

NCHSAA extends fall seasons

October 12, 2024 | Sampson Independent, The (Clinton, NC) Author: Brandt Young Sports Editor | Section: sports | 194 Words OpenURL Link

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association announced Wednesday that fall sports season will be extended due to Hurricane Helene which struck the western portion of the state earlier this month.

In a statemen, they said, "These discussions were necessitated by the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina."

Furthermore, that impacts the postseason schedule as well, as the conclusion of fall sports was set back in most cases. Many of the changes are to the season reporting deadlines, which allow make-up games to take place. There are still limits on practices and total number of games in a week, though.

"Changes to the fall calendar are difficult as well as complex but necessary," said NCHSAA President Dr. Stephen Gainey and NCHSAA Commissioner Que Tucker in a joint statement. "Keeping our student-athletes safe as we try to minimize risk of injury was central to any decisions made. We commend the work of the NCHSAA staff in its research, the Board of Directors in making time to consider these changes and the willingness of our host partners to accommodate any changes and make their venues available."

The new schedules are outlined in the attached fact box.

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HOOD: Helene brought out the best in Carolinians

October 12, 2024 | Sanford Herald, The (NC) Author: JOHN HOOD | Section: Archives | 651 Words OpenURL Link

RALEIGH

As we mourn the deaths and grapple with the destruction inflicted on our state by Hurricane Helene, I submit that the storm has brought out much that is good about North Carolina — and much that is vile about social media.

I'll start with the positive. Residents of the mountain counties most affected by Helene have fought heroically for their lives, their families, and their neighbors, often against long odds and terrifying threats. They haven't fought alone. Others from across North Carolina and beyond flocked in to help.

We've only just begun to collect their stories of prudent planning, daring rescues, and dogged determination. These tales feature the likes of Hendersonville's James White, who led more than a dozen neighbors sheltering in his home to safety with ropes and lifejackets, as well as Eddie Hunnell, recently moved to North Carolina from Colorado, who leapt into the swollen New River to save a stranger, Lesley Worth, separated from her husband by the raging stream.

At larger scale, hundreds of churches, charities, companies, and volunteer networks sprang to the assistance of their fellow Carolinians. So did law enforcement, fire and rescue teams, and emergency-response personnel from counties, municipalities, state agencies, and other public authorities.

On the ground, we've seen a great deal of cooperation across jurisdictional and political boundaries. Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler, for example, sent North Carolina Forest Service staffers familiar with the rugged terrain to guide National Guard units into position. On Oct. 7, Democratic and Republican appointees on the State Board of Elections voted unanimously to empower local boards in 13 hard-hit counties to modify the locations and hours of early-voting sites and other election procedures — but only by bipartisan votes of those boards, a prudent constraint to reassure a jittery public.

Democratic mayors have worked closely with Republican county commissioners to coordinate relief. Gov. Roy Cooper, U.S. Sens. Thom Tillis and Ted Budd, lawmakers from both parties — all have pitched in to comfort victims, survey damage, coordinate responses, and convey timely, accurate information to the public.

That's not to say there haven't been miscues and disagreements. Tillis and Budd questioned the pace at which military personnel from Fort Liberty and other bases were deployed into the devastated counties after the storm. Others have criticized the adequacy of response by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

While it will take some time to sort out all the claims and counterclaims, it's not too early to label these issues as legitimate topics for debate.

Unfortunately, much of the "debate" unfolding on social media over the past week has been anything but legitimate. Whether spreading wacky conspiracy theories about lithium mines and weather control or uttering grotesque slanders about Kamala Harris and Joe Biden intentionally "letting" Republican voters "drown," a host of very-online, supposedly conservative provocateurs and hacks have made a bad situation immeasurably worse.

Here's what a real conservative leader, state Sen. Kevin Corbin, had to say. "PLEASE help stop this junk," wrote Corbin, who represents North Carolina's eight westernmost counties. "It is just a distraction to people trying to do their job."

"Folks, this is a catastrophic event of which this country has never known. It is the largest crisis event in the history of N.C. The state is working non-stop. DOT has deployed workers from all over the state. Duke [Energy] has 10,000 workers on this. FEMA is here. The National Guard is here in large numbers."

Some incendiary memes are likely the product of misunderstandings, such as emergency officials redirecting volunteers away from dangerous roadways or relief agencies refusing certain donated items they aren't equipped to store or distribute. Others may well be the result of bad calls made in good faith, in stressful conditions, by officials with incomplete information or inadequate training.

Can policymakers properly second-guess such decisions after the fact? Of course! That time will come. Right now, our immediate challenges remain rescue and relief — challenges our fellow North Carolinians have met with magnificent resilience.

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WAGNER: Recovery efforts and precious moments continue

October 12, 2024 | Sanford Herald, The (NC) Author: BO WAGNER | Section: Archives | 903 Words OpenURL Link

It has been a very long week. What began as a one-day effort to clean up and recover in our area quickly morphed into an every day effort to get supplies and relief to all the affected areas of Western North Carolina. Hurricane Helene ravaged the area in unfathomable ways, but God's people all over have risen to the occasion to bring rescue, relief, and restoration.

I did not know that our church was going to become a local hub, receiving and transporting food, water, and other needed supplies to the mountains. God knew, and he has made it work. Our family life building, The Hope Center, has seen mountains of supplies pass back and forth through its doors, and both our church trailer and many of the personal trailers of our people have headed to Hendersonville, Asheville, Swannanoa, Fair View, and many other places.

It has been pretty eye-opening. In a disaster this large, I would have expected to see large amounts of people and help from state and federal sources, and that has simply not been the case as I write this. It has pretty well exclusively been a huge number of local churches, citizens, and also Samaritan's Purse that have been getting the job done.

Pastor Mike Rogers and Gashes Creek Baptist Church in Asheville particularly stand out to me. We have carried probably eighty% of our supplies up to them and then joined to help them carry them into every community. Pastor Doug Raynes and his sweet people at Progress Baptist in Hendersonville have also done yeoman's work.

Going into some of the affected areas has been breathtaking. We pulled a trailer of supplies down a barely-there mud path that just a week earlier was a paved, two-lane state road. Had my truck not been four-wheel drive, there is no way we could have made it. And what we saw when we got there was amazing. An entire community of mostly older folks, basically cut off since none of them seemed to have four-wheel drives, had banded together to survive. They were using a flat top griddle in the center of the neighborhood to cook for everyone, and then had rigged up a pipe to carry water from a natural spring to provide cleaning and flushing water for everyone.

They had a posted list of everyone who has carried supplies in to them; they called it their angel list. We dropped off supplies and carried their trash away for them.

From there, we went into decidedly poorer sections, mostly trailer parks. The biggest of them had been completely flooded, and the residents were gutting everything by hand and piling the innards of the trailers outside onto the ground. Here is what really got me in that one: while we were unloading supplies for them, a young man came out of one of those gutted trailers carrying a box of canned goods, handed them to us, and said, "I have enough of these to last a good while; take these to some others who can use them."

We have gotten calls from as far away as Canada and Hawaii asking how to help. People from 4,500 miles away are touching the lives of people they have never met.

An elderly Hispanic lady smiled from ear to ear when we gave her a pack of paper plates. I never imagined I would ever see anyone show such joy at so small a thing. It kind of puts things in perspective, doesn't it? We often complain about the most trivial things; imagine how much of what you have you would need to lose before you could smile over paper plates.

On Sunday, Oct. 6, our entire church stayed around after the morning service and loaded up a twenty-foot, double axle, enclosed trailer with supplies, mostly water. And then several of our folks hauled them up to Gashes Creek.

Water weighs eight pounds per gallon; it is heavy. And yet, it was not until everything was delivered, unloaded, and our folks with the trailer were all the way back that one of the tires blew and shredded. Please bear with me as I imagine the angel that had his hands around the tire the whole way, keeping it together until he could safely let go.

We have ordered a mountain of sleeping bags to distribute; the post office is going to hate us. Yes, I know all of this is really random; I have a lot of things on my heart and no good way to give them a poetic flow.

We passed a house by the side of the road that did not used to be by the side of the road; the flood water simply picked it up off of its foundation and carried it more than a quarter of a mile away. An old, beat-up vehicle was nearly completely buried on one side of the road, while an expensive BMW was mostly buried on the other. A jeep was on its side in a hole, the door nearly flush with the ground. A tractor-trailer with "Never Forget" on the side was partially inside a home.

No one was complaining. No one was giving up. Every person we talked to was determined to recover and rebuild. As one of my men so aptly put it, "This is Appalachia, Preacher; these people are used to surviving."

I am just glad God has moved on the heart of so many to help them do so.

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D.G. MARTIN: The great floods of 1916 and 2024

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One of Miss Letitia Currie's favorite topics in her history class in the 1950s at Davidson Junior High School was the Great Flood of 1916.

Miss Currie was the daughter of a Davidson College professor.

Many of her students also knew what she was talking about because their parents had experienced that 1916 flood and talked about it whenever rain poured down hard.

Today, many of Miss Currie's students, their parents and grandparents, great grandparents, and their children and grandchildren are having a similar experience dealing with the flooding that followed Hurricane Helene.

And they will be talking about it for the rest of their lives, calling it "The great flood of 2024."

