

Helene prompts evacuation of 2,000 inmates from NC mountain prisons. Where are they?

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC) Author: Joe Marusak; Staff Writer | Section: News | 457 Words Page: 6A OpenURL Link

Buses and some vans evacuated at least 2,000 inmates this week from five prisons in the North Carolina mountains, after Hurricane Helene damaged community water and electrical utility systems that serve the prisons, state prison officials said.

On Monday, about 400 women were bused from Western Correctional Center for Women in Swannanoa and the Black Mountain Substance Abuse Treatment Center for Women in Black Mountain to other correctional facilities for women, according to the N.C. Department of Adult Correction.

On Tuesday, 841 men incarcerated at Avery-Mitchell Correctional Institution in Spruce Pine were taken to seven other prisons across the state on Department of Adult Correction buses, department officials said.

And more than 800 men were bused Wednesday from Mountain View Correctional Institution in Spruce Pine and Craggy Correctional Center in Asheville, officials said.

The 248 men in Craggy Correctional were taken to Alexander Correctional Institution in Taylorsville, while the 557 men in Mountain View were bused to six prisons in central and eastern parts of the state, according to the department.

The six prisons are Granville Correctional Institution in Butner; Maury Correctional Institution in Maury; Neuse Correctional Institution in Goldsboro; Pender Correctional Institution in Burgaw; Warren Correctional Institution in Manson; and Pamlico Correctional Institution in Bayboro.

"All offenders are safe, and (the department) is taking appropriate steps to ensure continued health and safety of staff and offenders," officials said in a news release.

Family and friends should not call the prisons where people were moved, officials said. Inmates were able to make phone calls after they arrived.

Check the department's online Offender Locator site to confirm your loved one's new temporary location, prison officials said. The site will be updated with a person's new location within 24 hours of their move.

Officials decided Sunday to evacuate the facilities based on the damage, according to the announcement.

Some of the 360 minimum-custody inmates at Western Correctional Center for Women were moved to Anson Correctional Institution in Polkton, and others to North Carolina Correctional Institution for Women in Raleigh.

The 45 people receiving in-patient alcohol and drug treatment at the Black Mountain treatment center are now at the North Piedmont Confinement in Response to Violation facility in Lexington.

Inmates at Avery-Mitchell Correctional Institution were taken to Scotland Correctional Institution in Laurinburg;
Tabor Correctional Institution in Tabor City; Nash Correctional Institution in Nashville; Eastern Correctional
Institution in Maury; Southern Correctional Institution in Troy; Maury Correctional Institution in Maury; and Harnett
Correctional Institution in Lillington.

It's unknown how long repairs to the prisons will take.

"There's a very long time frame for those repairs - particularly for water," Keith Acree, spokesman for the Department of Adult Correction, told The Charlotte Observer on Thursday. "Our understanding is that Spruce Pine, Asheville and Swannanoa are not expected to have water restored for weeks."

Joe Marusak: 704-358-5067, @jmarusak

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Joe Marusak, Staff Writer, 'Helene prompts evacuation of 2,000 inmates from NC mountain prisons. Where are they?', *Charlotte Observer, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 6A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C024F9CA923128>



Ivanka Trump flies to Hickory, NC, to help donate Starlink devices for Helene victims

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC) Author: Julia Coin; Staff Writer | Section: News | 171 Words Page: 6A OpenURL Link

Hickory Ivanka Trump flew into Hickory on Wednesday morning to deliver 300 Starlinks to be flown out to western North Carolina. The devices will help flood victims connect to high-speed internet.

Medic Corps, one of at least four organizations running relief operations out of the Hickory Regional Airport, coordinated the visit. One group, Operation Airdrop, is flying supplies by helicopter to people in western North Carolina.

The daughter of former President Donald Trump took photos with pilots, airport staff and volunteers who have been organizing the five truckloads of supplies delivered from nearby communities.

The White House on Monday announced dozens of Starlink satellite systems would be launched to provide highspeed internet access in North Carolina.

"Since the Hurricane Helene disaster, SpaceX has sent as many Starlink terminals as possible to help areas in need," SpaceX CEO Elon Musk wrote in a post on the social platform X. "Earlier today, @realDonaldTrump alerted me to additional people who need Starlink Internet in North Carolina. We are sending them terminals right away."

Julia Coin: 7042189350, @juliamcoin

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Julia Coin, Staff Writer, 'Ivanka Trump flies to Hickory, NC, to help donate Starlink devices for Helene victims', *Charlotte Observer, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 6A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C024F9E2AD4DD8>



Pilots get needed supplies to battered Western NC and beyond, one delivery at a time

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC) Author: Rebecca Noel; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1117 Words Page: 7A OpenURL Link

From above, Gatlinburg, Tennessee, looks almost serene - the hills' jagged edges in fog, creeks and rivers twisting through the green like capillaries. From there, you wouldn't know Gatlinburg's babies don't have formula.

But there's been no running water in the area since remnants of Hurricane Helene tore through the mountain community on Thursday. Many residents still don't have power.

Gatlinburg's airport reopened Tuesday for the first time since Helene struck, and JillianGorrell was there to greet the seventh plane to touch down there that morning - a small CJ2+ from Concord, North Carolina. It was carrying over 1,000 pounds of diapers, baby formula, clothes and first aid supplies with eight more planes expected to follow.

"We desperately need medical supplies, baby supplies, cleaning supplies, trash bags," said Gorrell, a resident of the area and lecturer in the school of natural resources at the University of Tennessee in nearby Knoxville.

With roads and bridges in the area devoured and mangled in Helene's wake, it was the first assistance many in the area were able to get, she said.

"Roads are gone, landmarks are gone...," Gorrell said, teary-eyed, with her voice beginning to break. "Our area is hurting, but we're pulling together, and we really appreciate everything people are doing for us."

The pilots making the delivery were volunteers with Operation Airdrop, a disaster relief nonprofit, that has mobilized to deliver thousands of pounds of donated goods to western North Carolina, southern Appalachia, and other hard hit areas. Some, including Byron MacRae and Owen Williams, take off from Concord-Padgett Regional Airport, just northeast of Charlotte.

"We got to Asheville about 2:45 p.m. on Sunday, and they had just gotten power back about 10 minutes before we were landing," Williams said of the first trip he took after the storm, delivering 1,500 pounds of goods to the hard-hit Buncombe County city. "The mission has evolved with every trip we take as we learn more about what people need, what areas need us the most and how to spread the word to people that can help."

'Look for the helpers'

Operation Airdrop pilots have carried canned food, utensils, cleaning supplies, diapers, bottled water, feminine hygiene products, first aid supplies and more to small airfields in the North Carolina mountains, including Ashe County, Wilkes County and Banner Elk, in addition to parts of Tennessee and South Carolina.

With help from the Experimental Aircraft Association and the Carolina Aviators Network, Operation Airdrop and affiliated volunteers delivered eight tons of supplies from Concord, Statesville and Hickory to western North Carolina on Sunday alone. On Monday, 50,000 pounds of supplies left Concord aboard 75 flights.

Getting crucial supplies to those in storm-battered Western North Carolina remains one of the top Helene-recovery priorities. It's a massive effort involving federal, state and local governments, along with volunteers with groups like Operation Airdrop.

The organization started in 2017 after Hurricane Harvey dumped over 27 trillion gallons of rain in southeast Texas. Its founders, Doug Jackson and Robert Johnson from Dallas, flew supplies to the greater Houston area.

After Harvey, they launched Operation Airdrop, with the mission of delivering supplies in times of disaster to small communities cut off by storm damage that the Federal Emergency Management Agency couldn't immediately reach.

"We keep an eye on the weather as soon as hurricane season starts, and when we saw this one coming, we immediately reached out to pilots to see if they could get ready to help," said Shaun Carroll, a Durham resident who's been volunteering with Operation Airdrop since 2018.

Carroll weaved through rows of supplies in an airplane hangar in Concord Monday, as around 100 volunteers sorted donations into neat stacks to be weighed and loaded onto waiting planes.

The whole place was humming with purpose. Volunteers loaded supplies onto pallets donated from a Walmart down the street. Pilots from around the country filtered in and announced they had a few hours to spare, as Operation Airdrop organizers huddled around a table in the back of the room, monitoring weather conditions and dispatching pilots to areas they knew they could reach.

