutage.us, which uses information from Duke Energy, French Broad Electric Membership Corporation and Rutherford Electric Membership Corporation.

"It is so very hard and frustrating to be without electricity. I am sorry for all those still without," Marion Mayor Steve Little said in a statement Wednesday. In a conference Tuesday night, Duke Energy said everyone in Marion and much of McDowell County is expected to have power by Friday, Little said.

"So, even though it is not easy, we have to be patient and understand that there are many thousands of people in McDowell County, outside the city limits of Marion, who won't even have water until they get power to operate their wells." Little said.

McDowell storm shelter locations

There are three shelters in the county as of Thursday: "

- YMCA (Red Cross general public): 348 Grace Corpening Drive, Marion
- " Glenwood Baptist (persons with pets): 155 Glenwood Baptist Church Road, Marion "
- Senior Center Lower Level (oxygen and medical patients only): 100 Spaulding Road, Suite 2, Marion.

Food and water in McDowell County

Essential resources including water tankers, bottled water, meals ready to eat and other food items are being delivered to affected areas throughout McDowell County, the release said. Crews are working around the clock to make sure no one is left without these essential items.

On Wednesday, the county said heavy-duty drones were being used to deliver food and water to individuals in urgent need.

If you are in need of supplies, food and water distribution will happen at the following locations at 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., while supplies last: "

- Woodlawn: Hicks Chapel Church, 6008 U.S. Highway 221 North, Marion
- " North Cove: Former TJ's, 8153 U.S. Highway 221 North, Marion
- " Old Fort: 1 Walter St., Old Fort
- " Dysartsville: Solid Rock Freewill Baptist Church, 7860 N.C. Highway 226 South, Nebo
- " New Manna Baptist Church: 225 E. Court St., Marion
- " Zion Hill Baptist Church: 1036 Zion Hill Road, Marion

Community meals will be served at Grace Community Church, 5182 U.S. Highway 70 West, Marion, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 4-5:30 p.m.

Medical and Oxygen Support

The following pharmacies are open for those needing medications:

- " Ingles Pharmacy: 625 W. Henderson St., Marion
- " Marion Pharmacy: 232 S. Main St., Marion
- " Prescription Pad: 1211 N. Main St., Marion

- " Walmart Pharmacy: 2875 Sugar Hill Road, Marion
- ", CVS Pharmacy: 555 N. Main St., Marion
- " McDowell Pharmacy of Old Fort is open until 3 p.m.

Call the Helene Hotline at 828-652-3241 if you are isolated and need insulin, or if you are homebound or without power and in need of oxygen cylinders or charging oxygen concentrators.

FEMA scams in McDowell County

There are FEMA teams in McDowell County that are currently search-and-rescue teams, emergency management said.

There are no FEMA inspectors in the field as of Thursday morning. There are some FEMA representatives at shelters checking in with sheltered residents to assist with resources.

"As we continue to work through operations and move towards recovery, it is important to note when FEMA inspectors do arrive, you should always ensure correct identification of individuals involved in disaster recovery to protect against fraud, and ensure timely support for those in need," emergency management said.

More Information

If you need assistance after Hurricane Helene, call the McDowell County Helene Hotline at 828-652-3241. You can also get information on food and water distribution, shelter availability, community meals and disaster assistance at www.mcdowellnews.com.

If you need assistance but can't make a phone call, send a text to 911. Dispatchers can communicate with you through text to get help to you as needed.

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Morganton restaurant, salon destroyed by Helene

October 5, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: SHARON MCBRAYER Morganton News Herald| Section: News| 565 Words OpenURL Link

Justin Davis summed the damage caused by Tropical Storm Helene to his Morganton restaurant in one word Monday afternoon: "Heartbreaking."

Davis is one of the owners of Town Tavern in the River Village shopping center on Sanford Drive in Morganton. He said flooding from the adjacent Catawba River rose about 5 feet into the restaurant.

"It's devastating. It's pretty sad to see," Davis said.

He said the damage to the restaurant is substantial.

"I guess they call it a hundred-year flood," Davis said. "I hope I never see nothing like it again in my lifetime."

He said he hopes to rebuild but the owners, like everyone else, are taking it day by day. He said the restaurant will have to be gutted and renovated from scratch.

"Build back bigger, better," Davis said of starting over.

The restaurant opened in its River Village location in March 2021, Davis said.

He said it was a beautiful restaurant that people seemed to enjoy. Other locations of Town Tavern are in Blowing Rock and Banner Elk. Even though those two towns suffered devastating destruction, the Town Taverns in those locations faired much better than the Morganton location, Davis said.

"We were real fortunate that all of our locations are good, but all around us is just so much destruction everywhere," Davis said. "Roads washed out, trees, roads, homes destroyed and flooding. It's just so much to process. All the office buildings in that strip (in Morganton) all washed out, all destroyed."

Lisa Rector, owner of Salon 337 in the same shopping center, didn't think the water would get above the greenway behind River Village.

But when she made it to the salon to check out the damage, the inside was ruined. Almost everything needs to be thrown out. Water made it all the way to the roof.

"I just imagined it would be just a little bit of flooding, maybe halfway up," Rector said. "I didn't realize it would go to the ceiling, to the gutters. It's just heartbreaking because we're a family, and I don't want everybody to be out of a job, so we're sticking together."

She was headed to check out a building the salon could rent moving forward while her friends and family cleaned out the building. She said other salons have already offered temporary spaces for their staff to work until the salon is back up and running.

"It's just devastating," Rector said. We're going to rebuild and hang in there together. ... This is a salon that's going to come back again."

Her husband, Rob, said Lisa had asked if they should pack up some of the stuff and take it home to keep it safe from flooding.