"News of Davidson," the news outlet in my hometown, published the following account by Gatewood Payne Campbell, granddaughter of Davidson professor Gatey Workman and niece of the late, great opera singer William Workman. Gatewood and her husband Johnny live near Black Mountain.

"Life has stopped. We don't know dates or times. Sirens are 24 hours a day. It's relentless. Helicopters invade our sky. Chainsaws sound nonstop and we run outside in hopes it's in our neighborhood. ...

"Let me back up. We awoke around 6 Friday morning without power. The storm was loud and pounding but we didn't know where we were in the storm. We could not get updates. Around 8:30 we lost internet across cell lines. I called a friend and got her to look at radar and let me know an ETA on rain ending. That was the last call I was able to make. By 9:30 ALL cell signal was completely lost. The rain was increasing. We could see the creek rising. Johnny stepped outside under the porch and was soaked from head to toe after 30 seconds.

"Around 11 we felt like we could go out and survey the neighborhood. We began to feel the weight of the destruction, yet we had NO clue. The creek had turned into a river greater than 50 yards wide. The noise of water heaters, propane tanks, bikes, grills, construction supplies and yard equipment banging on the rails of our bridge to Black Mountain was deafening. We saw two neighbors with trees on their homes and knew they were taking on water."

Meanwhile in Asheville, Bryan King and his wife Angela Koh are assessing the damage to their 12 Bones Smokehouse on Foundry Street in the River Arts District. As I wrote in my book, "North Carolina's Eateries," "Even if 12 Bones had not been made famous by Barack Obama's visits there, it would be a 'must-do' in Asheville." When I first visited 12 Bones several years ago, it was located closer to the French Broad River. Had Bryan and Angela not moved the restaurant few blocks up the hill it would have been completely washed away. At its current location they may be able to repair and survive.

Angela's sister writes, "As the floodwaters recede, we see catastrophic damage to homes and businesses, including the River Arts District, where 12 Bones was founded. Entire livelihoods have been lost. In nearly every direction you look, everything is caked in mud and scattered debris. Broken wood and mangled wiring now stand where intersections once existed."

Coincidentally, on Oct. 15, the publisher Blair is releasing "River Road," a book of poems by mountain author Wayne Caldwell. His fine poetry describes the power of the flooding waters on the French Broad as shown in the following

excerpt:

SELECTION FROM "RIVER ROAD" BY WAYNE CALDWELL

The French Broad, being a river, floods.

How many times over the millennia has it left its banks

and moved whatever was swept up in it

To some far away (and sometimes ridiculous) place?

Perhaps thousands. And each time it returned to its placid face.

The worst (in the last century) was in July 1916.

Asheville's Riverside Park was washed away.

Parts of which one could have seen rushing by my house

Had it been there then. (Even this relatively high ground

Would have been inundated for several days.)

Only a half dozen people died in Asheville,

Which I'd consider a small miracle. Thanks to the telephone,

Warning came to Marshall, and only two or three drowned,

Even though the courthouse was about the only thing left

On Main Street. Fifty-Three houses disappeared.

From high ground one could have seen rushing by

Bales of cotton, houses, mules, gas tanks,

Vehicles, sheds, chickens, roosting on pieces of roof,

Tires, fences, trees, pigs, dogs, cats,

Anything thing not tied down — and many things that were.

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NC legislators vote to approve \$273 million in Helene recovery funds

October 12, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC)

Author: Sarah Gleason; Wilmington StarNews | Section: News | 915 Words

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Mountain people don't normally ask for help, Rep. Jennifer Balkcom, R-Henderson, said as she shuffled tears away from her eyes, but right now, they need it.

North Carolina legislators returned to Raleigh for a morning news conference and votes in the afternoon on Wednesday for initial Helene recovery funds.

The bill, which passed in the House and Senate unanimously and now heads to the governor's desk, was introduced by Senate Leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, and House Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, and includes \$273 million in funds. for now.

Helene swept across the Southeastern U.S., devastating Western North Carolina. In the wake of the devastating effects of the storm, entire homes were swept away in the overflowing rivers, landslides destroyed personal property, and residents were left without power and service, some even losing their family and friends.

It's been a little over a week since the unprecedented destruction occurred, and over 20 counties are finally able to start repairing some of the damage. But one thing is very clear, this recovery will take years.

"This is just a first step for us to take as legislators," Berger said.

Legislators are scheduled to return on Oct. 24 to continue what Moore called "a herculean task."

House Bill 149, is just one piece of the relief puzzle, with federal funding and assistance flowing in and community members stepping up.

"If it weren't for nonprofits, if it weren't for the churches, if it weren't for just ordinary citizens, we would have a much bigger crisis on our hands than what we do right now," Moore said.

President Joe Biden approved 100% Federal Emergency Management Agency reimbursement to affected North Carolinians for six months, Cooper has been on the ground connecting residents with resources, over 1,500 North Carolina National Guard members have been deployed and the state's Department of Justice is working to hold companies accountable for any instances of price gouging.

Affected residents can apply for aid at Home | disasterassistance.gov.

What the bill includes

In total, they are spending \$273 million which will go toward the established "Hurricane Helene Disaster Recovery Fund (Helene Fund)," according to the bill. It also extends the declaration of emergency until March, 2025.

The funding can be used in the affected counties established by the president and Nash County.

For those wondering why more money is not being spent, Berger said this is just the beginning.

"This is not all of it," Berger said. "Not by a long shot."

Moore also noted the role that federal funding plays in the matter, saying they expect the federal government to contribute 90 percent and the state 10 percent. They don't want to get ahead of federal funding as to take up unnecessary costs, he added.

The Department of Public Safety and the Division of Emergency Management, state agencies who are supporting Helene recovery, will receive \$250 million.

The Department of Public Instruction will receive \$16 million, which will support the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. The bill also includes school calendar flexibility, remote instruction allowance and states that teachers will still be compensated regularly.

To provide grants to local government, \$2 million will go to the Office of State Budget and Management.

The North Carolina State Board of Elections will receive \$5 million. The board asked for around \$2 million, but the legislature wanted to provide additional funding to support local boards as well as include several other counties affected by Helene that were not included in the board's resolution made this week that only applied to 13 counties.

The bill also includes water treatment, building and burning provisions that Moore said are supposed to help speed up recovery efforts.

"We don't need these efforts tied up in bureaucracy," Moore said.

Additionally, this bill, if signed into law by Cooper, asks the governor to put a hold on late and lost fees within the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Rep. Caleb Rudow, D-Buncombe, requested a separate bill be brought to the floor which would have extended the deadline to register to vote among other voting asks, however, the bill was not picked up for a vote.

Despite both chambers having Republican supermajorities, House Democratic Leader Rep. Robert Reives, D-Chatham, said "This is not a partisan issue," saying they represent the entire state.

The House also took a moment of silence for those lost in the storm before adjourning for the day.

Looking forward

Misinformation surrounding the presence of relief efforts from the state and federal government has been swirling, some fueled by top politicians like Donald Trump who has been criticizing the administration's handling of Helene recovery efforts. His claim that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) doesn't have enough funding because they've been using it on undocumented immigrants is false.

Without referencing specific concerns, Mark Pless, R-Haywood, Madison, said the legislature will need to look into why certain issues occurred directly after Helene, while adding that now is not the time to do so.

"There were some challenges initially that could not be met for reasons that we will determine," Pless said, who is co-chair of the House Disaster Recovery and Homeland Security committee.

In response to a New York Times article which claimed regulatory reform from state Republicans made Helene worse in the state, Moore said it was not true.

"They want to play politics with a disaster," Moore said about the claims that he rejected.

Rep. Lindsey Prather, D-Buncombe, spoke with emotion about her community, saying "we need to show folks that the government has their back, right now, at the time they need it most."

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On a mission to inspire, national 'Creative' organization opens Wilmington chapter

October 12, 2024 | StarNews (Wilmington, NC) Author: John Staton, Wilmington StarNews| Section: Entertainment| 916 Words OpenURL Link

As the outer bands of Hurricane Helene blew through Wilmington on Sept. 27, about 75 people assembled in the ballroom of historic Thalian Hall for what would be the inaugural gathering of national organization Creative Mornings' brand-new Wilmington chapter.

The crowd, which included musicians, actors, visual artists, arts administrators and even a few people who claimed not to have a creative bone in their bodies, was lively despite the stormy weather and the 8:30 a.m. hour, chatting as they enjoyed free coffee and doughnuts, and commenting on each others' answers to a question on a name tag handed out when they arrived: "What advice would you give to your younger self?"

After 30 minutes of socializing and opening remarks by Creative Mornings chapter host Kerry Skiles and Thalian Hall director Shane Fernando, it was time for the main event: A Ted Talk-like presentation by James Tritten of Wilmington label Fort Lowell Records on the topic of "reflection."

"People in creative fields or who are doing creative projects, there's always something you can learn from them," Skiles said during an interview a week or so after Creative Mornings made its Wilmington debut. "It's really about just connecting with people in the community. We want this to reflect what the community needs."

The Creative Mornings motto? "Everyone is creative."

Skiles, a native of Edenton, lived in Wilmington in the early 2000s before moving to Raleigh, where she lived for about two decades before returning to Wilmington a couple of years ago.