"That's the beautiful thing about Airdrop," Carroll said. "It's kind of like what Mr. Rogers used to say: 'Look for the helpers.' You'll find them everywhere."

On Tuesday, the Concord-Padgett Airport operation had reached its capacity for volunteers by 10 a.m. even as people continued to come in to offer help.

Challenges to the mission

Ben Spells is a local organizer for another airlift effort in Statesville, which a group of local individuals put together in collaboration with Operation Airdrop. Water remains one of the most high-need items in communities impacted by Helene, he said.

"We've heard from several people that there's either no water or there's a boil advisory or water treatment plants are just completely destroyed,"he said.

However, water can requirelarger planes to transport it, since it tends to be heavy and planes have a limit on the weight they can move at a time.

"While water is really heavy, we're trying to make sure we can get water to as many people as possible," Carroll said. "Water purification is a really big thing we're trying to get out there: LifeStraws, tablets, filters, that kind of thing, just because there's a big water issue right now."

Collecting donations is the easy part, Spells said. They get them from local individuals as well as corporations.

To distribute them, they reach out to organizations inhard-hit areas that can help, and, with communication severely limited in the region, it's no simple task.

"We try to connect with verified people out there, like churches, nonprofits, food banks, fire departments, just folks that can meet the planes when they get there and tell them where to go. It depends on the location," Spells said.

"We've honestly had a hard time finding people with a lot of people lacking electricity and cell service, but it's getting easier as more people come back online,"he added.

In Gatlinburg, MacRae and Williams unloaded supplies from the CJ2+into waiting pickup trucks ready to head to two local churches for distribution. Then, they fueled up, strapped back in and watched the green beneath them turn to white as they rose above clouds.

Time for another delivery.

Operation Airdrop will continue collecting donations of household necessities throughout the week, as long as roads in and out of western North Carolina remain blocked. Supplies can be delivered to the drop-off center in the parking lot of Walmart at 5825 Thunder Road NW in Concord.

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Rebecca Noel, Staff Writer, 'Pilots get needed supplies to battered Western NC and beyond, one delivery at a time', *Charlotte Observer, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 7A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C024F9D0B4F658>



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

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC)

Author: Drew Jackson; Staff Writer | Section: News | 717 Words

Page: 15A OpenURL Link

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Andrés in Asheville

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

The video has been seen 1.7 million times that, along with others he's shared since landing in Asheville, speak to the chef's role in shining a light on a crisis as much as lending a helping hand. Since he's been on the ground in the mountains, he's surveyed flooding from a helicopter, delivered meals to fire departments working the disaster and

sent food to cut-off communities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Drew Jackson: 919-829-4707, @jdrewjackson

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Drew Jackson, Staff Writer, 'Chef José Andrés and World Central Kitchen distribute thousands of meals in Western NC', *Charlotte Observer, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 15A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C024F945A3B1F0>



Hurricane, port strike impact supply chains in Carolinas

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC) Author: John Marks; Staff Writer | Section: News | 1274 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

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

"This is highly unusual," said Robert Handfield, professor and supply chain expert at North Carolina State University.

"Big storms hitting major interstate highways combined with port strikes is unprecedented."

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

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

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

Grocery store supply chain impact

Mark Ferguson is an associate dean at the University of South Carolina's Darla Moore School of Business. Grocery stores across the Carolinas that lost power and had to throw out fresh items will result in higher prices and harder-to-find items "probably within days," he said Wednesday afternoon.

"Short-term, predominantly we'll probably see fresh vegetables, fruits, anything being imported from South America. To a lesser degree, Europe."

Ferguson isn't aware of loss of power at cold storage facilities, where food stocks are kept before going to supermarkets. But when they and grocery stores have to restock, it could be difficult getting items from the West Coast

"The strike would create that by itself. But it's going to be amplified by the hurricane because existing inventories are depleted," Ferguson said. "It's going to be up and down the East Coast from the port shutdowns, but particularly the Carolinas, Florida, Georgia."

The port strike could impact anything from larger European auto parts used in South Carolina's BMW or Volvo plants to French or Italian wines, German beer or cheeses. Large appliances like washing machines or heavy machinery from Europe could become difficult to get.

The strike also could impact produce from the West Coast. How long consumers see those impacts will depend on the strike.

"That's going to be a problem until the ports reopen," Ferguson said. "There's not really an economical way to get fresh food to the East Coast, other than the ports."

Companies that trade in non-perishable items, particularly large retailers, pre-ordered inventory ahead of the strike to have a month or so of supply.

"I don't see a real need to panic buy things like electronics, toys, Christmas presents," Ferguson said. "These big retailers were anticipating strikes."

Prices are likely to rise on construction materials, due to port availability and tremendous need in Helene's path, he said.

"There's going to be a lot of rebuilding," Ferguson said.

If the strike lasts longer than the month most companies stocked up for, then consumers will begin to feel a steeper impact, he said.

Panic buying could impact product availability

Because retailers began prepping for a possible dock worker strike during the summer, impacts on customers should be minimal for the first couple of weeks, said University of South Carolina research economist Joey Von Nessen. That's if - and it's a big if - consumers follow normal buying patterns.

For communities that remember how fast toilet paper flew off the shelves during the height of the COVID pandemic, or tried to buy milk and bread on a snow day, there's always the threat of panic buying.

"Anticipated shortages can sometimes lead to current shortages," Von Nessen said. "That creates that self-fulfilling prophecy."

Both sides of the worker strike have incentive to resolve in quickly, he said, since both are consumers themselves and know how critical that work is to the region's infrastructure. The port in Charleston contributes to one of every nine South Carolina jobs and has an annual economic impact of \$87 billion, Von Nessen said.

Unlike bananas that may spoil if they have to take a longer, more expensive route through the West Coast due to the strike, South Carolina's main exports or vehicles, tires and agricultural products. "All of those are non-perishable items," Von Nessen said.

But if the strike goes beyond two weeks, price increases and product shortages could start to rise, he said. It's an unusual time to forecast, with variables from labor negotiations to markets and roads wiped away by the hurricane and unable to receive goods.

"It is very unusual to have two events like this happen at the same time," Von Nessen said. "It just magnifies the challenge. It's important to keep in mind not to panic."

Interstate loss to drive regional concerns

Even without the dockworker strike, the Carolinas would be facing logistical concerns.

"I-40 and 26 are major thoroughfares for a lot of freight for the east coast," Handfield said. "So it is hitting many different areas of the country, which will likely impact many different categories. One of the biggest concerns is healthcare supplies for the hospitals in Helene's path, which typically do not have a lot of inventory."

It likely will be months before logistical channels improve.

"We need to be thinking about the infrastructure - cell phone towers, roads, power lines and many other elements," Handfield said. "This will take months to repair and get this community working again."

Price gouging at retail shops

Too many retailers to name have donated millions of dollars worth of supplies to places ravaged by Helene, said Andy Ellen, president and general counsel for the 2,500-member North Carolina Retail Merchants Association. Yet there's still a cost to all those diverted trucks and manpower.

"Those are some of the items that would have moved from a distribution center into a store that wasn't impacted by the hurricane," Ellen said.

He doesn't expect a short-term problem getting water, cleaning supplies or plywood to rebuild from the storm. But he does see potential issues with the dockworker strike. About 40% of what ends up on store shelves in the country pass through those ports, Ellen said.

Even if the strike ends quickly but workers get the wage increases they're seeking, he said, markets could feel it. "That will also potentially impact price points," Ellen said. The group negotiating for the ports has offered 50% raises over the six-year life of the contract, while the union has demanded 77%.

Consumers should expect to see some price increases, including staples like coffee, Ellen said. Customers also can help or hurt supply based on how they shop.

"Regardless of the hurricane and regardless of this strike, it is not a time for consumers to panic," Ellen said. "We've had that before."

Avian flu drove up egg prices in the past, and the war in Ukraine impacted wheat. COVID stressed items across the supply chain. As prices increase and people buy what they can find, either for themselves or to donate, some people might mistake the natural supply and demand of pricing with price gouging, Ellen said.

"That doesn't mean that the retailer is doing anything wrong," he said.

Ellen is hopeful conditions will improve by the holiday shopping season. He's also concerned as the country is still recovering from high prices due to inflation.

How long the port strike lasts will determine whether it's a blip or something closer to the COVID-era supply chain challenges.