"I said, 'It'll never get that high,'" Rob said. "But it fooled us all."

He worked for Rutherford Electric for more than 30 years, but he'd never seen flooding that bad.

Davis said he is thankful none of the Town Tavern employees were hurt, and said things can be replaced.

"It is sad for the staff," Davis said. "We have so many key employees. Great and wonderful employees."

He hopes there are some programs they can get in place for the restaurant's staff to help them out until the restaurant can rebuild.

"It's just going to take some time," Davis said. "But we look forward to getting back open and seeing all of our family and friends and people in the community come back in and pick up right where we left off ."

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'We will survive this together'

October 5, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: DAN CRAWLEY dcrawley@mcdowellnews.com| Section: News| 708 Words OpenURL Link

Hundreds of volunteers across McDowell County have rolled up their sleeves to help in the recovery process from the catastrophic damage caused by Hurricane Helene, which was a tropical storm by the time it impacted North Carolina last week.

The storm knocked out power across the county for days and left homes and businesses ravaged. In the days after the storm, one of the biggest projects has been the collection of supplies at the Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center at 634 College Drive in Marion.

There, dozens of local residents have helped unload and then organize items that will be taken to the various points of distribution across McDowell County.

Glenwood resident Mandie Pennell has volunteered at the collection site daily. Seeing the recovery effort firsthand has shown her the resiliency and dedication of McDowell County residents to make sure that supplies are ready to go out to those in need, she said.

Pennell is a school counselor at McDowell Academy of Innovation. She, along with a large number of McDowell County School employees, have been on the ground this week doing their part in the recovery with schools currently shut down.

"I've always said that North Carolina is the most beautiful place to live," Pennell said. "But I've learned over my years and especially during this horrific natural disaster that it's not just the natural beauty that makes it beautiful. It's the people."

Pennell said the work at the collection site is the perfect encapsulation of how special the McDowell County community is.

"The McDowell Emergency Distribution Center is a perfect reflection of that beauty," Pennell said. "Over the last several days, hundreds of people have poured in from McDowell and surrounding counties to serve this community either through giving of their time and effort or giving of material items needed. It's been amazing to watch, and I can honestly say that I am proud to be from North Carolina. We will survive this, together."

McDowell Technical Community College, which closed through Oct. 4 after the storm, called on its faculty and staff to help at the donation center, too.

"While many of our students and their families are in need of critical resources at this time, we have also invited those faculty, staff and students who are able to do so to assist others by making donations to the primary distribution point at Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center or volunteering at needed locations throughout the county," college President J.W. Kelley said in a press release.

Pennell and others will continue to work at the collection site operated by the McDowell Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with McDowell Emergency Services as long as needed. Items in high demand at the collection site include bottled water, baby supplies and nonperishable food, according to emergency services.

"While we are in the important business of educating students and building capacity in the local and regional workforce, in times of crisis, our first order of business is taking care of ourselves, our families and our neighbors," Kelley said in the release. "That will be our sole focus over the coming days, and we invite everyone in the

community who is able to join us in our efforts to help our neighbors as they recover from this storm's devastating impact."

Drop-off hours at the Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center are from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

Interested volunteers can call the citizen volunteer coordinator at 828-559-9731 to learn more about how to volunteer during the recovery stage of Helene.

There are volunteer opportunities to help with distribution, cleanup and assisting at shelters, the McDowell Tech release said. At Grace Community Church, volunteers are distributing meals twice a day.

McDowell County Emergency Management put out a call for medical volunteers Tuesday evening. By Wednesday morning, the county had more than enough nurses, medical assistants and other volunteers to help at shelters, the county said in a news release.

More Information

Five distribution points for supplies are located in McDowell County. Distribution points are open 10 a.m. until noon and 4-6 p.m., depending on availability of supplies.

Woodlawn: Hicks Chapel Church, 6008 U.S. 221 N, Marion

Former TJ's Discount: 8153 U.S. 221 N, Marion

Old Fort: Old Fort Town Hall, 38 Catawba Ave., Old Fort

Marion: New Manna Baptist Church, 225 E. Court St., Marion

Dysartsville: Solid Rock Free Will Baptist Church, 7860 N.C. 226 S, Nebo

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UP IN THE AIR?

October 5, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: DAN CRAWLEY dcrawley@mcdowellnews.com| Section: Up In The Air| 578 Words OpenURL Link

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

One week after the remnants of Hurricane Helene ravaged McDowell County and the rest of western North Carolina, the 2024 high school fall sports season remains on pause for McDowell High School and the rest of the Mountain Athletic Conference with no immediate signs of a return.

Schools in McDowell, Burke and Buncombe counties, along with Asheville City Schools, have been out the entire week as these districts are some of the hardest-hit locations from Helene. School administrators from McDowell County Schools began to return on Thursday, and other employees started to roll in Friday as the school system begins to evaluate its campuses for a possible return to classes.

According to McDowell High School Athletic Director Joe Cash, no substantial damage has been observed to any of the athletic fields or to the gymnasium on the school campus. Sitting on the top of a ridge has allowed the school to escape any floodwaters from the Catawba River.

"No issues were found with any of our fields, the tennis courts and in both gyms," Cash said. "Our location keeps us generally safe from floodwaters. We closely monitor our facilities during impactful weather events. We really came out well compared to surrounding schools."

While the area of the McDowell High School's campus was spared from significant damage and utilities are being restored, the same cannot be said for the grounds at some of the Buncombe County schools.

"From what we have heard, its bad in Buncombe," added Cash. "Obviously, with what has happened over the last seven days, it's going to be a while before sports is being played again."

