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Hurricane, port strike impact supply chains in Carolinas

BY JOHN MARKS
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Bananas, imported wine and beer, coffee and car parts — there’s a long list of items consumers across the Carolinas might struggle to find in coming weeks. A dockworker strike on the heels of a destructive hurricane is a main reason why, but shopping habits could become another.

“This is highly unusual,” said Robert Handfield, professor and supply chain expert at North Carolina State University. “Big storms hitting major interstate highways combined with port strikes is unprecedented.”

Hurricane Helene ripped through the Carolinas last week, cutting power to the western parts of both states.

Western North Carolina faced major flooding and widespread destruction. Many people across the Carolinas still are without power. The storm badly damaged major freight routes Interstate 40 and Interstate 26 near the North Carolina and Tennessee border.

Now, dockworkers across the eastern half of the country are on strike. That labor dispute will disrupt supply chains that rely on facilities in Wilmington, Morehead City and Charleston to stock



RICHARD BURKHART Savannah Morning News via Imagn Images

An International Longshoremen’s Association member holds a picket sign along with fellow union members outside the entrance to the Garden City Terminal in Georgia on Tuesday as the ILA went on strike at the Georgia Ports Authority.

the region with goods.

GROCERY STORE SUPPLY CHAIN IMPACT

Mark Ferguson is an associate dean at

the University of South Carolina’s Darla Moore School of Business. Grocery stores across the Carolinas that lost

SEE SUPPLY CHAINS, 6A

Donors with Charlotte ties give millions to Helene relief

BY JOE MARUSAK
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The Charlotte-based Leon Levine Foundation committed \$5 million this week to Hurricane Helene relief efforts in the devastated North Carolina mountains — the latest big donation from a foundation, company or individual based in or with a strong presence in Charlotte.

“This is a time our broader community must come together to help those in need,” Tom Lawrence, Leon Levine Foundation president and CEO, said in a statement.

Helene killed at least 143 people in the Southeast, CNN reported Tuesday afternoon. Authorities confirmed 57 deaths in Buncombe County, home of Asheville, Sheriff Quentin Miller said Tuesday. The storm erased downtown Chimney Rock and other areas of the mountains and left thousands homeless.

An initial \$1 million went to the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina to help in 18 counties, Lawrence said. The foundation also has accelerated payments of scheduled 2025 grants and given more grants to its non-profit partners in the mountains, he said.

Leon Levine, founder of the first Family Dollar store in Charlotte, established the foundation in 1980.

OTHER BIG DONATIONS TO HELP HELENE VICTIMS

On Tuesday, American Airlines, which has a hub at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, announced that AAdvantage members have donated more than \$2 million to American Red Cross Helene relief.

And wireless provider Spectrum committed \$1 million to Helene relief in the Carolinas, Florida and Georgia.

The Connecticut-based company will donate \$50,000 each to the NC Disaster Relief Fund, OneSC Fund and Volunteer Florida Foundation, the company announced Tuesday.

Spectrum will give an additional \$100,000 to local organizations in areas hardest hit by Helene, including in and around Asheville; Spartanburg, South Carolina; Georgia and the west Florida coast. Spectrum is giving \$750,000 in free public service announcements to the organizations.

Last Saturday, the foundation headed by the owners of the Carolina Panthers and Charlotte FC committed to an initial donation to Helene relief in the Carolinas. The David and Nicole Tepper Foundation, and the Teppers’ two local sports organizations, announced an initial pledge of \$3 million.

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A view over flood-damaged western North Carolina on Monday as Andy Petree flies a helicopter through Operation Airdrop to deliver supplies.

Helicopter pilot flies supplies to NC Helene flood victims

BY JULIA COIN
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HICKORY

Right now in North Carolina, an index card could save a life.

Blue-lined, 3-by-5-inch papers sit in a grid on a plastic folding table inside Hickory Regional Airport, listing coordinates and what those stranded in Hurricane Helene’s aftermath need:

Baby formula.

Insulin.

Help.

A patchwork group of pilots inside the two-room airport grab three or four cards at a time, head to their helicopters

and fly west. Fuel is expensive. If they end up unable to land on the rickety terrain in the mangled Appalachian Mountains, they need more cards, more options before turning back. Organizers realized that halfway through their second day of missions.

But Andy Petree, a retired NASCAR analyst for ESPN, takes just one card at 5:56 p.m. Monday. The sun will set in about two hours. This is his sixth and last trip of the day. His first was 12 hours ago, when he flew his son out of their hometown, Hendersonville, and dropped him at Petree’s Lake Norman house, one with its own helipad, near Charlotte.

For his second to last trip, Petree flew

out to Black Mountain, where he rescued a family of three and their dogs.

Now, Petree loads Pampers diapers, Similac baby formula, his wife’s PB&J sandwiches and a Charlotte Observer reporter into his private helicopter and lifts off from the landing strip that’s about three football fields long.

The 66-year-old is one of 37 pilots offering their private aircraft to Operation Airdrop, a nonprofit that sends volunteer pilots and their aircraft with essential supplies after disaster.

In Asheville, Swannanoa, Lake Lure, Marshall, and many parts of western North Carolina, people are only reach-

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