"We could see some of that in the future," Ellen said. "If this strike is elongated, we will see higher prices on store shelves."

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

Citation (aglc Style)

John Marks, Staff Writer, 'Hurricane, port strike impact supply chains in Carolinas', *Charlotte Observer, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 1A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C024F92A15E918



A cart of flowers lifts spirits and brings color back to Western NC's dire landscape

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC) Author: Martha Quillin; Staff Writer | Section: News | 300 Words Page: 4A OpenURL Link

Asheville Leslee Serdar came to work at the Whole Foods Market on Tuesday and saw one more thing going bad in a place where too much already was rotten, and decided to turn it into something good.

Downtown, dozens of people were standing in line with 5-gallon buckets and YETI cups to gather drinking water from a tanker truck because their spigots are dry, because the remnants of Hurricane Helene wrecked the city's water system.

Across Asheville, residents have been told not to flush their toilets.

Electricity was slowly being restored, but many were expecting to spend another night - or more - in the dark.

"We had these flowers, and they were just going to wilt," Serdar said, reaching into a grocery buggy full of bundled daisies and roses that had sat in the store for a few days while everything was closed.

"And I thought, here's something we can do to try to keep people's spirits up."

Serdar loaded the flowers into the buggy and pushed it toward the front of the Merrimon Avenue store, where she offered them free to people coming in for bottled water and organic hummus.

"Some of them cry," said Emmaleigh Argonauta, who took a turn with the flower cart Tuesday afternoon.

Nerves are frayed in this corner of the state as residents confront the scope of the damage from Helene and begin to guess at how long recovery is going to take. Power restoration is a top priority, along with running water. Without those, most schools will remain closed and many businesses can't operate.

Meanwhile, in communities across Western North Carolina nearly broken by flood damage, people are making do with what they have and sharing if there's enough: sandwiches here, Mexican dinners there, a bouquet of slightly past-their-prime blooms.

"It just brings a little color," Argonauta said.

Martha Quillin: 919-829-8989, @MarthaQuillin

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Martha Quillin, Staff Writer, 'A cart of flowers lifts spirits and brings color back to Western NC's dire landscape', *Charlotte Observer, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 4A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C024FA4EF72188>



There's new storm activity in the Atlantic and Gulf. Could any of them affect NC?

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC)

Author: Renee Umsted; Staff Writer | Section: News | 371 Words

Page: 18A OpenURL Link

Recovery efforts are underway across the Southeast days after Helene swept through the region, but two months remain for Atlantic hurricane season, and more storms could be on the way.

Storms are moving and developing in the Atlantic Ocean, and there's a system that may be coming together in the Caribbean Sea. Here's the latest.

Storm system building in the Gulf of Mexico

There's allow pressure system producing a large area of disorganized showers and thunderstorms from the southwestern Caribbean sea into the southern Gulf of Mexico, according to the National Hurricane Center.

Conditions could lead the system to develop into a tropical depression. As of Wednesday, Oct. 2, there's a 40% chance that a depression will form over the next seven days.

Current models are showing that the system will likely not develop into something strong, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service's Forecast Office in Raleigh told The News & Observer.

"This really looks like a threat of heavy rain and possibly a wind and surge threat, depending on storm strength, for Florida later next week," AccuWeather meteorologist Bernie Rayno said in a report.

Which storms are in the Atlantic now? What about Hurricane Kirk?

* Hurricane Kirk is about 1,200 miles west of the Cabo Verde Islands off the coast of west Africa and 1,280 miles east of the Lesser Antilles. It is expected to move northwest before turning and heading northeast.

While the NHC expects Kirk to strengthen and become a major hurricane by Thursday, Oct. 3, it is not near land. No coastal watches or warnings are in effect.

* There is another system developing in the eastern Atlantic, a few hundred miles southwest of the Cabo Verde Islands. The system has a 90% chance of developing into a tropical depression within 48 hours as of Oct. 2, according to the NHC. It is expected to move northwest and then north, the NWS Raleigh meteorologist said.

Will any of the storms affect NC?

Hurricane Kirk and the other system developing in the Atlantic are not expected to impact land at all.

The system in the Caribbean is expected to stay well to the south of North Carolina, the NWS Raleigh meteorologist said.

What will the next named storm be?

The next named storm would be Leslie.

Renee Umsted: +1 202-383-6008, @renee_umsted

• Citation (aglc Style)

Renee Umsted, Staff Writer, 'There's new storm activity in the Atlantic and Gulf. Could any of them affect NC?', *Charlotte Observer, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 18A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C024F99AAE5668>



Pilots fly NC nursing home residents with dementia to safety as medicine runs low

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC) Author: Julia Coin; Staff Writer | Section: News | 455 Words

Page: 14A OpenURL Link

More than 100 nursing home residents - most with dementia - were hoisted onto helicopters and flown across 80 miles of North Carolina's damaged interior on Tuesday.

They'd been stuck in Burnsville since Friday, when Helene hit the southeastern United States with a wrath that hasn't been seen in some areas for more than a century.

Volunteer pilots made about 20 trips in their own helicopters - from two-seaters to Black Hawks - flying northwest from Hickory to rescue 76 residents in Yancey House, Mitchell House and a few others nearby.

The U.S. Army - via a Chinook marked by an image of singer Lionel Richie's face, with a troop from Davenport, Iowa, inside - made one trip. It was the last trip.

They had 34 seatbelts on board. Luckily, said Capt. Cody Nolan, there were only 34 residents left.

"That's because I prayed," said Lindsey Duch, the vice president of health policy and innovation at ALG Senior, a company with about 30 nursing homes from Charlotte to Asheville. "We had our own pilots going out and getting people."

She worked with Operation Airdrop, a nonprofit that sends volunteer pilots with personal aircraft into disaster zones. The pilots were set to rescue 100 from an orphanage Tuesday, said Matt McSwain, the organization's Hickory coordinator, but when they heard the kids got replenished food and water, they pivoted.

The seniors would soon run out of resources - namely medicine.

Shana Pitts, another ALG Senior executive, said they'd been waiting for government help since Thursday.

"It was a little frustrating," she said.

But the furrowed, concerned look disappeared from her face when residents wheeled up to the sliding airport doors in Hickory. One held a Bible in her lap, atop of a flowery, ankle-length skirt.

The nurses welcomed patients with chipper smiles.

"Hey, sweet lady! How're you?" one asked as a woman in a pink hummingbird shirt with long gray hair rolled up.

"Alright, now go steal some snacks," another said after checking one diabetic man's sugar.

Inside the terminal, on a table with a leafy fake plant, sat an opened pack of Lance peanut butter crackers, the kind grandma might have at the bottom of her big purse.

Then McSwain got another call. This one was from the N.C. State Highway Patrol.

"They just gave me a mission," he said. "Why is the highway patrol calling me? I should be calling them."

North Carolina Sens. Thom Tillis and Ted Budd stopped in at the Hickory airport early Tuesday. They offered verbal

support, McSwain said, which was more than some parts of the government.

Julia Coin: 7042189350, @juliamcoin

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Julia Coin, Staff Writer, 'Pilots fly NC nursing home residents with dementia to safety as medicine runs low', *Charlotte Observer, The* (online), 4 Oct 2024 14A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C024FA31C33E18>



Thousands Still In The Dark In Asheville, N.C. Post-Helene

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Video (NC)

Section: News 29 Words

OpenURL Link

 $https://vid.connatix.com/9a537640-2d65-40 fa-8c0e-3a17688c1364/mmid-84079a95-cdec-dd6c-9f00-c1ba5de26 fc9/1080_h264.mp4$

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

'Thousands Still In The Dark In Asheville, N.C. Post-Helene', *Charlotte Observer, The: Video* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C044A55592BC50



Volunteers help rebuild communities after hurricane helene devastates North Carolina

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Video (NC)

Section: News 19 Words

OpenURL Link

 $https://vid.connatix.com/b92744c8-655f-491d-80ce-3d2936facd88/mmid-03ea3990-3b44-acfb-f5b6-2854a5b6885e/1080_h264.mp4$

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

'Volunteers help rebuild communities after hurricane helene devastates North Carolina', *Charlotte Observer, The: Video* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C044A5564F8858>



"Night Long" is more than a song title to Bravo Company from Iowa

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Video (NC)

Section: News 58 Words

OpenURL Link

 $https://vid.connatix.com/fd776f0a-43a5-44c3-acc5-40dee767b0a7/mmid-3e0def9d-c176-8caa-67ad-e96a13e7c1eb/1080_h264.mp4\\$

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

""Night Long" is more than a song title to Bravo Company from Iowa', *Charlotte Observer, The: Video* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C044A554E434A0



Egypt, NC, is cut off from even helicopters

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Video (NC)

Section: News | 33 Words

OpenURL Link

 $https://vid.connatix.com/2a7535cf-cbcd-472b-8a69-23b6c99d34ef/mmid-af415e55-429d-3773-4a19-ffaa2d26d89f/1080_h264.mp4$

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

'Egypt, NC, is cut off from even helicopters', *Charlotte Observer, The: Video* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFEFCB8084FAF8



Biltmore Estate closed until further notice. A look at the damage there after Helene

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Chyna Blackmon, The Charlotte Observer | Section: north_carolina | 779 Words OpenURL Link

Following the catastrophic flooding of Hurricane Helene, several Western North Carolina homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed, including one of the state's biggest tourism sites: Biltmore Estate.