This week was the scheduled homecoming for McDowell High School as they were originally slated to play North Buncombe. The Titans (1-4, 0-1 MAC 4A/3A) played the last game on Sept. 20 at T.C. Roberson and was on its bye week when Helene moved through on Sept. 27. The team has five more conference games on its schedule to finish out the 2024 season.

Other fall sports like men's soccer, women's tennis, women's golf and volleyball were well into the league schedule with state playoffs slated to begin later this month. It may be hard for McDowell and all MAC schools to fit an additional two or three games into a schedule with multiple outings per week already on the schedule.

In the case of football, some teams could potentially play two or more times in a 10-day period should the current fall sports schedule remain in place.

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association said in a press release earlier this week that the board of directors will reach out to those in the impacted region this week to get information on conditions before coming up with a plan.

"I'm not sure one week would do it," said NCHSAA Commissioner Que Tucker earlier this week. "But that's a decision that has to be made by our board members. As a staff, we want to huddle up and look at what we have found and see what we can come up with to present to the board, but we want to make sure our board members (from the regions most affected) can be on the Zoom with us because they have boots-on-the-ground knowledge, and we need to get their perspective."

The NCHSAA playoffs are scheduled to begin in about two weeks, with girls' tennis (Oct. 14), volleyball (Oct. 19), girls' golf (Oct. 21) and cross-country (Oct. 26) up first. Football playoffs are scheduled to begin Nov. 8.

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Volunteers, military provide aid to western NC

October 5, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com| Section: News| 573 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 Sept. 27.

"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.

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BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com, 'Volunteers, military provide aid to western NC', *McDowell News, The* (online), 5 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C04C2F21DC3E50



Roads, bridges in McDowell County affected by Helene

October 5, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: SHARON MCBRAYER Morganton News Herald| Section: News | 420 Words OpenURL Link

The North Carolina Department of Transportation continues to say 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 McDowell and Burke counties that have been damaged or impacted by the storm.

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 west-bound, near Catawba Avenue in Old Fort at mile marker 73 to 66 at Dunsmore Avenue, is down to one lane due to a mudslide and downed trees. The issue should be resolved by Oct. 10. "
- U.S. Highway 221, near U.S. Highway 221 North in Woodlawn, is closed in both directions due to a mudslide 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.
- •" 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.

Burke County roads closed

David 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 reopen 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 was expected to be completed Thursday evening.

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SHARON MCBRAYER Morganton News Herald, 'Roads, bridges in McDowell County affected by Helene', *McDowell News, The* (online), 5 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C04C2F7376AEC0



Nation's largest maker of IV fluid limiting orders after damage at Marion plant

October 5, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Billy Chapman wchapman@hickoryrecord.com| Section: Business | 602 Words OpenURL Link

The nation's largest maker of intravenous solutions is limiting orders of products due to flooding in McDowell County at its largest plant.

In a press release Friday, Baxter International said it was limiting orders of saline, dextrose and peritoneal dialysis solutions to prevent stockpiling and ensure equal access to available products.

"We have implemented allocations to help ensure we are appropriately managing our inventory and minimizing disruption in patient care," the company said in the release. "That means that after review and consideration of available inventory and the medical necessity of impacted products, a specific limit on what a customer can order has been implemented."

Baxter produces 60% of the country's supply of IV solutions, producing 1.5 million bags per day, according to the American Hospital Association.

Baxter's North Cove plant was impacted by flooding from the remnants of Hurricane Helene on Sept. 27.

Heavy rains triggered a levee breach, which led to water permeating the site. Bridges accessing the site from U.S. Highway 221 were also damaged.

As a result of flooding at the plant's site, the plant was closed after the storm.

The company said in a press release it was working with great urgency to reopen, but did not know when full operations would resume.

"We will spare no resource, human or financial, to restart operations and help ensure patients and providers have the products they need," the release said.

The company has about 500 workers on site to repair the plant, the release said. The company expects that number to double over the next week.

One entrance requires a fix to a county bridge, Baxter said in a Thursday release. The company is working to make a temporary bridge. Once it is fixed, the company plans to move some product out to be sent to customers, the release said.

Baxter said it expects a permanent bridge to be built by the Army Corps of Engineers and North Carolina Department of Transportation in the coming weeks.

2,500 employees

Baxter Manufacturing is the largest employer in McDowell County with over 2,500 employees. The company said it is working to get in touch with all of its employees to make sure they are safe.

While the plant is closed, the company is providing access to generators, laundry machines, showers, water, food and toiletries for employees at a site near the plant.

The company said counseling and financial assistance options from Baxter's Employee Disaster Relief Fund were

available to help employees with personal property damage and emergency expenses.

In a press release Sunday, the company said it was allocating \$1.5 million toward recovery needs.

Hospitals respond

The company said it would use its global manufacturing network to help mitigate supply issues.

Hospitals in North Carolina are looking for other places to get supplies.

"The closure of the Baxter North Cove plant has nationwide impact," UNC Health said in a statement. "At UNC Health, we are working through ways to conserve what we have in stock now and looking at alternative products we can use in place of the Baxter products. This is an active collaboration across our supply chain and pharmacy and our physicians and nurses.

"We are striving to maintain normal operations so that this temporary shortage of Baxter products is invisible to the patients we have the privilege to serve."

Novant Health also said it is working with other sources for hospital products.

"Baxter has been one of our trusted vendors for many years, and our thoughts are with their teams as they face this unimaginable disaster," the statement said. "Like health systems across the nation, Novant Health has been notified that we will not receive our full allocation of Baxter products, so we are working to source products from alternative suppliers."

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C04C2EF291DCAO>



McDowell County Schools plan to restart school Wednesday except at Old Fort Elementary

October 5, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Virginia Annable | Section: Education | 323 Words OpenURL Link

McDowell County Schools plans to restart school for all but one school on Wednesday, Oct. 9, the school system said in a Facebook post on Friday.