During her time in Raleigh she attended monthly Creative Mornings meet-ups for close to a decade, and "every time I left one, I was like, 'I'm so inspired,'" she said.

When she looked for a Wilmington chapter of Creative Mornings and found there wasn't one, she decided to start her own. Founded in Brooklyn in 2008, Creative Mornings now boasts some 238 chapters in 69 countries. According to its website, about 70,000 people attend a Creative Mornings event worldwide each month.

Events are typically held on the last Friday morning of the month, with all chapters hosting a speaker who expounds on a common theme. In September, it was "reflection."

Aside from a minor technical glitch that cropped up when slides she had prepared didn't project properly, the inaugural event seemed to go swimmingly.

"It became bigger than we expected," Skiles said, "And that was just from word of mouth."

September's speaker, James Tritten of Fort Lowell Records, told the story of how the label he runs with wife, the singer Tracy Shedd, started in Tuscon, Arizona, and responded to a tragic shooting there in 2011 by trying to put positive energy back into the community via a compilation album of local bands that raised money for anti-violence causes.

The label has released 76 albums since its founding 2009, the majority of them since Tritten and Shedd moved to Wilmington in 2018. In 2020, inspired by the George Floyd/Black Lives Matter protests, Fort Lowell released a compilation album of Wilmington bands called "GROW" that has funded scholarships for a half-dozen students through the Wilmington chapter of the NAACP.

That project, Tritten said, "helped us realize the beauty of what was here," and he also talked about the label's "This Water Is Life" series of albums that pairs Wilmington indie rockers with local hip-hop artists to raise money for environmental causes.

"We took it as an opportunity to share the story of Fort Lowell. To reflect back, but also creating this idea of, 'I just want to shed light on the things around me,'" Tritten said. "I went at it wanting to ensure that there was an opportunity for inspiration to be had."

In talking with people after his talk and "having people tell me, 'That really was inspiring,' I definitely left feeling good," Tritten said.

When Skiles first asked him to speak at Creative Mornings, Tritten said, "My first question was, 'Where's the money?' If anyone was making money off this, I was going to have a problem with it. I quickly recognized Kerry is doing exactly what I'm doing, which is trying to shed light on our peers and our community."

After talking with her, he said, "I realized, I have to be involved with this."

Skiles said that Creative Mornings meet-ups are required by the national organization to be free, with volunteer labor and meeting space, food and coffee all donated.

"That's kind of the beauty of it," Skiles said. "Chapters aren't run as profit-making machines, and there's not this underbelly of having to raise money."

The idea is for the meet-up to be in a new place each month, at least at first, though Skiles said it might evolve into having "a go-to place sprinkled in with other locations."

Wilmington's second Creative Mornings meet-up will be 8:30 a.m. Friday, Oct. 25 at the Cameron Art Museum and feature filmmaker Christopher Everett, director of the 1898 documentary "Wilmington on Fire" and co-founder of Wilmington's Three Chambers Festival, which has a combined focus on film, hip-hop and martial arts.

"I've always been a fan of Creative Mornings. It's like Ted Talk for creatives," Everett said. "I plan on talking about creating a vision for a creative future. This story is important to me."

Skiles said that, as speakers, Tritten and Everett "appealed to me in different ways. They had an idea and they wanted to bring it to life, and that's just inspiring."

Want to go?

* What: Creative Morning Wilmington monthly meet-up with featured speaker, filmmaker Christopher Everett

* When: 8:30 a.m. Friday, Oct. 25

* Where: Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington

* Details: Free. Coffee and snacks provided.

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Want to donate to flood victims? Money needed more than supplies

October 12, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC)

Author: SARAH C. JOHNSON sjohnson@hickoryrecord.com BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com | Section: Mapping | 864 Words OpenURL Link

Send money, not water. That's the advice Catawba County United Way Executive Director Mark Bumgarner off ered Wednesday for people wanting to aid people in the portions of North Carolina ravaged by Hurricane Helene.

At one point, the Catawba County United Way had four drop-off sites for donations. As of Wednesday, all sites have been closed to donations. Bumgarner said donations were stacked to the ceiling in every room of the Catawba County United Way office building. Volunteers would send out the donations. As soon as the mountain of items disappeared, new donations would arrive to take their place. "We are actively turning people away with donations now. Not because we want to but because we have to," Bumgarner said. On Wednesday, there were still piles of items throughout the Catawba County United Way offices. Bumgarner said the Catawba County United Way also has two warehouses full of items such as toiletries, nonperishables and bottled water.

Bumgarner said the Catawba County United Way sent supplies in small amounts to pocket communities near Marion and Hendersonville that still needed help on Wednesday.

"There is the possibility that we may need to warehouse things for just a small amount of time until the need develops again, or we see if the need develops again," Bumgarner said. "I certainly can't rule out that if we discover that western North Carolina truly has what it needs, and that's not going to be an issue, then depending on what happens in Florida (as Hurricane Milton approaches) some of these things get sent to Florida. I don't know those answers yet, it's still too fluid."

Bumgarner said the response made him proud to live in Catawba County. Bumgarner said he appreciates that people still want to help. He said the best way to help now is to send money. Bumgarner said checks can be brought to Catawba County United Way. Monetary donations can also be given to the United Way of North Carolina, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the Samaritan's Purse.

"If you're not sure about who a legitimate partner is, feel free to call us and we'll give you tools for you to research organizations for yourself before you make a donation," Bumgarner said. The Catawba County United Way can be contacted at 828-327-6851. The office is located at 2760 Tate Blvd. in Hickory.

McDowell County

Our neighbors to the west in McDowell and Burke counties are recovering from flooding.

McDowell County suffered devastating flooding, especially in Marion and Old Fort, during Hurricane Helene.

Burke County experienced major flooding as well in Morganton and Glen Alpine. Areas along the Catawba River were ravaged by the intense overflow. McDowell County has stopped accepting donations of supplies, according to the county's Hurricane Helene information website mcdowellcares.org.

Money can still be donated to McDowell County by visiting mcdowellcares.org.

Burke County

Burke County has stopped accepting donations, too. "Our donation room is full of surplus supplies, and the number of individuals seeking assistance through donations continues to decrease now that power is rapidly restored," Burke County officials said in a news release on Monday.

Burke County said their donation center at 2128 S. Sterling St. stopped taking donations at 8 p.m. on Tuesday. The county said donations can be restarted at any time if the need arises.

"Thanks to your incredible outpouring of support, the community is saturated with clean water, food, hygiene supplies, blankets, and other items," Burke officials said. "Burke County will continue to warehouse the surplus supplies and to serve as a western North Carolina resource hub."

If Burke County citizens need help getting supplies, they can still contact one of four fire departments: George Hildebran Fire/Rescue, Longtown Fire Department, Enola Fire Department, Brendletown Fire/Rescue station 1 or the Jonas Ridge Fire Department.

"The community is returning to work, school and their daily responsibilities," Burke County said. "This requires relief efforts to transition from short-term, life-sustaining efforts to a more long-term relief strategy that supports housing, food and economic insecurities."

Anyone who wishes to donate money toward relief in Burke County can send money to the Community Foundation of Burke County. The group set up an emergency relief fund to provide grants to local nonprofits providing resources for housing, food and economic insecurities created by hurricane Helene. As of Monday, the fund had raised more than \$100,000. The fund will provide grants of up to \$10,000, according to the foundation's website.

FEMA rumors

"There's things out there like FEMA is confiscating items or supplies, there's no truth at all to that," FEMA spokesperson Nate Custer said, referring to a rumor that FEMA is taking donated items and not disbursing them to affected communities. "We always say, particularly for people outside the affected area, a cash contribution is the most effective way (to help)."

Custer said people should give to the Red Cross or other established organizations. Custer also said well-intentioned deeds may not be helpful.

"People get a pick-up, get a few neighbors, get a few supplies in a truck and head on down to western North Carolina," Custer said. "That's difficult with the roads, they're not sure where to go, there's a problem in not knowing exactly where to drop those (donations off)."

Sarah Johnson is the courts and breaking news reporter for the Hickory Daily Record.

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SARAH C. JOHNSON sjohnson@hickoryrecord.com BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com, 'Want to donate to flood victims? Money needed more than supplies', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2A4C29DAE4058



HURRICANE MILTON POUNDS FLORIDA; AT LEAST 8 KILLED

October 12, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Mapping | 96 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Milton made landfall Wednesday night in Siesta Key near Sarasota, about 70 miles south of Tampa, as a Category 3 storm, bringing misery to a coast still ravaged by Helene. The storm pounded cities with winds of over 100 mph after producing a barrage of tornadoes, but it spared Tampa a direct hit. St. Petersburg recorded over 16 inches of rain. Milton then barreled into the Atlantic Ocean on Thursday, leaving at least eight people dead and over 3 million without power. Above, a crane lays across 1st Avenue South on Thursday in St. Petersburg.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'HURRICANE MILTON POUNDS FLORIDA; AT LEAST 8 KILLED', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2A4C1E261D970



Biffle 'should get Medal of Freedom'

October 12, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: BRIAN LINDER pennlive.com| Section: Mapping | 432 Words OpenURL Link

The heroic efforts of NASCAR driver Greg Biffle in the wake of Hurricane Helene are not going unnoticed.