Like many other sites around the mountains, much of its destruction is still being assessed so the property will remain closed until further notice. According to the Biltmore website, it could be closed to guests until at least October 15.

biltmore house heleneBiltmore House after Hurricane Helene hit Western North Carolina as a tropical storm.

"Like all of this region, the damage varies by location across our 8,000-acre property. In forested areas, which is a large portion of the estate, wind damage is extensive to grounds and some structures. Crews have been working tirelessly to clear roads so we can begin repairs," the Biltmore's latest update on Oct. 3 said.

biltmore helene damage update instagram 1003

crews clearing roadways near biltmore estateCrews working to clear roadways near Biltmore Estate in Asheville.

How bad was Helene storm damage at Biltmore?

Biltmore House, Conservatory, winery, gardens, and the property's hotels had very little to no impact, the team said, with most damage to other elements of the estate.

Biltmore entrance hurricane heleneDamage from Helene at the Biltmore entrance in Biltmore Village.

"The entrance to Biltmore, located in Biltmore Village, and other low-lying areas of the property, such as our farm, experienced significant flooding and damage to buildings. We are assessing structures and roadways in these areas," the team said.

biltmore group sales officeThe group sales office at Biltmore Estate after Hurricane Helene swept through Western North Carolina as a tropical storm.

"We sadly lost a few of our animals during the storm, but the vast majority are safe and accounted for thanks to our dedicated agriculture and equestrian teams. As with all of our neighbors who experienced the effects of Helene, we are working on our plans for a swift recovery and look forward to welcoming our guests to this region as soon as it is safe to do so."

Located in the state's largest mountain town, the 8,000-acre Asheville estate with 250 rooms is the largest privately owned home in the country and one of North Carolina's most popular tourist destinations.

biltmore estate lodge gate damageStorm damage at Biltmore Estate's lodge gate after Hurricane Helene.

After Helene, can NC businesses and tourist sites restore 'the magic of Asheville'?

What if you have tickets to visit Biltmore?

As the Biltmore remains closed to guests, including Biltmore Annual Passholders, Vanderbilt Wine Club members, and Sporting Clay Club members, the team is working to accommodate those with previous plans to visit during this time.

According to the Biltmore website, those with daytime tickets are welcome to reschedule a visit for another day once the estate has safely reopened or request refund online. For those who booked overnight stays at the estate between Sept. 27-Oct. 15, reservations have been automatically canceled and a 12-month credit will be distributed.

Biltmore Villages satellite imagery of flooding from Helene

"We are heartbroken for our friends, family, and neighbors across this region who have been devastated by this storm," Biltmore's website says. "To our first responders, utility workers, and community volunteers, we are eternally grateful for your endless care and courage. We will all work together to recover from this unprecedented disaster."

RAL_100224-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-16.JPGA scene from Biltmore Village in Asheville on Wednesday October 2, 2204. The area received extensive damage from flooding of the Swannanoa River after the remnants of Hurricane Helene caused torrential rainfall in western North Carolina.

Biltmore Relief Fund

While the Biltmore remains closed, its team announced the \$2 million "Biltmore Relief Fund for WNC" to support estate employees, emergency response teams and nonprofit partners in Asheville.

biltmore estate relief fund ig post

"Western North Carolina has been our family's home for more than 125 years, and we are devastated to see Helene's impact on our region. We remain committed to supporting our employees and neighbors in the aftermath of this unprecedented storm and the long-term recovery efforts. Now more than ever, we must work together to stabilize and rebuild this community," Bill Cecil, Jr., President and CEO of Biltmore, said in a statement.

You can find more information and updates on the status of Biltmore's closure, refunds and how to help online at biltmore.com/weather-update.

Before and after satellite images show flooding from Helene in AshevilleBiltmore Village and the River Arts District in Asheville received extensive damage from flooding of the Swannanoa River after Helene caused torrential rainfall in western North Carolina over the weekend. Satellite imagery provided by Planet Labs PBC shows the river overwhelming parts of the city.

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

Tropical Storm Helene closed the most famous road in Western North Carolina

Here's a searchable database of NC roads closed and damaged by Tropical Storm Helene

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

Citation (aglc Style)

Chyna Blackmon, The Charlotte Observer, 'Biltmore Estate closed until further notice. A look at the damage there after Helene', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C007FED5A00E78>



Thousands still in the dark in Asheville post-Helene. Duke Energy has a temporary fix

October 4, 2024 \mid Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Mary Ramsey, The Charlotte Observer Section: weather_news \mid 774 Words OpenURL Link

Duke Energy plans to restore power to thousands in a Helene-ravaged Asheville neighborhood within days using a temporary solution to a problem that would otherwise take months to fix.

Like the Biltmore Village community it serves, the Biltmore substation was ravaged by the Swannanoa River's raging flood waters during the storm. Shredded mulch bags, plywood and a garden hose holder that raced downstream during the storm from a nearby Lowe's are still tangled up in the substation's lower level. The mangled station now sits just across a partially washed-out two-lane road from the river.

Fast food restaurants normally bustling with tourists visiting the nearby Biltmore Estate are washed out, too. There are mauled vehicles strewn haphazardly and a shipping container wrapped around a power transmission pole.

AVLDuke_5.jpgA shipping container wrapped around a Duke Energy transmission tower along the Swannanoa River, near Biltmore Village, in Asheville on Thursday, Oct. 3, 2024.

The damage has been a "logjam" to restoring power to about 6,700 customers, primarily in Biltmore Village and south Asheville, Duke spokesman Bill Norton said.

The substation's lower level was "completely flooded out," meaning it must be "completely rebuilt," Norton said. There's also likely water damage to the substation's upper tier. Repairs will take three to four months.

"There's no way we could keep customers waiting that long," Norton said.

Biltmore Villages satellite imagery of flooding from Helene

To provide a faster fix, special crews drove in a 200,000-pound mobile substation across the state from Garner. It's expected to restore power to at least some of the 6,700 as soon as the weekend.

"They're hurting, so we want to get their power on as quickly as possible," Norton said.

It's one of multiple mobile substations going in across Western North Carolina in an effort to help the hundreds of thousands still without power in Helene's path.

RAL_100224-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-27.JPGNick Morel, an offshore operator, refuels a portable light in Biltmore Village in Asheville on Wednesday October 2, 2204. The area received extensive damage from flooding of the Swannanoa River after the remnants of Hurricane Helene caused torrential rainfall in western North Carolina.

Mobile substations provide 'off-ramp' for power

AVLDuke_1.jpgDuke Energy works to install a mobile substation on Swannanoa Drive, near Biltmore Village, in Asheville on Thursday, Oct. 3, 2024.

On Thursday afternoon, a Duke crew worked through mud and the odor of dirty river water to dig trenches and lay new copper wiring for the Biltmore mobile substation. For some customers, "power will be back right away" once it's online, Norton said. Others may have down power lines in their neighborhood that will also have to be addressed before power is restored.

"It's nice to be able to get a chunk like this on all at once," Norton said.

Biltmore Villages satellite imagery of flooding from Helene

Another mobile substation is already up and running near New Salem Road, also along the Swannanoa River. A third is planned for Hot Springs, about an hour northwest of Asheville, to power its hydroelectric dam.