In anticipation of Hurricane Helene's impact on the area, McDowell County Schools closed Sept. 26. Schools remained closed in the wake of flooding and damage to the area.

Schools will operate on a two-hour delay with limited bus routes starting Wednesday, McDowell County Schools said.

Old Fort Elementary School, which had flood damage, will not open on Wednesday, the school system said. The school system said it hopes to start school for students of Old Fort Elementary by Oct. 14 in a new location.

All schools except Old Fort Elementary and North Cove Elementary had power as of Friday afternoon.

"We will publish information by Monday evening for community bus stops for each of our schools," McDowell Schools said. "We will remain in a two-hour delay status for the remainder of the week to allow plenty of daylight for our drivers in the morning, and to ensure that our student drivers may safely travel to school."

All school staff are asked to report to work on Monday on a one-hour delay, McDowell County Schools said.

"Although this storm has left us with many unanswered questions, we continue to count our blessings and we are grateful for all of the prayers of support during this time of need," McDowell County Schools said.

Old Fort Elementary School

The school system is working on plans to bring Old Fort Elementary students together at another location, the school system said.

For parents of Old Fort Elementary students, the school system is holding two community meetings on Tuesday, Oct. 8. The first is at 4 p.m. and second at 6 p.m. Both meetings will be held at Greenlee Baptist Church, 5967 U.S. Hwy. 70, Old Fort.

"In this meeting, we will share our plan for the Old Fort students to remain together in another location," McDowell Schools said in the Facebook post.

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Virginia Annable, 'McDowell County Schools plan to restart school Wednesday except at Old Fort Elementary', *McDowell News, The* (online), 5 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C04C2EF79F0768>



Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia remains closed

October 5, 2024 | Mountain Times, The (Boone, NC) Author: Staff Report| Section: Mountaintimes | 234 Words OpenURL Link

The entire length of the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia remains closed as crews continue their assessment of the damage from Hurricane Helene.

To assist with recovery efforts, the National Park Service has deployed its Eastern Incident Management Team, which brings specialized skills and resources to support the parkway with employee emergency needs, emergency stabilization of affected park resources, and damage assessments. As of Saturday morning, 214 National Park Service employees representing 57 national parks from 32 states and the District of Columbia are working with Blue Ridge Parkway staff in the recovery efforts.

National Park Service assessment teams are still completing their initial inspections of the parkway, acquiring the data they will need to analyze the full impact of Hurricane Helene. Based on what the teams have seen so far, significant, and in some cases catastrophic, damage has occurred along the parkway, particularly from milepost 280 to milepost 469 in North Carolina.

In the coming weeks, the assessment teams will utilize the data from their inspections to determine the full extent of the damage including the timeline and cost estimates for repairs. A projected reopening date of any section of the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina has not yet been established. In Virginia, damage assessments and the clearing of debris from the road are nearing completion, which will for allow a phased reopening in Virginia in the coming days to weeks.

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Staff Report, 'Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia remains closed', *Mountain Times, The* (online), 5 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C14880DBB1EF70



App Theatre celebrating re-opening anniversary on Oct. 14

October 5, 2024 | Mountain Times, The (Boone, NC) Author: JERRY SNOW| Section: Mountaintimes | 126 Words OpenURL Link

BOONE — Appalachian Theatre of the High County has postponed or rescheduled several events through Oct. 13, according to apptheatre.org, due to the devastation left behind by Hurricane Helene.

On Monday, Oct. 14, from 6-8 p.m., App Theatre will celebrate the 5-year anniversary of its re-opening with a feature-length documentary "Hollywood in the High Country." Admission is free.

The 20,000-square foot venue is now a versatile performing arts center.

App Theatre (559 W King St.) will celebrate the occasion with concessions, games, a photo booth, and the screening of "Hollywood in the High Country." The feature length documentary shares the history of film and cinema in Boone and follows the non-profit's mission of re-opening of Appalachian Theatre in 2019.

For the latest updates, go to apptheatre.org, www.instagram.com/apptheatre or www.facebook.com/AppTheatre/ (c) 2024 The Mountain Times. All rights reserved.

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JERRY SNOW, 'App Theatre celebrating re-opening anniversary on Oct. 14', *Mountain Times, The* (online), 5 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C063F69C872960



U.S. FEMA head visits Haywood; sheriff blasts false rumors on social media

October 5, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Brionna Dallara| Section: News| 996 Words OpenURL Link

The U.S. administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Deanne Criswell, joined North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper alongside Haywood County officials at a press conference Friday to condemn disinformation circulating online about emergency response to Hurricane Helene.

Addressing rumors

"One of the things that I've been hearing is our funding is being diverted to other things. I can tell you that that is false, completely false. Our funding is dedicated to this response. I've committed to Governor Cooper, and the other governors that were impacted, that we are here to support them," Criswell said. "Our funding is here for them, and we are not going to leave until everybody has what they need for their recovery."

Criswell said that during a disaster of historic proportions, false information hinders people's access to essential resources and services. FEMA has had its resources in all six states impacted by the disaster, she added.

"We have been there since before the storm made landfall, before it impacted these communities. And I have teams embedded in each of the emergency operation centers to make sure we have a consistent line of communications to get those resources where they're needed," Criswell said.

"We have everything you need, Governor, everybody here in North Carolina," Criswell said to Cooper, "and we are going to continue to provide that assistance as long as you need it."

Sheriff combats keyboard warriors

Haywood County Sheriff Bill Wilke addressed the online rhetoric, as well — decrying social media falsehoods being levied against local emergency response and recovery efforts in Haywood.