In fact, ESPN's Marty Smith, seems to have a pretty good idea about what should await Biffle when this is all over.

"Former NASCAR driver Greg Biffle should receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his ongoing and ceaseless heroic efforts in western North Carolina, using his helicopter and coordinating w/ others to save lives," Smith wrote on X. "Go to @gbiffle to see his amazing effort. Thank you Greg."

For those that missed it, Biffle, who is also a pilot, has been using his personal helicopter to fly emergency relief missions to deliver supplies to victims of the storm in western North Carolina.

Biffle has shared some of his runs on X, and the guy has flown into some tight spaces to help save people.

"Trees. Canyons. Power Lines," he wrote in a post on X along with a video of him landing in a narrow strip of open grass in an otherwise heavily wooded area. "Glad this little beast of a helicopter can make it to the areas unreachable by larger aircraft."

Biffle shared a second video explaining the landing in the tight space that shows folks on the ground using a mirror to signal to the helicopter.

"The mirror that caught our attention well over a mile away," he wrote. "Only way we were able to find someone stranded in the mountain at bottom of steep canyon. 6 attempts to land due to difficulty but we got there – got him a chainsaw, Epipens, insulin, chicken food, formula, gas, 2 stroke oil, and sandwiches premade from Harris Teeter before we left."

Biffle is also reportedly dropping off Starlinks to the victims so they can access the internet.

Many in NASCAR have pitched in to help, but Biffle's effort has been amazing.

The 54-year-old was named one of NASCAR's 75 Greatest Drivers in 2023 and is up for induction into the NACAR Hall of Fame.

Not alone

Hendrick Motorsports and Joe Gibbs Racing also flew their helicopters to areas in western North Carolina.

JGR collected water and non-perishable food items at its race shop in Huntersville to be delivered by one of the team's haulers. JGR posted on social media that it is continuing to accept financial donations online, which should be titled as "Hurricane Relief."

Hendrick's aviation team also had been flying out to western North Carolina to support hurricane relief efforts since Sept. 29 and planned to continue as long as the critical needs exist. HMS has been working with organizations like Samaritan's Purse and Atrium Health to distribute resources to the people.

• Citation (aglc Style)

BRIAN LINDER pennlive.com, 'Biffle 'should get Medal of Freedom'', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2A4C1A38EE3D8>



NCHSAA approves fall sports modifications

October 12, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: FROM STAFF REPORTS | Section: Mapping | 504 Words OpenURL Link

On Wednesday, the N.C. High School Athletic Association announced changes to the fall sports calendar, extending the regular seasons.

The move comes in the wake of Hurricane Helene. Fall sports teams in western North Carolina haven't been able to compete for the better part of two weeks due to damage from the storm.

"Changes to the fall calendar are difficult as well as complex but necessary," said NCHSAA President Dr. Stephen Gainey and NCHSAA Commissioner Que Tucker in a joint statement. "Keeping our student-athletes safe as we try to minimize risk of injury was central to any decisions made. We commend the work of the NCHSAA staff in its research, the Board of Directors in making time to consider these changes, and the willingness of our host partners to accommodate any changes and make their venues available."

The Board approved changes and modifications to the schedule. Sunday practices and competitions are still prohibited.

The football regular season will be extended by one week. The regular season will end on Nov. 9 and playoff brackets will be released on Nov. 10.

The football playoffs will begin with the first round on Nov. 15, with the following rounds being played each Friday night. State championships will be played on Friday, Dec. 20, and Saturday, Dec. 21.

The updated calendar is as follows:

FOOTBALL

Effective immediately, a minimum of three calendar days (72 hours) must occur in between contests.

• "Reporting deadline: Nov. 9, 11:59 p.m. (revised from Nov. 1) "

• Seeding: Nov. 10 (Sunday, after 1 p.m.) "

• First round: Nov. 15

• " Second round: Nov. 22 "

• Third round: Nov. 29 "

• Fourth round: Dec. 6

•" Regionals: Dec. 13

• " State Championships: Dec. 20-21

WOMEN'S TENNIS

Individual "

• Reporting deadline: Oct. 14, 11:59 p.m. (revised from 3 p.m. to allow for an extra day of competition)

"• Regionals: Oct. 18-19

• " State Championships: Oct. 25-26

Dual Team

• " Reporting deadline: Oct. 17, 11:59 p.m. (revised from Oct. 10)

• " Seeding: Oct. 18

• " First Round: Oct. 21

• " Second Round: Oct. 23

• " Third Round: Oct. 28

"• Fourth Round: Oct. 30

• " Regionals: Nov. 5

• " State Championships: Nov. 9

VOLLEYBALL

Effective immediately, the weekly limitation is modified to allow affected schools to make up multiple postponed matches, not to exceed eight in a week. No change was made to the daily limitation. "

• Reporting deadline: Oct. 19, 11:59 p.m. (revised from Oct. 16) "

• Seeding: Oct. 20 (Sunday, after 1 p.m.) "

• First Round: Oct. 22

• " Second Round: Oct. 24 "

• Third Round: Oct. 26

• " Fourth Round: Oct. 29

• " Regionals: Oct. 31

• " State Championships: Nov. 2

CROSS COUNTRY

• " Reporting deadline: Oct. 22, 11:59 p.m. (revised from Oct. 19) "

• Regionals: Oct. 26 "

• State Championships: Nov. 2

MEN'S SOCCER

Effective immediately, the weekly limitation is modified to allow affected schools to make up multiple postponed matches, not to exceed four in a week. No change was made to the daily limitation.

•" Reporting deadline: Nov. 6, 11:59 p.m. (revised from Oct. 31)

•" Seeding: Nov. 7

•" First round: Nov. 9

• " Second Round: Nov. 12 "

• Third Round: Nov. 14 "

• Fourth Round: Nov. 16 "

• Regionals: Nov. 19 "

• State Championships: Nov. 22-23

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• Citation (aglc Style)

FROM STAFF REPORTS, 'NCHSAA approves fall sports modifications', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2A4C1AB7F9AD8



Doosan Bobcat hosting blood drive at Statesville facility; public invited

October 12, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: SPECIAL TO THE RECORD & LANDMARK | Section: News | 112 Words OpenURL Link

Doosan Bobcat is hosting an American Red Cross blood drive from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Oct. 31 at its Statesville manufacturing facility, 1293 Glenway Drive.

The blood drive is open to the public and those interested in supporting the cause can register at RedCrossBlood.org and enter: DOOSAN to schedule an appointment. Walk-ins are welcome. The blood drive will be set up in the SHIPPING/RECEIVING lot at the rear of the factory.

Following the devastation of Hurricane Helene, Bobcat has rallied to support the broader North Carolina region including this blood drive and collecting supplies to deploy throughout the region.

For more information about donating blood to the American Red Cross, visit redcross.org/give-blood © Copyright 2024, Statesville Record & Landmark, Statesville, NC

• Citation (aglc Style)

SPECIAL TO THE RECORD & LANDMARK, 'Doosan Bobcat hosting blood drive at Statesville facility; public invited', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2A4C2A1372C80>



FEMA workers going door-to-door in NC

October 12, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com| Section: Mapping | 940 Words OpenURL Link

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) teams are providing resources to western North Carolina.

FEMA teams are going door-to-door to make sure people and structures are safe and to sign people up for federal assistance after the remnants of Hurricane Helene devastated the area.

FEMA Media Relations Specialist Nate Custer said the teams are marked with official FEMA identification badges and carrying tablets to sign people up on the spot.

FEMA spokesperson Jann Tracey added that agents are accompanied by local officials.

Custer said the agency is currently in response mode. During this stage, the agency is conducting search-and rescue operations, getting utilities up and running and getting roads passable.

Custer is assigned to provide information for Catawba, Burke, McDowell and other western North Carolina counties.

Tracey is providing information about Alexander, Caldwell and northwestern North Carolina counties.

"We work closely with faith-based organizations, community partners," Custer said. "FEMA administers and is in charge of the various federal agencies, but we're only part of the equation. We don't come in and, so to speak, run the show. We're invited in and requested in by the governor.

"We work closely with state emergency management and local emergency management. We have an element that works with voluntary organizations. Often there are partnerships and task forces created to solve some of these long-range housing problems.

"There's going to be an awful volume of these this time around," Custer said.

What is FEMA doing in western North Carolina?

Tracey said FEMA comes in when local and state officials need assistance.

If a need cannot be met by local and state officials, FEMA jumps in to meet the need, using resources from all over the country.

"FEMA and the state work hand in glove," Tracey said. "Even before a disaster hits, we're trying to anticipate needs and get resources where they are needed."

Custer said FEMA is in all of the 27 federally declared disaster counties and in lands of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in North Carolina in some capacity.

Custer said the teams going door-to-door are essential for making people aware of resources available to them.

"In a typical disaster, communications are an issue, and it's worse in this one," Custer said. "Usually there are some cell phone outages, but nothing like this in how we're (having difficulty) getting the word out to people."

Custer continued, "A lot of people are in a state of shock. They don't know what's going to happen the next day.

They might not be aware they need to register with FEMA. If they register with their local emergency management or Red Cross, that does not get them into the FEMA system."