Substations are a critical connection for getting power to customers — like an off-ramp from the interstate into a town. Norton said.

RAL_100224-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-02.JPGA scene from Biltmore Village in Asheville on Wednesday October 2, 2204. The area received extensive damage from flooding of the Swannanoa River after the remnants of Hurricane Helene caused torrential rainfall in western North Carolina.

Latest news on Western North Carolina power outages

AVLDuke_2.jpgDuke Energy works to install a mobile substation on Swannanoa Drive, near Biltmore Village, in Asheville on Thursday, Oct. 3, 2024.

Duke has restored power to more than 1 million in North Carolina in the week since Helene hit, but a little more than 200,000 are still in the dark in the state's hard-hit mountain areas, according to Norton. With much of the rest of the state in good shape, Duke is sending everyone available west.

"It allows us to collapse all the resources into the mountain region," he said.

Improving cell phone reception and internet service has made it easier for crews in the area, some of whom traveled from as far away as Canada, to communicate and work more efficiently, Norton said. Duke expects most customers to get their power back by the end of the week.

But for some areas, where roads have been completely washed out, it will take more time.

"If that road is gone, our poles are gone, the easement is gone. That is not a week-long restoration ... It'll be weeks," Norton said.

AVLDuke_4.jpgA Duke Energy substation is littered with items from a Lowe's home improvement center that is located less than a mile upstream from its location along the Swannaoa River. Items from the store such as bags of mulch, lumber, plastic tubing and bags of flower bulbs were carried in the flood waters caused by Hurricane Helene.

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Mary Ramsey, The Charlotte Observer, 'Thousands still in the dark in Asheville post-Helene. Duke Energy has a temporary fix', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFF11F510930D8>



Waffle House Index: Is it closed in Western North Carolina after Hurricane Helene?

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Evan Moore, The Charlotte Observer | Section: c5_food_drink | 276 Words OpenURL Link

Scientists often use the Saffir-Simpson Wind Scale to predict how destructive a hurricane will be. The scale was used to determine that Hurricane Helene would be a Category 4 storm as it swept through much of Western North Carolina.

But a more well-known – and perhaps even more reliable – indicator of how disastrous a storm can be is the "Waffle House Index."

Is Waffle House closed in Western North Carolina?

According to the most recent unit status maps released by the company Friday afternoon, Oct. 4, in the wake of Hurricane Helene, two Waffle House locations in Western North Carolina were closed and 11 were offering limited menus.

That's an improvement from just two days ago, when three locations were closed and 13 were offering limited menus, according to a post from the company on X.

[ANOTHER DINER TO VISIT: At the Salty Goat Grill in Western North Carolina, residents come in for coffee and community.]

Why is it so important if Waffle House is closed during a storm?

Why does it matter if Waffle House is open or closed during a storm? As it turns out, the status maps can tell us a lot about their severity.

"Green means the restaurant is serving a full menu, a signal that damage in an area is limited and the lights are on. Yellow means a limited menu, indicating power from a generator, at best, and low food supplies. Red means the restaurant is closed, a sign of severe damage in the area or unsafe conditions," Waffle House stated.

"If you get there and the Waffle House is closed?" former FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate has said. "That's really bad. That's where you go to work."

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Evan Moore, The Charlotte Observer, 'Waffle House Index: Is it closed in Western North Carolina after Hurricane Helene?', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C01498B4CD49C8>



Their Western NC home survived Helene. Why they still left for Charlotte seeking housing

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Desiree Mathurin, The Charlotte Observer | Section: north_carolina | 1675 Words OpenURL Link

On Sept. 26, Porter Watson started to prepare for Hurricane Helene. He lives in Woodfin, a mountain town north of Asheville and uphill from the French Broad River.

He bought a few microwavable meals, got gas with no issues, along with ice. Then the rain came. The power went out, the water shut off and cell service ceased. Watson watched the river rise and rage, bringing along debris and PVC pipes the size of train cars.

Luckily his home didn't sustain any damage. But after nearby flooding receded, he knew the same couldn't be said for many other areas of Western North Carolina. He jumped into the fray, helping friends dig out from the mud and damage caused by flood waters.

Then Watson and his wife Layson made the decision to leave the area.

"The whole idea is to minimize our burden on the search-and-rescue and recovery efforts and available resources," he said. "Our house is an open shelter right now for anyone who needs it."

He's one of many western North Carolinians temporarily relocating two hours away to Charlotte and other eastern areas as emergency workers begin to fix the infrastructure damage caused by Helene. It's unclear how long it will take for power and water lines to be restored. Lack of cell service remains also an ongoing issue.

Those impacted by Hurricane Helene are looking for immediate housing from Hickory to Charlotte and Raleigh.

As they make the move, folks are either staying with family members or searching for hotels or Airbnbs, while hoping to avoid price gouging. And some folks, like Watson, are heading to Charlotte to pick up supplies for those still in need.

IMG_8480.jpgFrom left, Porter Watson, Shane Shields and friends gather supplies to bring back to Western North Carolina. Both Watson and Shields have temporarily relocated to Charlotte to help lessen the burden on needed resources in Asheville and nearby areas.

Finding housing in a hurry around Charlotte

For people who can leave the western area, finding housing in Charlotte is a mixed bag.

Some hotels around Charlotte Douglas International Airport said facilities have been at capacity since Sept. 27.

In Hickory and Conover, which collectively has more than 1,400 hotel rooms about an hour east of Asheville, facilities are maxed out, according to Mandy Pitts Hildebrand, CEO of the Hickory Metro Convention Center & Visitors Bureau.

Mainly, many emergency response workers are occupying those spaces.

West Asheville resident Shane Shields said he managed to secure an Airbnb in the University area of Charlotte but the options were limited. Shields lives near the River Arts District and watched as the local businesses and art center was destroyed. His home didn't sustain any damages but like Watson, his friend, Shields left the area to lessen the burden.

image3.jpgWhen the French Broad River flooded Asheville's River Arts District, it left destruction in its wake. Summit Coffee Co.'s damage is extensive: Its main wall is nearly gone, its roof partially caved in and a mixture of mud and debris lies inside.

"The vulnerable populations in the city as well as the rural populations in the region are not able to access a lot of those resources," Shields said. "Many people have stayed and don't have the means to leave. But I think it's helpful in some ways that the folks that can find temporary relief do so, so that the resources that are in Asheville can go to the folks who are still there and need it most."

To help with the housing search, Angela Standish and Josie Nasife started a Facebook group to connect folks who need housing with people who can offer shelter. The WNC Temporary Housing Resources group has over 1,200 members and Standish said the group is growing rapidly.

Both women are in the housing and real estate industry, so to help with the recovery efforts they wanted to put their knowledge to use.

Nasife said the idea behind the group was to create a real-time central place for folks to search for and post free or heavily discounted housing.

"There's a lot of people that are opening their homes and willing to help," Nasife said. "We're kind of just growing the page organically, through word-of-mouth and posting on the local counties social media pages. We haven't even scratched the surface because a lot of these folks don't have cell service."

So far, Nasife and Standish said the response has been outstanding.

IMG_8469.jpgPorter Watson, Shane Shields and friends gather supplies in Charlotte to bring back to Western North Carolina.

Locals all over North Carolina are offering their spaces, from rooms to full houses. Nasife added that some multifamily property managers, including Southwood Realty in Gastonia, are offering at least two months free rent with the option to look at future leasing options.

Some of the properties are located throughout Charlotte and the metro area.

Standish and Nasife are monitoring the group, marking posts as completed as people's offerings or needs are met. They are also making sure prices are reasonable.

Right now, they are seeing a need for immediate housing but as things progress, the group will begin to focus on long-term spaces.

"It's just one way to get people connected and help," Standish said "This need is going to be here for a long time."

Housing resources for people displaced by Helene

There are a number of open shelters throughout the counties affected by the storm. A list can be found at ReadyNC.gov.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has activated its Transitional Sheltering Assistance program for displaced residents in these counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk,

Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey counties. The program is also available for those in the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

The program will cover the costs of hotel and motel temporary stays, including room, taxes and non-refundable pet fees. The program is available for those who applied for disaster assistance.

FEMA said residents do not need to request the housing assistance. They will be notified by the agency of their eligibility through automated contact.