"The rumors and the misinformation are being generated by a very small number of people. I'm focusing on the people who are wearing boots and gloves and doing muck-outs and spending, in some cases, 18 hours a day working just to find family heirlooms that have been lost. My effort is on them," Wilke said. "I've been out in the field, and I've seen what's happening, and those voices are of no concern to me, and I'm asking the residents of this county to focus on what's good."

Wilke said those levying social media attacks and rumors are an insult to those who rolled up their sleeves to help others.

"You're harming the morale and the efforts of people who are out there putting themselves in harm's way to help others who have been impacted," Wilke said. "You've got residents in this county without power, without immediate access to transportation, food or water, who, without any regard for their own safety, go next door to their neighbor's house and do things like help them find their cattle."

Wilke said he has little patience for conspiracy theorists and falsities spread through social media.

"I would encourage the good residents of Western North Carolina to turn that garbage off. I have very little patience for it," Wilke said. "Get off Facebook, and get out there in a pair of boots and put on a pair of gloves and get to work."

Chairman Kevin Ensley of the Haywood County Board of Commissioners added that Haywood's emergency management teams have been in the field 24/7 since Thursday morning.

"They set this up a week beforehand. So to say something that some of our emergency personnel aren't working is totally false," Ensley said.

FEMA Funding

Criswell said she fears the misinformation could deter folks from applying for assistance.

"This level of misinformation creates this scenario where they won't even come to us, they won't even register, and I need people to register so they can get what they're eligible for through our programs," Criswell said.

Criswell confirmed that FEMA does have enough funding to support the response for all states impacted by Helene. She said that because of the passing of a Continuing Resolution by Congress, FEMA is allowed to continue operating based on the president's proposed budget for fiscal year 2025.

"But hurricane season isn't over yet, and so we need to watch very closely what other storms might come, what impact that might have on the disaster relief fund, so we can work with Congress to ensure we have enough to not just the responses, but the ongoing recoveries from the storms that we've seen over the last several years," Criswell said.

Additionally, Criswell stated during the conference that no one has been denied FEMA assistance. However, if an individual hasn't received more information after registering or isn't receiving financial assistance immediately, it is most likely due to a lack of information.

"We understand there's a lot of people that don't have access to their information, maybe it's stored electronically. So we have teams that are out in the field, our Disaster Survivor Assistance teams, that can work with them to help gather that information," Criswell said. "In the future, as soon as it's safe in those communities and we have services and we're not taking away from the response efforts, we'll have disaster recovery centers that will also be able to help them."

Individuals can now either register online at DisasterAssistance.gov, talk to somebody in a FEMA shirt who is part of a DSA team, or call the FEMA help line 1-800-621-3362.

"FEMA has been here on the ground, and I know there are an excess of 50,000 applications and an excess of \$5 million that have already gone to people," Gov. Cooper said.

Response time

Criswell challenged those who are claiming federal agencies did not respond quickly to the disaster.

FEMA personnel were on the ground in all six states prior to the storm making landfall, including search and rescue teams, the Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, Health and Human Services, and the Department of Defense, Criswell added.

"Then once we knew where the impacts were, then working with the governor's team, sending them out to the areas that had the greatest need," Criswell said. "I think one of the most important resources that we had on the ground was our Incident Management Assistance Teams that embed with the governor's team, so we have a clear line of communication to move things quickly once we know where the impacts are going to happen."

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U.S. FEMA head visits Haywood; sheriff blasts false rumors

October 5, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Brionna Dallara| Section: News| 1060 Words OpenURL Link

The U.S. administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Deanne Criswell, joined North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper alongside Haywood County first responders at a press conference Friday to condemn disinformation circulating online about the agency, funding and their response time to Hurricane Helene.

Addressing rumors

"I think one of the things that I've been hearing is, our funding is being diverted to other things. I can tell you that that is false, completely false. Our funding is dedicated to this response. I've committed to Governor Cooper, and the other governors that were impacted, that we are here to support them," Criswell said. "Our funding is here for them, and we are not going to leave until everybody has what they need for their recovery."

In response to a question about online rumors regarding FEMA, Criswell stated that during a disaster of historic proportions, false information hinders people's access to essential resources and services. FEMA has had its resources in all six states impacted by the disaster, she added.

"We have been there since before the storm made landfall before it impacted these communities. And I have teams embedded in each of the emergency operation centers to make sure we have a consistent line of communications to get those resources where they're needed," Criswell said.

"We have everything you need, Governor, everybody here in North Carolina," Criswell said to Cooper, "and we are going to continue to provide that assistance as long as you need it. And the second part I wanted to say is, we have resources for individuals. We want them to apply for assistance. This level of misinformation creates this scenario where they won't even come to us, they won't even register, and I need people to register so they can get what they're eligible for through our programs. So I really need your help in letting people know the resources are here, they will continue to come, and they need to apply to FEMA so they can get additional financial assistance."

Haywood County Sheriff Bill Wilke addressed the online rhetoric as well, cautioning those who use social media and make assumptions about FEMA or emergency management team's response to the storm.

"The rumors and the misinformation are being generated by a very small number of people. Far as my agency is concerned, I'm focusing on the people who are wearing boots and gloves and doing muck-outs and spending, in some cases, 18 hours a day working just to find family heirlooms that have been lost. My effort is on them," Wilke said. "I've been out in the field, and I've seen what's happening, and those voices are of no concern to me, and I'm asking the residents of this county to focus on what's good. You've got residents in this county without power, without immediate access to transportation, food or water, who, without any regard for their own safety, go next door to their neighbor's house and do things like help them find their cattle, things that presented a livelihood that no longer exist."

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Response time

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FEMA personnel were on the ground in all six states prior to the storm making landfall, including search and rescue teams, the Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, Health and Human Services, and the Department of Defense, Criswell added.