A release from Oct. 6 from the White House said there are more than 1,000 FEMA staff in North Carolina with more arriving daily. The release said there are 1,500 military personnel in the state assisting with disaster response.

Over 1,200 search and rescue personnel are in the area. Teams have rescued more than 3,200 people as of Oct. 6.

Tracey said FEMA has contributed over 5 million liters of water and 7 million meals since the disaster began.

"When people don't see someone in a FEMA shirt distributing, that doesn't mean it wasn't contributed by FEMA," Tracey said.

How can people apply for assistance?

Custer said people can apply for assistance by calling 800-621-3362. Those able to access the internet can also apply for assistance by going to disasterassistance.gov.

FEMA also has an app that can be downloaded and used to apply for assistance.

Custer said FEMA will soon open disaster recovery centers.

Tracey said recovery centers would likely be in every county included in the federal disaster declaration.

Custer said individuals do not have to live in a county where a disaster center is located to use a center.

Staff members at disaster recovery centers will be able to help people who have previously applied for assistance and sign people up for aid.

One disaster center is currently open in North Carolina. The center is located at A.C. Reynolds High School in Asheville.

FEMA's website said the deadline to apply for assistance in North Carolina is Nov. 27.

What do you need to apply for assistance?

- " Proof of ownership of a residence
- "A list of people permanently living at a location
- "• Social Security number
- " Estimated annual income
- "Insurance information, if available Custer said it takes about 10 minutes to provide this information over the phone.

More information is coming for people who have lost a driver's license and other documents, Custer said.

"That happens in virtually all these situations. Key documents get swept away," Custer said. "There's avenues people can use to recover documents."

Who can apply for FEMA assistance?

U.S. citizens, non-citizen nationals and qualified non-citizens are eligible to receive assistance according to FEMA's website.

Applicants will also need to provide a Social Security number to prove their identity.

What happens after applying for assistance?

Custer said the time to process an application varies. "We have already approved more than \$37 million in housing and other types of assistance for over 28,000 North Carolina households," Custer said on Oct. 8.

On Oct. 9, FEMA's website said nearly \$60 million in housing and other assistance had been approved for almost 52,000 North Carolinians.

After applying for FEMA assistance, applicants will receive a letter explaining what type of grant they have been awarded or advising them their application is incomplete and more information is needed.

If someone is not satisfied with the grant they received, an appeals process exists. Custer said specialists at disaster recovery centers can assist applicants with the appeals process.

FEMA's website also says appeals can be made online through accounts registered with disasterassistance.gov.

Custer said FEMA may call applicants from any number, so if someone has applied for assistance they need to answer their phone even if it is from an unknown number.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

BILLY CHAPMAN wchapman@hickoryrecord.com, 'FEMA workers going door-to-door in NC', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 12 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2A4C1E082E040>



Critical habitat potentially gone - After Helene, rare hellbender salamander's homes in WNC may have washed away

October 12, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC)
Author: Will Hofmann; Asheville Citizen Times | USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 942 Words Page: A1
OpenURL Link

Just west of Burnsville, along the Cane River, Atley Cannon, 9, wades through the water covering the farm outside of his uncle's house. With a ball cap, camo pants and two BB guns on his waist, he scans the water that knocked the house off its foundation. He reaches his hand into the shallow end of the mud up picking up a slimy, long semi-black salamander that wiggled its legs slowly in the early afternoon light. His grandfather, John Young, shouted down at the boy from his red tractor: "A mud puppy! They're endangered. Don't hurt it!"

After instruction from his grandfather, Cannon walked the salamander back to the river, where it likely was living just days before.

The family found at least three during their time clearing the water from their property along the river, Young said. Their story may be an omen for the future of the rare southern Appalachian species.

Colloquially known as "mud puppies," "snot otters," and "devil dogs," the rare eastern hellbender is just one of three giant salamander species in the world.

The salamander is known for living among the large, flat river rocks of Western North Carolina — and the broader southern Appalachian region — and can grow up to two feet, making it the largest North American amphibian.

Just as the floods washed away homes, businesses, baseball fields and Asheville's River Arts District, they also took the critters with them. By all accounts, the flooding may have worsened their conditions, said Lori Williams, a biologist and hellbender expert with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. The commission has received reports of individuals finding up to 15 hellbenders at one time. Some are dead, others alive.

"Initial reports are that hellbenders appear to have taken a major hit across multiple counties and watersheds. People are reporting finding them hundreds of feet away from rivers, stuck in mud ditches, piles of storm debris, and washed out in open fields," Williams said.

North Carolina designates the species as of "special concern," meaning the state government requires their protection and conservation. However, eastern hellbenders — whose habitats require clean, cold water and a river bed of large rocks — are not yet considered "endangered" by the federal government. But, recent legal battles have sought to give the designation to the animal.

In 2021, several riverkeeper and waterkeeper organizations sued the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for not considering hellbenders for Endangered Species Act protections. In September 2023, a federal judge agreed with the groups, ordering the service to re-do it's designation around the species.

'Low chance' that hellbenders survived in certain areas

MountainTrue's Watauga County Riverkeeper Andy Hill said he's finding more of the hellbenders washed up out of their environment — some dead and some alive — after the flood. As a riverkeeper, Hill monitors and protects Watauga County's waterways, streams and rivers.

More than likely, many of the environments where the hellbenders nested may now be unlivable.

"Their habitat is going to be heavily impacted by this sediment runoff," Hill said.

For the Swannanoa River, where hellbender populations were already "barely hanging on," Williams said there is a "low chance" that any are left. The Swannanoa River peaked at 26 feet — it regularly sits around a foot and a half.

Already, at least one area of identified nests in WNC — which was to soon see repairs and stabilization — was deemed as "gone" due to the floods.

"We are aware of a stream in Ashe County that had confirmed nests and hellbender rocks that were to get a restoration and bank stabilization project any week now. We were going to go rescue and relocate the hellbenders prior. Now, it's all gone," Williams said. "The rocks, the nest, the habitat, the stream channel that needed stabilization and now needs something much, much more to help it."

A new population assessment on the creatures is anticipated to take "quite a while" as the floods caught the species in the middle of the breeding period.

"We anticipate habitat damage and destruction in most watersheds meaning loss and displacement of shelter rocks, nest rocks, and nests themselves which would have had eggs soon to hatch this time of year," Williams said.

Hill said the environments in certain rivers may return before too long. However, the environmental practices that might "help that process along" will require more thought.

"A hopeful note for these hellbenders and these ecosystems: While we are worried about them, we know that the rivers are resilient and timeless," Hill said.

"The rivers will come back. It just might be a long process."

What should you do if you

find an Eastern Hellbender?

If you find a hellbender displaced by floodwaters, Williams and Hill recommend you do the following:

Note the physical location or GPS coordinates.

Note the date.

Take a photo.

Send information to Lori Williams at Iori-williams@ncwildlife.org.

Will Hofmann is the Growth and Development Reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times, part of the USA Today Network. Got a tip? Email him at WHofmann@citizentimes.com. Consider supporting this type of journalism with a subscription to the Citizen Times.

WHERE TO

FIND HELP

See 2A for the latest on emergency resources.

TEXT UPDATES

We are staffing a text message service to bring you the latest on Helene, connect you with resources and answer

any questions you might have. To sign up, text "Hello" to (239) 241-6343.

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Post-Helene updates: Curfew, resources, donations - What to do with debris

October 12, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC)

Section: News 1123 Words

Page: A2 OpenURL Link

Henderson County will provide free curbside storm debris pickup for all county residents on NCDOT, municipal and private roads. All storm debris that is pushed to the right of way of a property will be picked up for free.

Burning debris is not the safest method under the current conditions, and accidental fires would only tax the already busy emergency responders. Residents are strongly encouraged to use this free curbside service to reduce the risk of accidental fires.

Find a job as debris

collection monitor

Debris Tech is hiring hurricane debris collection monitors to support recovery efforts in Henderson County. Applicants can earn \$1,000 or more per week based on full-time hours.

These positions offer hourly pay, overtime eligibility and on-the-job training, with no experience required. Monitors will be responsible for ensuring that eligible debris is properly collected and loaded, as well as maintaining safety standards and reporting any issues during removal.

To apply, visit www.debrisjobs.com and check the "Debris Monitor" box or text your name, contact information and city/county/state of residence to 407-205-9602 or 407-205-9627.

Find a place to do laundry

Express Laundry, 5839 Asheville Hwy., Hendersonville, is open 6 a.m.-9 p.m. daily. 828-551-5053.

Pocket Change Laundry, 1620 Brevard Road, Suite 50, Hendersonville, is open 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Laundry drop-off from 8 a.m.-noon at Pocket Change Laundry, 282 New Leicester Hwy., Asheville, or 1620 Brevard Road, Hendersonville. 50% off wash, dry and fold for regular customers. Free for first responders and linemen. (828) 540-2625 or www.itspocketchange.com.

Coin Laundry at Mills River Barbershop, 4176 Haywood Road, Mills River, is open until 10 p.m. (828) 891-4855.

The Tide laundry unit is at Home Depot, 401 Linda Vista Drive, Hendersonville, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. No charge.

Resource hubs

Providing community distribution lines this week:

First Baptist Church, 312 5th Ave. W., Hendersonville, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on Saturday.