RAL_100224-HURRICANE-HELENE-TEL-27.JPGNick Morel, an offshore operator, refuels a portable light in Biltmore Village in Asheville on Wednesday October 2, 2204. The area received extensive damage from flooding of the Swannanoa River after the remnants of Hurricane Helene caused torrential rainfall in western North Carolina.

Airbnb is also offering free temporary housing through their nonprofit, Airbnb.org. The organization is offering temporary stays for 10 to 14 days free of charge, according to Christoph Gorder, executive director of the organization.

Gorder said North Carolinans who are in need of shelter can reach out to 211 to determine eligibility and to be given access to the free Airbnb sites. Going onto Airbnb's regular website will not show the free offerings.

Current hosts can reach out to Airbnb to offer their listings for free. Gorder added that if someone isn't a host but is interested in becoming one during the emergency, they can reach out to Airbnb.

Price-gouging complaints

Price gouging laws went into effect immediately after the storm, making it illegal for businesses to raise costs to make a profit during the emergency.

As of Oct. 3, N.C. Attorney General Josh Stein's office has received over 150 complaints including for high fuel, groceries and hotel costs.

One person in Cleveland County said they were charged \$10 for a loaf of bread. Another person in Hickory said they spent \$45 on a 24-pack of water. In Boone, one person said a Quality Inn and Suites that usually charges \$100 for a room per night is now charging more than \$388.

In Charlotte, a Google search showed that prices were relatively normal for hotels around the airport and in Uptown.

North Carolinians may submit complaints of price gouging online or by phone. To report potential price gouging, call 1-877-5-NO-SCAM or go to ncdoj.gov/pricegouging.

Next steps for displaced residents

For Watson and Shields, it's unclear when they'll return to their homes but they are going back to Asheville and nearby cities with supplies.

Shields has already made one trip back to Asheville with the help of a friend's truck.

"Many folks have stepped up in bringing supplies in from runs that they've done in Charlotte or wherever they might be," Shields said. "I know that there are a lot of governmental agencies and institutions and public workers that are working tirelessly around the clock. But because the community is small... a lot of folks have jumped in to help however they can, and not wait for everybody to be checked on through those agencies."

Outside Watson's temporary space in the Elizabeth neighborhood of Charlotte, 8x10 trailers and SUVs were stuffed

with loaded gas canisters, water, diapers and other essential supplies.

Asheville is a small city, Shields said, and that's allowed for grassroots effort to form to help Western North Carolina.

The group gathered Wednesday evening prepping for a trip out west. Watson said so far he's received thousands of dollars in donations, all of which are being used to purchase supplies. The trailers were also gifted for the ride.

The plan is to be as helpful as possible without interfering with federal aid, according to Watson. They plan to disperse the donations throughout the places they can reach including the towns of Marshal, Spruce Pine and Asheville.

They also intend to do wellness checks for anyone in need and just be a source of information for residents.

While the team was packing, random neighbors were approaching them with money and whatever supplies they had on hand, including open packages of water.

Shields and Watson said the city of Charlotte and residents throughout North Carolina have stepped up to help in the effort. And they'll need to continue doing so for a long time.

"We're going to try to be that satellite, that supply source that people need right now, because people aren't getting the appropriate support they need," Watson said. "The two aims that we're trying to accomplish... are getting supplies to people and getting people gas and car maintenance so that they can get off the mountain."

IMG_8455.jpgPorter Watson, Shane Shields and friends gathered packed 8x10 trailers and SUVs stuffed with loaded gas canisters, water, diapers and essential supplies to bring back to Asheville and nearby towns in need after Hurricane Helene.

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Desiree Mathurin, The Charlotte Observer, 'Their Western NC home survived Helene. Why they still left for Charlotte seeking housing', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFFD250B48BF88>



Pools, bottles, creeks: How one Western NC community is finding water after Helene damage

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Tracy Kimball, The Charlotte Observer | Section: weather_news | 491 Words OpenURL Link

It's a welcome sight for a weary community: signs offering free water that dot the roads in Black Mountain.

Resources from around the state and nation are pouring into Western North Carolina — a region devastated by flooding from Tropical Storm Helene. And while the town's water system, like so many others across the region, still isn't fully operational, bottled water is plentiful. Pop-up stands in parking lots offered the much-needed commodity along with food.

Black Mountain Presbyterian Church offered lunches, and restaurants from around the area offered hot meals.

At the Black Mountain Parks and Recreation pool, volunteers directed people to the pool, where residents siphoned non-potable water. Around a corner, people used hoses to pump potable water. Across the street, residents used containers to gather creek water.

kimball_Helene_BlackMt10_10424.jpgJennings White waits for water Friday, Oct. 4, 2024 at the Black Mountain Parks and Recreation pool.

Water is a resource they took for granted before, residents say. It's more valuable now than ever.

"You don't really, really recognize how lucky we were before," said Lashonda Lytle at the parks and recreation center. "You're not able to live your normal life."

Lytle said her employer expects her to return to work Monday But Lytle's unable to shower or wash clothes and she's her 83-year-old mother's caregiver.

"And that's a huge obstacle for me," Lytle said about leaving her mother to go to work in a Helene-devastated community.

Laura Weaver of Black Mountain said her husband has been trying to build a portable shower above their house. Weaver became emotional when talking about taking care of her large family.

"Emotionally, it's been just getting all of our kids fed," she said Friday at the Presbyterian church, where parishioners and volunteers were feeding members of the community.

kimball_Helene_BlackMtn4_10424.jpgVolunteers load bags of groceries at a pop-up food bank in Swannanoah, N.C. on Friday.

There's also the emotional trauma of the storm and remaining without much information about the world outside of their community.

"We felt like we were on an island," she added. "Just not what's not going on, if my parents are ok or whether my sister was ok."

Weaver on Friday afternoon ate macaroni and cheese at Black Mountain Presbyterian. Dozens of people milled around, shoving boxes with canned goods, water, hygiene products and baby formula, among others.

Organizers said donations were pouring in from "everywhere."

Down the street from the church, another pop-up food bank offered meals, canned goods and supplies. Residents walked from their homes carrying large sacks of goods.

Anthony Lee, of Graybeard Realty, handed out donations out of a trailer in a parking lot.

"There's still families in need," he said while toting a large case of water to a table.

kimball_Helene_BlackMtn7_10424.jpgEmily Sampson organizers water bottles at the Black Mountain Parks and Recreation pool Friday, Oct. 4, 2024

kimball_Helene_BlackMtn16_10424.jpgVolunteers at Black Mountain Presbyterian Church sort through groceries on Friday, Oct. 4, 2024

kimball_Helene_BlackMtn18_10424.jpgVolunteers at Black Mountain Presbyterian Church sort through groceries on Friday, Oct. 4, 2024

kimball_Helene_BlackMtn5_10424.jpgVolunteers load unload groceries at a pop-up food bank in Swannanoa, N.C. on Friday.

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Tracy Kimball, The Charlotte Observer, 'Pools, bottles, creeks: How one Western NC community is finding water after Helene damage', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C01498B6975B68>



County says there's hope for Mountain Island Lake-area homes left off Helene disaster list

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Nora O'Neill, The Charlotte Observer | Section: local | 575 Words OpenURL Link

There may be hope for owners of dozens of homes along the Catawba River near Mountain Island Lake as Mecklenburg County officials work toward a federal disaster declaration.

County staff estimate more than \$26 million in Helene-cased damage, a preliminary figure likely to increase, said Commissioner Elaine Powell. People from around 100 residents near Mountain Island Lake were displaced as a result of the storm, The Charlotte Observer previously reported. But Mecklenburg wasn't among 25 counties in the federal disaster declaration from President Joe Biden. The omission means the federal government won't help with home repairs, temporary housing or property damage or other expenses in the same way as communities to the west.

Gaston, Lincoln and Catawba counties, which also border the Catawba River, were included in the federal disaster declaration. Iredell, Rowan, Stanly and Union were among other Charlotte-area counties left out.

"I met with a lot of folks who lost everything, all their personal possessions. And they're in shock," Powell said of residents near Mountain Island Lake. "I felt the pain of what these people were going through, the pain, the fear, the shock ... And they wanted help, wanted a magic fairy to appear and make everything better."

drone images 004.JPEGThis image taken by a drone shows homes along the Catawba River submerged in floodwater from Helene. A number of homes saw roof-high flooding as water moved through the Catawba River system.