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Boots on the ground: national FEMA director tours Haywood

October 5, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Brionna Dallara| Section: News| 902 Words OpenURL Link

The national director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency toured the flood damage in Haywood County on Friday, alongside Gov. Roy Cooper while making a pledge that FEMA assistance is and will be available until recovery is complete.

FEMA director Deanne Criswell appeared at two press conferences in Haywood, one at the Pisgah Memorial Stadium in Canton and one in the lobby of the Haywood County Sheriff's Office.

"We are not going to leave until everybody has what they need for their recovery," Criswell said.

Criswell confirmed that FEMA does have enough funding to support the response for all states impacted by Helene.

"But hurricane season isn't over yet, and so we need to watch very closely what other storms might come, what impact that might have on the disaster relief fund, so we can work with Congress to ensure we have enough for not just the responses, but the ongoing recoveries from the storms that we've seen over the last several years," Criswell said.

No one has been denied FEMA assistance, she added.

As of Sunday, FEMA reports \$27 million has been distributed to North Carolinians to help with immediate needs.

Ahead of the storm

In Haywood, FEMA was on ground before the storm, said Allison Richmond, Haywood's emergency management public information officer.

"We've had incredible support from FEMA and the state," she said. "Groups doing swift-water rescues were FEMA teams. We made a state request for help and had teams from Indiana and Wisconsin here supporting us on the ground. They've been a great resource and took over specific parts of the response, which allowed the emergency operations center to manage higher level decisions. We were able to divide and conquer."

For example, truckloads of water were offloaded at the county's central flood supply delivery site at the Smoky Mountain Events Center and at the fire departments for distribution shortly after the storm ended Friday, Sept. 27.

Richmond said Haywood began monitoring the path of Hurricane Helene early in the week. The emergency management team, headed by Travis Donaldson, grew more alarmed with each update from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency.

"If we had not had the phenomenal and very precise weather forecast we had, Haywood County would have been in far worse shape," she said. "Their wording and strong language and accurate forecasting gave us the tools we needed to save lives. The forecasts spoke with language never used before."

For instance, NOAA warned of "catastrophic flooding on par with 1916" on Tuesday - 72 hours before Helene hit - and the Wednesday warning was even more dire. Each forecast got more precise.

The early warnings prompted Haywood to request state and federal help well before the storm hit. Teams from FEMA and ones dispatched by the N.C. Department of Public Safety Emergency Management were all on site before

the storm or immediately afterward, Richmond said.

It takes time for the specialized teams to mobilize and drive from several states away to reach a site, she explained.

"By the time teams staff up, leave their homes and families, drive in with boats, diesel trucks and the self-contained units they need to operate, they just can't assemble overnight," she said. "As soon as we knew we needed them, they were on the way. Our team was making steady requests. We got as much as we needed and backups for that. We completed our full-county search in record time."

By the following day, and even late Friday, helicopters with water and other essentials provided through FEMA were arriving in the county. The plan called to get them immediately to the fire departments, which are centrally located in each community. Because there was no cell service in the county, Richmond said it was hoped that many would automatically go to the fire department as the nearest emergency response site.

FFMA assistance

Criswell challenged those who are claiming federal agencies did not respond quickly to the disaster.

FEMA personnel were on the ground in all six states prior to the storm making landfall, as well as search and rescue teams, the Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, Health and Human Services, and the Department of Defense, Criswell added.

"Then, once we knew where the impacts were, then working with the governor's team, sending them out to the areas that had the greatest need," Criswell said. "I think one of the most important resources that we had on the ground was our Incident Management Assistance Teams that embed with the governor's team, so we have a clear line of communication to move things quickly once we know where the impacts are going to happen."

As for FEMA claims, hundreds have already been processed in response to Helene. However, if an individual hasn't received more information after registering or isn't receiving financial assistance immediately, it is most likely due to a lack of documentation.

"We understand there's a lot of people that don't have access to their information, maybe it's stored electronically. So we have teams that are out in the field, our Disaster Survivor Assistance teams, that can work with them to help gather that information," Criswell said. "In the future, as soon as it's safe in those communities and we have services and we're not taking away from the response efforts, we'll have disaster recovery centers that will also be able to help them."

Those impacted by Helene can register online at DisasterAssistance.gov, talk to somebody in a FEMA shirt who is part of a DSA team, or call the FEMA help line 1-800-621-3362.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Brionna Dallara, 'Boots on the ground: national FEMA director tours Haywood', *Mountaineer, The* (online), 5 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C0F1C3CD8CEEE0



Cruso suffers landslides, collapsed roads and washed out bridges

October 5, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Vicki Hyatt vhyatt@themountaineer.com| Section: News| 518 Words OpenURL Link

CRUSO — With the horror of the 2021 floods still fresh in their mind, Cruso community members heeded the warnings to evacuate to safer ground in advance of Helene.

Elijiah Tice, 13, whose father is the pastors at East Fork Baptist Church, was one of the 40 or so folks waiting out the storm at the Cruso community center. Both his home and church were in the direct path of the storm. The Tice family could see the church parking lot filling with water, becoming a lake of sorts at one point.

"Water was within 5 inches of the church door, but it didn't go in," Tice said. "Water came down behind the church and went right back into the river. It truly was a miracle."

East Fork Baptist was submerged in 5 to 6 inches of water in 2021, a fate that was avoided this time around.

Once the storm passed, those at the center slowly drifted away, likely to go home, he said. Those living in homes that flooded were doing what they could to clear out flooded carpets or other water-logged items, but without any power to run pumps or dehumidifiers, there was little to do beyond that.