Donations - financial aid

needed most now

Henderson County is no longer in need of physical donations like water, food and supplies after an outpouring of

support from the community and beyond.

Henderson County does continue to encourage financial contributions. The Community Foundation of Henderson County has set up a special page for Hurricane Helene Relief & Recovery donations. To contribute, visit www.cfhcforever.org. Donors may choose among funds specifically for Henderson County and the surrounding area, WNC recovery and Lake Lure and Chimney Rock.

The United Way of Henderson County is managing volunteer sign-ups. Visit www.hendersoncountync.gov/helene.

Wellness Check Status Map

Henderson County has launched a Wellness Check Status Map for missing contacts. This map shows individuals whose location and safety are unknown in red. Blue dots show contacts that were made. Check the map to see if you are listed or if you know the whereabouts of anyone on this map. Call (828) 771-6670 to notify of anyone's status. View the map at https://hendersoncounty.maps.arcgis.com/.../76a0a66ff2ff4...

Environmental health —

well, septic, food

Have questions about your well water, septic system or food establishment after Tropical Storm Helene? The Environmental Health team has compiled a list of guidance and resources to help people navigate their situation. Visit https://www.hendersoncountync.gov/.../environmental...

To view Hendersonville Water Department updates and a map for up-to-date status of water advisories, visit http://www.hvlnc.gov/wateralerts. Depending on where customers are in the system determines if they still need to boil water. The majority of customers have water and no longer need to boil water.

The state of North Carolina will provide free well testing kits for those affected by Tropical Storm Helene at a future date. Test kits are expected to arrive by Monday, Oct. 14. More details are forthcoming.

Some offices are open

City government offices in Hendersonville have reopened with walk-in services at some facilities from 9 a.m.-5 p.m.:

City Hall, 160 6th Ave. E.

Hendersonville Police Department, 630 Ashe St.

Community Development, 100 King St.

Visit www.hvlnc.gov/Helene or call (828) 697-3052 for updated city service information.

FEMA assistance

President Biden has approved federal disaster assistance that is available for survivors in designated counties in North Carolina. Survivors may apply online at disasterassistance.gov, call 800-621-3362 or on the FEMA App.

Recreation

The Oklawaha Greenway in Hendersonville is open for walking.

Information call center

The call center is available for all non-medical requests for information. Call (828) 771-6670 or email Helene-info@hcem.org. For emergencies, call 911.

For more information visit www.hendersoncountync.gov and click on the Hurricane Helene Updates banner.

Get food for your pets

Blue Ridge Humane Society will give out pet food from 1-4 p.m. Saturday at the BRHS warehouse, 802 S. Grove St., Hendersonville. Visit www.blueridgehumane.org.

Due to the overwhelming generosity of the community and beyond, BRHS has a large amount of dog and cat food to give away.

Additional items such as cat litter, treats and water are also available in limited supply.

Reminder: Access to

Bat Cave area is restricted

Henderson County's State of Emergency Declaration has been modified to prohibit travel on U.S. 74, U.S. 64, N.C. 9 or Grant Mountain Road beyond the area barricaded by the Henderson County Sheriff's Office in the direction of Gerton, Bat Cave or Lake Lure.

Exceptions include:

Law enforcement officers

First Responders and Emergency Medical Services Personnel

Other public safety officials

Utility workers

Persons traveling to and from gainful employment.

Residents of the area beyond the area barricaded by the Henderson County Sheriff's Office in the direction of Gerton, Bat Cave or Lake Lure.

Hendersonville water system restored to normal operations

The City of Hendersonville announced that the water system has been substantially restored to normal operations. Thursday, water service was fully restored to the Hoopers Creek area, marking the completion of the system-wide restoration efforts.

Approximately 4% of the utility's 80,0000 customers, including those in the Hoopers Creek area, remain under a system pressure advisory. This advisory will remain in effect until water quality tests confirm it is safe for consumption. Residents can find updates and view a map showing the status of water advisories at www.hvlnc.gov/wateralerts.

Although the conservation recommendations have been lifted, the Hendersonville Water Department encourages residents to continue practicing mindful water use where possible. Ongoing conservation helps ensure that the utility can remain resilient and extend assistance to neighboring communities in need.

Curfew lifted for

Henderson County

Henderson County has lifted its curfew, though a State of Emergency remains in effect.

Share storm experience

with Historical Society

The Henderson County Historical and Genealogical Society is asking residents to share stories about their experience of Tropical Storm Helene, so they can be archived and preserved for future generations. Writeups can be emailed to hcghs@bellsouth.net, sent via mail to the Society at 400 N. Main St., Hendersonville, NC 28792 or dropped off in person when the office opens sometime next week.

Hendersonville Theatre

asks for volunteers

A work day/clean up day will be held from 2-5 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 13, at Hendersonville Theatre, 229 S. Washington St., downtown. This will include cleaning and organizing inside the theatre, minor repairs and setting things back in order. Bring any tools or supplies that might be useful. Call (828) 692-1082. for more information.

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Bat Cave moves on without its bridge

October 12, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Jade Jackson; USA TODAY Network | Section: News | 666 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

BAT CAVE - Off the edge of Lake Lure Highway, where Broad River flows through, Chelsea Hughes straps her 1-yearold son Luke to her back. The Bat Cave resident is in good spirits as her friend carries the boy's car seat. They climb down the rocks on the side of the highway and walk to the river.

There, they carefully maneuver across a makeshift pedestrian bridge, built after Tropical Storm Helene destroyed U.S. 64 in Bat Cave, which once connected the community to more populated towns.

"We have one car on this side of the bridge," Hughes told the Citizen-Times. "Then we go across the river to the other side of the bridge where there's another car. We're doing a little hike and a little shopping today."

The makeshift bridge was built by the North Carolina Department of Transportation and Kannapolis Fire crews. They cross it with ease while NCDOT crews work on repairing the massively destroyed bridge next to them.

"When we get back, we'll carry everything," Hughes said. "And probably won't leave for a few days because it's just a lot to leave for a few hours."

How the Bat Cave

bridge collapsed

Over the Broad River off U.S. 74 Alt. onto U.S. 64, the bridge had a segment destroyed near Bat Cave Old Cider Mill and Applesolutely Gift Shop. Several cottages along the river appeared wiped out from the flooding.

The mountain community of Bat Cave sits in the lower elevation of Henderson County along the Broad River.

Built in 1958, NCDOT said the collapse of the bridge was due in part to debris coming down the river and catching on the columns for the last 60 years. Because the water levels were so high, a lot of debris from the storm started catching on the bridge itself. This forced the water around the bridge instead of under it.

"We have a bridge we're trying to save and shore up," NCDOT resident engineer, Michael Patton said.

"Eventually, this entire thing will need to be replaced because it's compromised. We're going to make it safe. What we're doing is we're building up very carefully underneath it."

Crews have made progress, hoping to make travel safe again for residents within the next two weeks.

Bat Cave neighbors making a way

Chelsea Atkins and her neighbors and friends were wheelbarrowing clothing across the makeshift bridge while NCDOT crews worked Thursday afternoon. She and her husband are living in a camper nearby, but still come back over to assist neighbors.

"They've been down here and not able to do their laundry," Atkins said. "We just have some socks, some underwear and warm clothes since it's been pretty cold. If you haven't showered in a week, I just thought to bring some blankets and clean clothes. Going back and forth all day, your feet get really wet."

She's lived in Bat Cave for seven years and said Tropical Storm Helene did a number on her home along the Broad River on Lake Lure Highway. The flooding started in their basement, and eventually rose to the first floor. A tree fell through the side of her home.

"I used to be picky about letting people in my house if it wasn't clean," Atkins said.

"Now, I'm like come see the disaster. I am in good spirits, because I've seen the work that people here have done to just help each other out. I've felt the sense of community even across the river from those neighbors."

Chelsea Hughes said the first few days after Tropical Storm Helene hit, community members realized they didn't have anybody coming to save them but themselves.

"It was just us and volunteers down at the fire department," Atkins said. "But even now, people have been driving by and dropping off and delivering stuff. I have diapers and everything I would need."

Jade Jackson is a public safety reporter for IndyStar assisting The Citizen-Times, Asheville with Hurricane Helene coverage. Contact her at Jade.Jackson@IndyStar. Follow her on Twitter @IAMJADEJACKSON.

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Local hospitals conserving IV fluids

October 12, 2024 | Tribune, The (Elkin, NC) Author: John Peters jpeters@mtairynews.com| Section: News| 529 Words OpenURL Link

Officials with both Northern Regional Hospital in Mount Airy and Hugh Chatham Memorial Hospital in Elkin said they are keeping a close eye on intravenous fluid supplies that are critical for surgical procedures, dialysis, and other treatments.

That is because of a nationwide shortage largely caused by Hurricane Helene's damage to a facility in the mountains of western North Carolina which produces more than half the nation's supply.

While federal officials are looking for ways to alleviate the shortage, local medical practitioners are taking it upon themselves to be ready for a worst-case scenario.

"Northern is expecting a prolonged and severe shortage of this resource and has begun efforts to secure additional supply and thoughtful conservation of our current supply," Northern Chief Medical Officer Jason W. Edsall said Thursday. "Currently there is no planned disruption of services but continued care of all our patients is our utmost priority. We will provide updates to our community as we know more information in the coming weeks."