Parts of the area were under a mandatory evacuation order last week as Duke Energy pushed Helene's floodwater from Lake Norman through the Catawba River and into Lake Wylie in South Carolina. The rush of water as floodgates opened led to four houses being completely swept away, Powell said. One home was found on Tuesday in Lake Wylie, she said.

"All the water from the mountains makes its way here, or a significant amount," Powell said. "I feel like a lot of people forgot, and it makes sense, there's so much trauma in Western North Carolina ... but this neighborhood was underwater, and four houses went down the Catawba River."

But there's hope.

Powell said the county is working to be added to the declaration, which requires 25 impacted residences and over \$5 million worth of damages, and the request is currently under review. The county staff estimate of 89 impacted structures and and \$26 million in damage tops the requirements. In the meantime, FEMA recommends residents contact local services for aid.

"Residents and businesses should continue to clean up, contact their insurance company and document damage," Brian Haines, a spokesperson for the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, said in an email to The Charlotte Observer. "They should also please report any damage from the storm to their local emergency management agency."

Paige Grande, a spokesperson for Charlotte-Mecklenburg Emergency Management, said residents should take advantage of city and county resources and support from nonprofits while the county works to get a FEMA

declaration.

Resources include a donation drive at Calvary Baptist Church, a monetary donation fund set up by group FORCLT, and the Mecklenburg Department of Community Resources. A complete list of resources can be found on the CharMeck Responds Coaltion's website.

Despite the lack of FEMA aid, Powell said it's been beautiful watching North Carolinians work together in the wake of Helene.

"I just love the beauty of that," she said. "It's just like, 'how can we help each other?' And I wish there was way more of that in the world than the opposite... Mr. Rogers would be proud."

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Nora O'Neill, The Charlotte Observer, 'County says there's hope for Mountain Island Lake-area homes left off Helene disaster list', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFF11F53EFB2EO>



Charlotte restaurateurs had to watch from afar while Helene destroyed their Asheville locations

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Samantha Husted, The Charlotte Observer | Section: c5_development | 2025 Words OpenURL Link

Kaitlyn Burton's role as director of operations for PIE.ZZA looks different these days. Instead of managing the day-to-day operations of the pizza joint's two stores, this week she's focused on making phone calls to her employees, checking to see if they are alive.

"It's been terrifying to try and communicate with employees ... There's still some people we haven't heard from, and we're trying to communicate with them every single day," Burton told CharlotteFive on Wednesday, Oct. 2.

PIE.ZAA is a late-night pizzeria with locations in both Asheville's South Slope Brewing District and Charlotte's South End neighborhood. While Burton lives in Charlotte, she's a Henderson County native. For her, Hurricane Helene hit extremely close to home.

"Now that the rivers have gone down, we can really see what's been going on — cars flipped over, houses completely washed away. It's so surreal," she said of the storm's extensive damage.

[WHAT'S NEXT? After Helene, can NC businesses and tourist sites restore 'the magic of Asheville'?]

image6.jpgPIE.ZAA's Asheville location remains mostly unscathed, so owner Tyler Kotch is dedicating time to clearing Asheville's debris-ridden roads, chainsaw in hand.

Reaching Asheville employees has been difficult — not just for Burton, but for many Charlotte business owners with locations in Western North Carolina. With cell phone service scattered at best, communication has been a hurdle during this unprecedented time.

One employee Burton was able to reach is the Asheville store's general manager, Kayla Smith. Burton said Smith was trapped in her neighborhood with roads leading in and out blocked by fallen trees and other debris, making it nearly impossible for cars to enter or exit.

"She (Smith) was walking for three hours to be able to find any cell reception to connect with me," Burton explained.

Thankfully, a family member was able to reach Smith and get her to safety.

While Burton diligently checks on her employees' welfare, PIE.ZAA owner Tyler Kotch is using his trusty chainsaw to help clear roads.

"Tyler has been very adamant about taking his chainsaw and cutting down trees to make sure that roads are becoming accessible," Burton said. "Whether that's our employees or random people."

image5.jpgPIE.ZAA owner Tyler Kotch is helping employees at his Asheville pizzeria and others in the community by clearing fallen trees and other debris off roads in the community.

Kotch was also able to bring essential supplies to the Asheville store's assistant manager.

While Burton still doesn't know the full extent of the damage to PIE.ZAA's Asheville location, she says it seems that

Helene left it mostly unscathed, though the store is still closed and without power or water. Other businesses, like Summit Coffee Co., which has an Asheville location just down the road, weren't as fortunate.

"We didn't have a loss of our entire business or anything like that, which we're extremely thankful for and almost feel guilty over," Burton said. "But our employees are out of work now, and without them working, they can't make money for their families."

Charlotte and Asheville: Two connected North Carolina cities

We all know and love Asheville, Charlotte's beloved neighbor to the west. While different in culture and scenery — Asheville is known for its relaxed mountain energy, while Charlotte is a metropolitan banking town — our two cities share a lot in common.

Many of our favorite Charlotte spots, like PIE.ZAA, have locations in the Asheville area. Familiar spots like Summit Coffee Co., PlantHouse, Blaze Pizza, Burial Beer Co., Hi-Wire Brewing and Botiwalla by Chai Pani have all been affected by Hurricane Helene, the catastrophic storm that has devastated Western North Carolina.

Employees and their families are displaced and business owners are facing uncharted territory — no one expected this level of devastation.

In the days following the storm, images and videos show historic levels of flooding with popular destinations like Asheville's River Arts District and Chimney Rock's Main Street completely decimated. Businesses have been literally swept away in Helene's wake. Now, much of what remains is wreckage, mud and debris.

Many Asheville businesses are focused on prioritizing employees' welfare, as well as providing support to the community and surrounding towns. Charlotte businesses have also risen to the occasion, providing much-needed supplies to Western North Carolina and beyond.

riverside_12.JPGA sign for the River Arts District sits in the rubble on Riverside Drive in Asheville, N.C. on Tuesday, October 1, 2024.

How other Western North Carolina businesses are coping after Helene

A couple miles down the road from PIE.ZAA's Asheville location is Summit Coffee Co, a Davidson-based coffee shop with locations in Charlotte and other areas across the South. Its Asheville spot was severely damaged when the French Broad River flooded the River Arts District, leaving total destruction in its path.

Summit Coffee Co. CEO Brian Helfrich said in the days leading up to the storm, he expected minor flooding — nothing that the store couldn't handle. In reality, Summit Coffee was ambushed by rushing water almost as high as the building itself.

"The first photo I received from the franchise owner was around 2 p.m., when the main wall had collapsed and water was over 10 feet high," Helfrich said. "Later that night we saw video coverage of the River Arts District with only the roof of our building visible above the floods."

The building's main wall is mostly gone, the roof is partially caved in and the store is waterlogged.

"I'll never forget the physical reaction," Helfrich said upon seeing the initial photos of the flooding. "It gave me chills and tears. Everything was simultaneously tense and draining from my body."

image3.jpgWhen the French Broad River flooded Asheville's River Arts District, it left destruction in its wake. Summit Coffee Co.'s damage is extensive: Its main wall is nearly gone, its roof partially caved in and a mixture of mud and debris lies inside.

While the fate of the coffee shop is unknown, Helfrich said his priority right now is the welfare of his crew. Through Oct. 6, Summit Coffee Co. is supporting its team by giving 100 percent of proceeds from all online coffee orders to a fund for its displaced Asheville staff.

"Our short-term priorities have been to support them," Helfrich said. "This online coffee sale should at least help relieve stress for a while. We'll figure out what happens with the cafe after a few days."

In terms of the weeks ahead, Helfrich, like many others in Western North Carolina, doesn't know what the future will hold.

"We don't quite know what the future looks like, other than that we are committed to having a presence in Asheville," he said.

Hi-Wire Brewing, a brewery headquartered in Asheville with a location in Charlotte also faced devastation at its River Arts District location.

"It is heartbreaking," co-owner Bryna Frosaker told us. "There's just mud everywhere. (The flood) went probably 10 feet up the building."

image2.jpgHigh waters during the flooding at Hi-Wire Brewing's location in the River Arts District.