Fire department crews set out immediately to survey the damage. Crews were assigned to go door-to-door to check on residents and determine what areas had been cut off — either through missing bridges, roads or other obstructions.

Landslides washing out roads and bridges is one of the biggest problems faced in Cruso.

"At one point there was no access to the community," Cruso Fire Chief Tim Henson said, referring to a major landslide on U.S. 276.

Four landslides prevented traffic in and out immediately post-flood. Locals with large equipment cleared three before Saturday afternoon when N.C. DOT crews arrived, but the one above Camp Hope is so large the state will have to tackle it.

Residents also pitched in to clear trees and even repair roads — leaning on lessons from 2021. Storm damage blocked access to both Chinquapin and Pisgah Creek roads, but folks found a back channel to get out in all-terrain vehicles, Henson said. By Sunday, a very rough road had been fashioned by local residents pitching in, and a N.C. DOT crew was working to even it out.

There are downed trees still on the road in places and other areas where sawdust is evidence that trees have been cut to open the road to traffic.

Past the community center, areas of pavement have buckled and cracked or have been undercut by water damage, making them unsafe for travel.

The Cruso Fire Department was the hub for storm response, but with no outside communication, department members relied on their private radio channel.

"As far as we know, we haven't lost any lives, and all we know of are accounted for," Henson said Saturday. "A landslide took out a house at the head of Chinquapin, but luckily the residents got out before that happened."

As they did previously, fire department crews will be working throughout the recovery period, lending a helping hand where needed, but the worst has passed, Henson said.

Now it's a matter of digging out.

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False rumors on social media hindering flood relief and hurting morale of responders

October 5, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Brionna Dallara| Section: News| 798 Words OpenURL Link

Keyboard warriors spreading misinformation and rumors on social media were taken to task by Haywood County leaders, joined by Gov. Roy Cooper and the national head of FEMA, during a press conference in Haywood County or Friday.

Haywood County Sheriff Bill Wilke addressed the negative online rhetoric — decrying what he called a "very small number of people" levying falsehoods on social media.

"The rumors and the misinformation are being generated by a very small number of people. I'm focusing on the people who are wearing boots and gloves and doing muck-outs and spending, in some cases, 18 hours a day working just to find family heirlooms that have been lost. My effort is on them," Wilke said. "I've been out in the field, and I've seen what's happening, and those voices are of no concern to me, and I'm asking the residents of this county to focus on what's good."

Wilke said those levying social media attacks and rumors are an insult to those who rolled up their sleeves to help others.

"You're harming the morale and the efforts of people who are out there putting themselves in harm's way to help others who have been impacted," Wilke said. "You've got residents in this county without power, without immediate access to transportation, food or water, who, without any regard for their own safety, go next door to their neighbor's house and do things like help them find their cattle."

Wilke said he has little patience for conspiracy theorists and falsities spread through social media.

"I would encourage the good residents of Western North Carolina to turn that garbage off. I have very little patience for it," Wilke said. "Get off Facebook, and get out there in a pair of boots and put on a pair of gloves and get to work."

Those rumors include allegations that emergency response and recovery efforts in Haywood have fallen short, when that couldn't be further from the case, according to local officials.

Chairman Kevin Ensley of the Haywood County Board of Commissioners added that Haywood's emergency management teams have been in the field 24/7 since Thursday morning.

"They set this up a week beforehand. So to say something that some of our emergency personnel aren't working is totally false," Ensley said.

FEMA rumors

An entourage of media outlets from across the state were on the ground in Haywood County Friday to follow Gov. Cooper and the national head of FEMA Deanne Criswell as they toured flood damage and met with local leaders. During a press conference, Criswell was questioned by media outlets about claims that FEMA funding had been diverted and, as a result, would fall short in meeting Helene disaster needs.

"One of the things that I've been hearing is our funding is being diverted to other things. I can tell you that that is false, completely false. Our funding is dedicated to this response. I've committed to Governor Cooper, and the other governors that were impacted, that we are here to support them," Criswell said. "Our funding is here for them, and

we are not going to leave until everybody has what they need for their recovery."

Criswell said that during a disaster of historic proportions, false information hinders people's access to essential resources and services. FEMA has had its resources in all six states impacted by the disaster, she added.

"We have been there since before the storm made landfall, before it impacted these communities. And I have teams embedded in each of the emergency operation centers to make sure we have a consistent line of communications to get those resources where they're needed," Criswell said.

"We have everything you need, Governor, everybody here in North Carolina," Criswell said to Cooper, "and we are going to continue to provide that assistance as long as you need it."

Criswell said she fears the misinformation could deter folks from applying for assistance.

"This level of misinformation creates this scenario where they won't even come to us, they won't even register, and I need people to register so they can get what they're eligible for through our programs," Criswell said.

Criswell challenged those who are claiming federal agencies did not respond quickly to the disaster.

FEMA personnel were on the ground in all six states prior to the storm making landfall, including search and rescue teams, the Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, Health and Human Services, and the Department of Defense, Criswell added.

"Then once we knew where the impacts were, then working with the governor's team, sending them out to the areas that had the greatest need," Criswell said. "I think one of the most important resources that we had on the ground was our Incident Management Assistance Teams that embed with the governor's team, so we have a clear line of communication to move things quickly once we know where the impacts are going to happen."

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IRS provides relief for Helene victims in the Carolinas

October 5, 2024 | Mt. Airy News, The (NC) Author: Staff Report | Section: Business | 416 Words OpenURL Link

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service this week announced disaster tax relief for all individuals and businesses affected by Hurricane Helene, including the entire states of Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina and parts of Florida, Tennessee and Virginia.