"Hugh Chatham Health took immediate action to protect and conserve their supply of IV fluids and has had no disruption in service to our patients and the community," Chief Operation Officer Mary F. Blackburn said on Friday. "The current and predicted ongoing supply chain concern is being addressed through widely adopted conservation methods which include appropriately selecting the type and amount of IV fluid for each unique patient care situation... We will continue to evaluate and monitor our supply of IV fluids until the national shortage is alleviated."

While both local hospitals are able to continue offering surgical procedures, many hospitals nationwide have stopped offering any elective surgeries until the shortage is alleviated.

According to multiple media outlets, there was already a shortage of the fluids in some segments of the nation, largely as a result of supply chain and shipping issues. When Hurricane Helene ravaged the mountains of Western North Carolina, a production facility in Marion, owned by Baxter International, was heavily damaged. Various reports indicate that plant produces between 50% and 60% of the IV fluids used across America.

"We will spare no resource — human or financial — to restart operations and help ensure patients and providers have the products they need," Baxter CEO José Almeida said in a company update posted on its website this week.

Already the firm has been cleaning and repairing the plant, with plans to reopen the facility in phases with the hope of being fully operational before year's end.

Another company, B. Braun, had planned to increase its production of IV fluids to help fill in the need, but its facility in Daytona Beach, Florida, was shut down because of Hurricane Milton. That facility sustained significantly less damage and officials hope to have that plant up and running, at least in a limited capacity, soon, this weekend, according to a report by NPR.

Other manufacturers are trying to ramp up production of the product, and this week the Food and Drug Administration announced it has authorized 19 IV products for temporary importation from Canada, China, Ireland and the U.K.

Still, that leaves local hospitals and other medical facilities scrambling for new sources and implementing ways to conserve the use of the fluids until national supplies increase.

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VANCE DERIDES STORM REspONSE - VP candidate JD Vance derides Hurricane Helene response at Greensboro town hall

October 12, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC)

Author: KEVIN GRIFFIN Staff Reporter | Section: A | 1103 Words

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Republican vice presidential nominee JD Vance criticized the Biden administration's response to Hurricane Helene and pledged that a second Trump administration would not leave western North Carolina behind.

The Ohio senator and running mate of former President Donald Trump took questions in town hall event at the Koury Convention Center on Thursday.

Former IndyCar and NASCAR driver Danica Patrick, a Trump supporter who said she would be a first-time voter this year, moderated the forum, introducing audience members who asked questions.

The first question of the day came from a representative of a group of volunteers, including several pilots, who have been assisting with relief efforts following Hurricane Helene.

The volunteer asked Vance to promise that a new Trump administration would continue to support western North Carolina in its recovery from the storm.

"We will never forget Western North Carolina," Vance responded to applause from the crowd.

The volunteer also asked Vance what a second Trump administration would do to streamline the disaster relief process and allow for more direct participation from volunteers including veterans.

Vance called the federal response to the hurricane "a massive failure."

He faulted the Biden administration for not sending the 82nd Airborne Division sooner to assist with disaster relief. He faulted a bureaucratic culture in agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Federal Aviation Administration.

"You've got people who have been trained by the government bureaucracy that their job is not to cut the BS and help people, it's to basically act like the DMV," Vance said. "Unfortunately, what that means in this case you have a lot of people who could have been helped, a lot of lives that could have been saved that weren't."

For her part, Harris has criticized the Trump campaign for spreading misinformation in the wake hurricane, calling the claims about the response "extraordinarily irresponsible" during an appearance on CNN earlier this week.

She added: "The reality is that FEMA has so many resources that are available to folks who desperately need them now, and resources that are about helping people get back on their feet and rebuild and have places to go."

In the aftermath of the hurricane, rumors and conspiracy theories spread about the response have received pushback from even some Republicans.

U.S. Rep. Chuck Edwards, a Republican whose district includes some of the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Helene, has set up a "Debunking Helene Response Myths" web page.

Edwards said via the release that while the FEMA response "had had its shortfalls," he wanted to "dispel the outrageous rumors that have been circulated online," including claims the hurricane was engineered by the

government, that FEMA is running out of money and that FEMA workers are blocking supply trucks or seizing donations.

Vance said situations like the Helene response required accountability which Trump was willing to provide in a way the Democratic nominee, Vice President Kamala Harris, was not.

"What is fundamentally different about the leadership style of Kamala Harris and Donald Trump is Donald Trump. I mean, hell, he got famous saying, 'You're fired!" He believes in accountability for our government," Vance said. "Kamala Harris just doesn't. I think it's this attitude of go-along-to-get-along of, 'Yeah you screwed up and maybe you even got people killed but we're not going to fire you.' That's not going to do good for our people in the 21st century."

Vance also reiterated the Trump campaign's plans for mass deportations of undocumented immigrants and advocated for increased domestic oil drilling to bring down energy and other costs.

He also criticized Harris for not doing more media interviews and took several gibes at the Democratic nominee.

At one point, a woman in the seating section behind Vance stumbled. After checking to see if the woman was all right, Vance said: "Kamala Harris built this platform behind us."

Vance's performance gained positive reviews from members of the crowd of Trump supporters.

Ron Wiley said he was particularly impressed with Vance's response on the question of what the Trump administration would do about illegal immigration.

"That question came up, and I thought he gave us an answer we wanted to hear, which is that they're going to exercise that opportunity and get us back in shape," Ron said.

Wiley's wife Jamie said she found Vance's comments about how the Trump administration would aid those affected by Hurricane Helene and continue relief efforts touching.

"He made a good point about supporting it, and not letting North Carolina go behind," Jamie Wiley said.

Emily Williamson said she was most impressed with Vance's promise that the Trump administration would protect social security.

"The thing that was most profound for me was making sure that seniors get what they paid into social security, because they've done their due diligence and they should be able to enjoy their retirement," Williamson said.

Williamson also said Vance's performance would probably earn him her vote.

"I think he answered questions very well," she said.

Camdyn Bruce contributed to this story.

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Milton was strong. Climate change made it worse, scientists say - Climate change gave significant boost to Milton's destructive rain, winds, scientists say - Scientists say human-caused climate change intensified deadly Hurricane Milton's rainfall by 20 to 30% and strengthened its winds by about 10%

October 12, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC)

Author: ALEXA ST. JOHN Associated Press | Section: A | 714 Words

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Human-caused climate change intensified deadly Hurricane Milton's rainfall by 20 to 30% and strengthened its winds by about 10%, scientists said in a new flash study. The analysis comes just two weeks after Hurricane Helene devastated the southeastern United States, a storm also fueled by climate change.

World Weather Attribution researchers said Friday that without climate change, a hurricane like Milton would make landfall as a weaker Category 2, not considered a "major" storm, instead of a Category 3.

WWA's rapid studies aren't peer-reviewed but use peer-reviewed methods. The WWA compares a weather event with what might have been expected in a world that hasn't warmed about 1.3 degree Celsius since pre-industrial times

The team of scientists test the influence of climate change on storms by analyzing weather data and climate models, but in the case of Milton - which followed so shortly after Helene - the researchers used only weather observations data. WWA said despite using different approaches, the results are compatible with studies of other hurricanes in the area that show a similar hurricane intensity increase of between 10 and 50% due to climate change, and about a doubling in likelihood.

"We are therefore confident that such changes in heavy rainfall are attributable to human-caused climate change," said WWA, an international scientist collaborative that launched in 2015 and conducts rapid climate attribution studies.

At least eight people died in Milton, which spread damage far and wide even though it didn't directly strike Tampa as feared. Roadways flooded and dozens of tornadoes tore through coastal areas. At one point power was out to some 3.4 million customers, and more than 2.4 million remained without power Friday morning.

Milton made landfall Wednesday evening as a Category 3 hurricane on the west coast of Florida near Siesta Key, about 70 miles (112 kilometers) south of the Tampa Bay area, driven by warmer waters near record levels.

Climate scientist Michael Mann said he agrees with the thrust of the analysis that climate change substantially worsened the hurricane. But if anything, Mann said, the study might "vastly understate the impact that it actually had" with what he called "the fairly simple approach" of its estimates.

He cited other attribution studies after Helene that calculated significantly larger rainfall due to warming.

"It's the difference between a modest effect and a major effect," Mann, of the University of Pennsylvania, told The Associated Press. "I would argue that the catastrophic flooding we saw over large parts of the southeastern U.S. with Helene was indeed a major effect of human-caused warming."

Jeff Masters, a meteorologist who co-founded the commercial weather service Weather Underground, said the study looked solid to him.

"I support their conclusion that without climate change, Hurricane Milton would have hit as a Cat 2, not a Cat 3," he

said.

Another analysis, done by research organization Climate Central, said earlier this week that climate change made possible the warmed water temperatures that amplified Milton. Andrew Pershing, the group's vice president for science, said those waters were made up to 200 times more likely with climate change. The group said waters were more than 1.8 degrees F (1 degrees C) warmer than the 1991 to 2020 average.