Frosaker, an Asheville local, was there throughout the worst of the storm. She says she didn't realize the magnitude of the destruction until she was able to finally get cell phone reception.

"I knew what was happening in Asheville, but I didn't realize the breadth of it going on elsewhere," she said.

In order to touch base with Hi-Wire employees and check on their wellbeing, Frosaker reached out to an employee based outside of Asheville. They were able to connect to all of Hi-Wire's team members. All were safe — but not unscathed.

image4.jpgHi-Wire Brewing's Biltmore Village Production Brewery and Taproom after Hurricane Helene's flooding subsided.

"We had one employee with a tree go through his daughter's bedroom," Frosaker said.

Hi-Wire's Biltmore Village location also received some damage, but Frosaker is hoping to reopen there soon.

"As soon as we have power and water — and assuming our employees can get safely to work — we can begin operations again," she said.

Like Summit Coffee, PlantHouse has multiple locations across the Carolinas, including in Asheville and Charlotte. Severe flooding overtook the plant store's Biltmore Village location.

"The water was almost all the way to the ceiling," Charlotte store manager Brittany Pineda said.

Pineda told CharlotteFive that many of the PlantHouse employees live near the damaged store in Asheville, a point of concern as the damage in the area was severe. She eventually received confirmation from the Asheville store manager that the entire PlantHouse team is safe and accounted for.

"It was pretty scary for us just trying to figure out if everyone on the team was OK and if the store was OK," she said.

While some business owners have had luck reaching employees, others are still trying. Jimmy Sierra, a franchise owner for Blaze Pizza locations in Charlotte, Gastonia and Asheville, said it's been difficult to make contact with a

majority of his crew.

"So far we have been able to get in contact with about 20 percent or less of our team members," Sierra told CharlotteFive. "All are OK (so far) except one. His house suffered damage when a tree fell on top of the house — no idea the extent of the damage yet."

Sierra, a Puerto Rican native, is no stranger to hurricanes. However, that doesn't make their impact any less jarring — especially here in North Carolina.

"I never expected Asheville to go through that," he said.

Both of Blaze Pizza's Asheville locations are relatively undamaged, and its Gerber Village location has had power and water restored.

Sierra hopes to reopen as soon as possible. Not only does he want to reopen for the people of Asheville, but also for team members who rely on Blaze Pizza for income.

"Our team members have always been an important part of our success, and we want to be there for them in this time of great need," he said.

Restaurants give food and water to WNC residents after Helene

One of the biggest concerns for the people of Asheville right now is access to food and water. Botiwalla by Chai Pani, an Indian restaurant with locations in Asheville, Atlanta and Charlotte, is working hard to provide life-saving food relief with the support of World Central Kitchen, an organization that prepares food for communities impacted by natural disasters.

A spokesperson for Chai Pani Restaurant Group told CharlotteFive that all 150 team members are safe and accounted for. The restaurant group has set up an internal resource center for staff, equipped with charging stations, Wi-Fi and onsite translators for team members who don't speak English.

"It's critical they have what they need to start FEMA applications, insurance claims and relief applications with incredible organizations like Giving Kitchen and Southern Smoke Foundation. More than anything, it's become a community space for our team to be together, to hug each other," the spokesperson said.

In the days since the storm, Burial Beer Co., an Asheville-based brewery with a Plaza Midwood Charlotte location, has also been able to provide clean water, Burial beer and free burgers to Asheville locals at its South Slope Taproom.

Botiwalla.pngChai Pani Restaurant Group team members in Asheville prep over 1,000 meals per day with the support of World Central Kitchen. The meals are delivered via helicopter to isolated areas across Western North Carolina.

How to help small businesses in WNC after Hurricane Helene

Here's how to help these businesses in both cities in Helene's aftermath:

PlantHouse's Bailey Ryan has set up a Go Fund Me, with all proceeds going to crew members and their families. PlantHouse Charlotte has also been serving as a donation drop-off spot. The store is accepting water, nonperishable food, hygiene products and other essentials.At PIE.ZAA, Kotch has set up a Go Fund Me to help support the Asheville community.Hi-Wire Brewing is collecting hurricane relief supplies at its Charlotte, Wilmington and Durham locations to be flown to Asheville and surrounding areas. You can support Hi-Wire's staff via its online relief fund.Summit Coffee Co. is supporting its team by giving 100 percent of proceeds from all online coffee orders through Oct. 6 to a fund for its displaced Asheville staff.Sierra has also set up a Go Fund Me for Blaze Pizza

employees in Asheville, with all donations going directly to the staff to help them rebuild and recover. Guests can add a donation directly to their check when they dine at Botiwalla by Chai Pani in Optimist Hall. All donations go towards supporting Chai Pani Restaurant Group team members who have been impacted by Hurricane Helene.

[HOW TO HELP: An updated list of Charlotte restaurants and shops collecting donations for hurricane relief.]

Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer

• Citation (aglc Style)

Samantha Husted, The Charlotte Observer, 'Charlotte restaurateurs had to watch from afar while Helene destroyed their Asheville locations', *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFF11F4AD8E2D0



Country star drops midnight surprise on storm-ravaged NC: 'It just didn't feel right to wait'

October 4, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Théoden Janes, The Charlotte Observer | Section: music_news_reviews | 563 Words OpenURL Link

A week ago, North Carolina's Eric Church — the 10-time-Grammy-nominated singer responsible for country-music hits like "Springsteen" and "Drink in My Hand" — had no plans to release new music in 2024.

Then Hurricane Helene swept through his home state, leaving many of the parts he's most familiar with totally devastated.

And in response, at midnight Friday, the 47-year-old native of Granite Falls (a small town northwest of Hickory) released a surprise single he said was dedicated to "the unsung heroes, the people who show up when the world's falling apart."

But Church added an even bigger twist: He signed over all of his publishing royalties for "Darkest Hour," according to a news release, "to the people of North Carolina."

"We've been helping with boots on the ground efforts," the 2000 App State grad said in a statement, "but this is something that will live beyond just the immediate recovery. This is not a quick thing to fix, so hopefully 'Darkest Hour' will be able to contribute to that for a long time to come.

"This song goes to my home, North Carolina, now and forever."

Eric Church - Darkest Hour

Royalties from "Darkest Hour" will be funneled to and distributed by Church's Chief Cares Fund (which plays on the "Chief" nickname he inherited from his grandfather, a former police chief of Granite Falls).

The charity also will be assisting "in all states and communities affected from Appalachia to the Gulf," the news release said.

"When the night's at its blackest, this is for those who are holding the light, guiding the lost and pulling us through," Church said of "Darkest Hour." "The message of the song specifically in this time is about Hurricane Helene and the people that need help, but in a broader view, it's about any challenging times that we have in our life."

A sampling of the lyrics:

All I really know is I never know

What's coming around the bend

But you should know you're not alone

Hang on and hold my hand

_

| I'd light your way |
|--|
| Baby don't give up |
| I'll do everything in my power |
| To take even a minute off your darkest hour |
| "It's always important to know that in your darkest hour," he explained, "there are people that will come running, there are people that will help. And I think it's also important to be one of the people that go running when other people need help." |
| The song marks the first new solo release in more than three years from Church, a part-time resident of Banner Elk. |
| "I've been in the studio for a while," the singer said in his statement, "trying some different things and exploring creativity |
| "We were going to wait to release music until next year, but it just didn't feel right to wait with this song. Sometimes you give songs their moment and sometimes they find their own moment." |
| "Darkest Hour" can be streamed here. |
| See the damage to I-40 through Pigeon River GorgeDrone video taken by NCDOT's Division of Aviation shows some of the damage Helene caused to Interstate 40's path through the Pigeon River Gorge. |
| Helene stole the music and soul of the town of Spruce PineWith the mud ankle-deep inside her Majestic Music store, and the water stains climbing 8 feet high on the walls, Angie Buchanan said goodbye to 50 years of teaching music in Spruce Pine, NC. "My life is in there," she said. "It's hard. Very hard." Copyright (c) 2024 The Charlotte Observer |

Théoden Janes, The Charlotte Observer, 'Country star drops midnight surprise on storm-ravaged NC: 'It just didn't feel right to wait", *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 4 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-

In your darkest hour

Baby I'd come runnin'

In your darkest hour

• Citation (aglc Style)

view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BFF11F415F8830>