Taxpayers in these areas now have until May 1, 2025, to file various federal individual and business tax returns and make tax payments. Among other things, this includes 2024 individual and business returns normally due during March and April 2025, 2023 individual and corporate returns with valid extensions and quarterly estimated tax payments.

The IRS is offering relief to any area designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Besides all of Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina, this currently includes 41 counties in Florida, eight counties in Tennessee and six counties and one city in Virginia.

Individuals and households that reside or have a business in any one of these localities qualify for tax relief. The same relief will be available to other states and localities that receive FEMA disaster declarations related to Hurricane Helene. The current list of eligible localities is always available on the Tax relief in disaster situations page on IRS.gov.

The tax relief postpones various tax filing and payment deadlines that occurred beginning on Sept. 22, 2024, in Alabama; Sept. 23 in Florida; Sept. 24 in Georgia; Sept. 25 in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia; and Sept. 26 in Tennessee. In all of these states, the relief period ends on May 1, 2025 (postponement period). As a result, affected individuals and businesses will have until May 1, 2025, to file returns and pay any taxes that were originally due during this period.

This means, for example, that the May 1, 2025, deadline will now apply to:

Any individual or business that has a 2024 return normally due during March or April 2025.

Any individual, business or tax-exempt organization that has a valid extension to file their 2023 federal return. The IRS noted, however, that payments on these returns are not eligible for the extra time because they were due last spring before the hurricane occurred.

2024 quarterly estimated income tax payments normally due on Jan. 15, 2025, and 2025 estimated tax payments normally due on April 15, 2025.

Quarterly payroll and excise tax returns normally due on Oct. 31, 2024, and Jan. 31 and April 30, 2025.

In addition, the IRS is also providing penalty relief to businesses that make payroll and excise tax deposits. Relief periods vary by state.

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Helene creates piles of debris in Western NC that foretell long cleanup ahead

October 5, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Richard Stradling, News & Observer | Section: north carolina | 749 Words OpenURL Link

People in Western North Carolina still lack potable water, power and other basics after Tropical Storm Helene, and the search for the missing continues.

But some of the longer-term challenges of recovering from the storm are starting to come into focus, including how to deal with the mountains of fallen trees, shattered buildings and other debris.

Jonathan Kanipe, town manager of Biltmore Forest in Buncombe County, said Helene felled an "uncountable number" of trees in his heavily wooded community of 1,500. A debris removal company estimates it will collect 100,000 cubic yards of trees and limbs from the 3-square-mile town, Kanipe said.

"To visualize that, imagine a football field covered with material to a depth of 56 feet," he said at a press conference Thursday. "It's highly likely the final number will be greater than this."

The floodwaters that scoured Western North Carolina carried shattered pieces of farms, homes, country stores and campgrounds down the hills and valleys. Mangled cars and washing machines, propane tanks and the possessions of thousands of people are now snagged in tangled piles of trees felled by the wind and water.

The huge number of downed trees makes the task of cleaning up after Helene more daunting than after most hurricanes, said Joe Hack, a senior project manager for Mecklenburg County's solid waste department and president of the state chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America, a trade group.

"It's probably going to take months, maybe years, to get some of the debris up from some of the back areas," Hack said in an interview.

RAL_100224-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-07.JPGA scene from Biltmore Village in Asheville on Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2024. The area received extensive damage from flooding of the Swannanoa River after the remnants of Hurricane Helene caused torrential rainfall in Western North Carolina.

For most communities, clearing that debris is not yet a priority. Buncombe County is still in the "cut-and-clear" phase, moving trees and debris off to the side of blocked streets and roads, said county manager Avril Pinder.

But Pinder said the county has begun talking with municipalities about where that material will go. They have designated storage areas for storm debris, she said, but with the sheer volume created by Tropical Storm Helene, "we have to expand that tremendously."

Pinder said Buncombe County has also begun talking to state regulators about possibly burning some vegetative debris. State law prohibits most outdoor burning, but trees and other plants can be burned under certain conditions, according to the state Division of Air Quality.

As for building materials, furniture and other non-vegetative waste, the county is talking with companies that take construction and demolition debris, Pinder said.

"We know of a couple of places close by that we can haul that to," she said. "We're working with them now on contracts and what that will look like."

Drone video shows the damage to Biltmore Village in AshevilleBiltmore Village received extensive damage from

flooding of the Swannanoa River after the remnants of Hurricane Helene caused torrential rainfall in western North Carolina over the weekend.

Landfill shortage could become worse

The state Division of Solid Waste Management regulates and helps coordinate debris cleanup after a storm, Hack said. The Federal Emergency Management Agency will likely provide money to help pay for it. In Raleigh on Wednesday, President Joe Biden said he'd approved a request from Gov. Roy Cooper to pay the entire cost of debris removal for at least the next six months.

RAL_100224-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-26.JPGInches of mud cover Biltmore Village in Asheville on Wednesday October 2, 2204. The area received extensive damage from flooding of the Swannanoa River after the remnants of Hurricane Helene caused torrential rainfall in western North Carolina.

But it will primarily be up to each county and town to determine how to clean up, in concert with private hauling and disposal companies, Hack said.

"Each community will evaluate the best way to handle it as they go," he said. "There's a lot we don't know yet."

Hack said much of the material will be hauled to emergency debris sites, where some effort is made to separate trees, cars and refrigerators, household trash and hazardous materials, so each can be shipped to the right disposal facility.

Some counties have landfills that can take the material; others usually ship their waste out anyway and will need to find some place to take storm debris.

"Long-term, there is ultimately a landfill shortage or disposal capacity shortage in North Carolina," Hack said. "And this is just going to accelerate filling up some of the facilities."

RAL_100224-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-22.JPGA scene from Biltmore Village in Asheville on Wednesday, Oct. 2, 2204.

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