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Bands perform 'Amazing Grace' tribute to Helene victims - Watch Wake Forest, NC State marching bands perform "Amazing Grace" tribute to Helene victims

October 12, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC)

Author: CONNOR MCNEELY Staff writer | Section: A | 701 Words

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Get your tissues ready.

Even amid a particularly intense college football game, Wake Forest and NC State found a way to unite in support of those impacted by Hurricane Helene.

At halftime of the two teams' 118th meeting at NC State's Carter Finley stadium, the schools' marching bands performed a moving rendition of "Amazing Grace" in the wake of the storm, which has devastated Western North Carolina, killing 115 and rendering hundreds more missing.

So far, the two bands' performance has been featured all across the national news, and even in an Oct. 7 segment of NBC News' "The Today Show."

It was a deviation from the excitement of the traditional rivalry game, in which the Demon Deacons pulled out a 34-30 comeback win to improve to 109 all time head-to-head wins against NC State's 151.

But what most people might not know is that Saturday's performance was the two bands' very first time playing together. In fact, they didn't practice "Amazing Grace" with each other before the big game.

The idea began when a student came into one of the classes of Paul Garcia, the director of bands at NC State, on Oct. 1. She apologized to him for not being present in class, Garcia said, because she still hadn't heard from her family.

Immediately Garcia wondered if there was something the band could do, musically, for those impacted by the burricane

"I figured 'Amazing Grace' would be most appropriate because it was a song of hope, and we had a great rendition in our library," Garcia said.

Garcia called Tim Heath, the director of bands at Wake Forest University, and the two bands were off and running for Saturday's game.

"Dr. Garcia and I were joking a little bit on the phone," Heath said. "I was like 'Hey, do you want us to come over and rehearse?' He goes, 'Well, it's at 7:30 in the morning.' And he says, 'I trust you.'"

Although Wake Forest's Spirit of the Old Gold and Black couldn't get over to Raleigh early enough to rehearse, they were able to have a unifying lunch with the band members at NC State, which laid the groundwork for a special performance.

"We prepped the students for how it would work," Garcia said. "But the students were of one mind and one source of music in that moment."

Bolutife "B" Dediare, a drum major in the Spirit of the Old Gold and Black band, said that knowing friends and other peers who lived in western North Carolina made the performance so much more impactful for her.

"There are so many elements to music more than just sound that provide that sense of impact that people see," Dediare said. "Within the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the staples that we saw was music, and people saw it as a sense of comfort, as a sense of belonging. And music, one of the elements that it provides is uniformity."

Andrew Bassard, a senior trumpet player in Wake Forest's band, said that he never expected for the performance to gain national recognition. And despite the usual flare of emotions during a rivalry game, Bassard said that there was a unique bond with NC State's band throughout the day.

"They were very welcoming, even when I was running over to [my mark], they were calling me over to them, and then when I got there, they cheered before we played," Bassard said.

For Heath, the moment was important for young people whom he believes should take opportunities to use art in a unifying way.

"When you have students at different universities come together and play such an iconic and emotional song with so much history, especially in a state like North Carolina, I think it just really showed everyone the bigger picture," Heath said.

"I just hope that this helps the people of western North Carolina," Garcia said. "Either by getting the word out to more people or whether it inspires someone to donate their time or whatever efforts they can. It's going to be a long healing process."

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Back-to-back hurricanes reshape 2024 campaign's final stretch - Back-to-back hurricanes reshape 2024 campaign's final stretch - A pair of unwelcome and destructive guests named Helene and Milton have stormed their way into this year's presidential election

October 12, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC) Author: JOSH BOAK Associated Press | Section: A | 1274 Words Page: 9 OpenURL Link

WASHINGTON - A pair of unwelcome and destructive guests named Helene and Milton have stormed their way into this year's presidential election.

The back-to-back hurricanes have jumbled the schedules of Democrat Kamala Harris and Republican Donald Trump, both of whom devoted part of their recent days to tackling questions about the storm recovery effort.

The two hurricanes are forcing basic questions about who as president would best respond to deadly natural disasters, a once-overlooked issue that has become an increasingly routine part of the job. And just weeks before the Nov. 5 election, the storms have disrupted the mechanics of voting in several key counties.

Vice President Harris is trying to use this as an opportunity to project leadership, appearing alongside President Joe Biden at briefings and calling for bipartisan cooperation. Former President Trump is trying to use the moment to attack the administration's competence and question whether it is withholding help from Republican areas, despite no evidence of such behavior.

Adding to the pressure is the need to provide more money for the Small Business Administration and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which would require House Republicans to work with the Democratic administration. Biden said Friday that Hurricane Milton alone had caused \$50 billion in estimated damages.

"Dealing with back-to-back crises will put FEMA under more scrutiny and, therefore, the Biden administration will be under a microscope in the days leading up to the election," said Timothy Kneeland, a professor at Nazareth University in Rochester, New York, who has studied the issue.

"Vice President Harris must empathize with the victims without altering the campaign schedule and provide consistent messaging on the widespread devastation that makes FEMA's work even more challenging than normal," Kneeland added.

Already, Trump and Harris have separately gone to Georgia and North Carolina to assess hurricane damage and pledge support, requiring the candidates to cancel campaign events elsewhere and use up time that is a precious resource in the final weeks before any election. Both Georgia and North Carolina are political battlegrounds, raising the stakes.

The hurricane fallout is evident in the candidates' campaign events as well.

On Thursday, the first question Harris got at a Univision town hall in Las Vegas came from a construction worker and undecided voter from Tampa, Florida. Ramiro Gonzalez asked about talk that the administration has not done enough to support people after Helene and whether the people in Milton's path would have access to aid - a sign that Trump's messaging is breaking through with some potential voters.

Harris has called out the level of misinformation being circulated by Republicans, but her fuller answer revealed the dynamics at play just a few weeks before an election.

"I have to stress that this is not a time for people to play politics," she said.

On the same day, Trump opened his speech at the Detroit Economic Club by praising Republican governors in the affected states and blasting the Biden-Harris administration.

"They've let those people suffer unjustly," he said about those affected by Helene in North Carolina.

The storms have also scrambled the voting process in places. North Carolina 's State Board of Elections has passed a resolution to help people in the state's affected counties vote. Florida will allow some counties greater flexibility in distributing mail-in ballots and changing polling sites for in-person voting. But a federal judge in Georgia said Thursday the state doesn't need to reopen voter registration despite the disruptions by Helene.

Tension and controversy have begun to override the disaster response, with Biden on Wednesday and Thursday saying that Trump has spread falsehoods that are "un-American."

Candace Bright Hall-Wurst, a sociology professor at East Tennessee State University, said that natural disasters have become increasingly politicized, often putting more of the focus on the politicians instead of the people in need.

"Disasters are politicized when they have political value to the candidate," she said. "This does not mean that the politicization is beneficial to victims."

As the Democratic nominee, Harris has suddenly been a major part of the response to hurricanes, a role that traditionally has not involved vice presidents in prior administrations.

On Thursday, she participated virtually at a Situation Room briefing on Milton while she was in Nevada for campaign activities. She has huddled in meetings about response plans and on Wednesday phoned into CNN live to discuss the administration's efforts.

At a Friday briefing with Biden to discuss the hurricanes, Harris repeated a message that subtly ties back into her campaign policies to stop price gouging.

"To any company or individual that is using this crisis to jack up prices through illegal fraud or price gouging, whether it be at the gas pump, the airport or the hotel counter, we will be monitoring and there will be a consequence," Harris said.

Her newfound importance was such that Biden was nudged to wrap up his remarks so she could speak, prompting him to joke, "She's my boss here."

Hurricane Milton made landfall in Florida late Wednesday and left more than 3 million without power. But the storm surge never reached the same levels as Helene, which led to roughly 230 fatalities and for a prolonged period left parts of North Carolina without access to electricity, cell service and roadways.

Trump and his allies have seized on the aftermath of Helene to spread misinformation about the administration's response. Their debunked claims include statements that victims can only receive \$750 in aid as well as false charges that emergency response funds were diverted to immigrants.

The former president said the administration's response to Helene was worse than the George W. Bush administration's widely panned handling of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which led to nearly 1,400 deaths.

"This hurricane has been a bad one, Kamala Harris has left them stranded," Trump said at a recent rally in Juneau, Wisconsin. "This is the worst response to a storm or a catastrophe or a hurricane that we've ever seen ever. Probably worse than Katrina, and that's hard to beat, right?"

Asked about the Trump campaign's strategic thinking on emphasizing the hurricane response, campaign press

secretary Karoline Leavitt said it reflects a pattern of "failed leadership" by the Biden-Harris administration that also includes the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan and security at the U.S. southern border.

"Kamala has left Americans behind and proven she is not equipped to solve crises at the highest level," Leavitt said.

John Gasper, a Carnegie Mellon University professor who has researched government responses to natural disasters, said storm victims generally want to ensure foremost that they get the aid they need.

"These disasters essentially end up being good tests of leadership for local, state and federal officials in how they respond," he said.

But Gasper noted that U.S. politics have gotten so polarized and other issues such as the economy are shaping the election, such that the debate currently generating so much heat between Trump and the Biden-Harris administration might not matter that much on Election Day.

"On the margin, it will matter," he said. "Will it define the election? Probably not. There's so many other things out there."

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