

Food Lion donates \$1.5 million to support disaster relief after Hurricane Helene

October 8, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Staff report | Section: Nc News | 329 Words OpenURL Link

SALISBURY — Food Lion is donating \$1.5 million to support the communities impacted by Hurricane Helene as part of its commitment to the towns and cities it serves.

Through Oct. 30, customers can join this effort to support their neighbors by donating at the register. The Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Food Lion, will distribute the funds to partner feeding organizations to address recovery and rebuilding efforts as a result of Hurricane Helene.

As part of the contribution, funds have been directed to support an initial emergency donation to American Red Cross in providing food, emergency shelter, relief supplies and comfort, as well as the World Central Kitchen in their efforts to provide meals to those affected by the devastation. To help address the most critical needs, Food Lion is collaborating with local disaster relief and response teams, hospitals, government agencies and community feeding partners to provide nonperishable snacks, water, gift cards and other supplies to shelters and emergency support service areas. To date, Food Lion Feeds has donated more than 280,000 pounds of food and water to community partners. Food Lion Feeds was founded in 2014 by Food Lion to address food insecurity in the towns and cities it serves.

"Caring for our neighbors and the towns and cities we serve is an integral part of our Food Lion culture," said Meg Ham, President, Food Lion. "Our hearts go out to those devastated by Hurricane Helene, and we want our neighbors and communities to know they can count on Food Lion, especially those who need us most during this time. By joining forces with our customers, we are reminded of the strength and resiliency of our communities to come together to support those impacted by the effects of the storm."

Established in 2001, the Food Lion Feeds Charitable Foundation provides financial support for programs and organizations dedicated to eliminating hunger. The foundation annually awards more than \$1 million in grants benefitting more than 500 local feeding partners.

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WHS athletics remain on hold as recovery efforts continue

October 8, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Zach Colburn | Section: Sports | 501 Words OpenURL Link

BOONE — As recovery efforts from Hurricane Helene continue for Watauga County and the surrounding High Country areas, high school athletics are still on hold for the time being.

That could change as the Northwestern 4A/3A Conference is scheduled to resume athletic contests starting on Wednesday.

However, for Watauga and Ashe County, that wait may be longer as their facilities continue to be used as shelters and donation drop-offs.

According to an email from North Carolina High School Athletic Association that was sent out Monday morning, Commissioner Que Tucker notified the membership that the association and its board of directors have been working on the issue.

"During the past week, the NCHSAA Board of Directors and staff were busy collecting information relative to the impact of Hurricane Helene on the Fall Sports Season and the Playoffs," Tucker said in the email. "Using this gathered information, decisions will be made by the Board members and announced on Wednesday morning."

The announcement will include if there are any changes to the fall sports schedule.

Past storms have changed the fall schedule, extending the football season by one week and condensing the playoffs in other fall sports to allow affected schools to make up games.

This last happened in 2018 when Hurricane Florence hit the southeastern part of the state. It also occurred in 2016 with Hurricane Matthew — both times, adjustments were made to the postseason schedule.

"We are awaiting some guidance from the NCHSAA before commenting on our schedules moving forward," Watauga Athletic Director Dustin Kerley said in a statement on Monday. "The ADs from our conference have been working on some options, but it is all dependent on whether the NCHSAA allows extra time for sports to finish their seasons or not."

With the exception of cross country, which returned to the field this past Saturday, the Pioneers have not seen game action since Oct. 25, which marks two weeks this coming Wednesday.

Alexander Central announced on Sunday that its football team will face Freedom this coming Friday at Patton High School (with the Patriot's field deemed unplayable and Patton's availability on Friday due to not fielding a varsity squad this season).

The Cougars were originally scheduled to host Watauga in the second week of NWC football action. No makeup date has been announced for that game or for the Pioneers game at South Caldwell, which was scheduled for last Friday.

As of Monday, this is the list of the games that the Pioneers and Huskies have missed so far and will need to make up. Depending on when they're allowed to resume, nonconference contests could be canceled due to league play taking priority.

Football

Watauga: at South Caldwell, at Alexander Central

Ashe County: at Hibriten, at South Caldwell, vs. Alexander Central

Boys Soccer

Watauga: at Alexander Central, vs. Hibriten, vs. Freedom, at Ashe County

Ashe County: vs. Alexander Central, at South Caldwell, vs. Hibriten, vs. Freedom, vs. Ashe County

Volleyball

Watauga: vs. South Caldwell, vs. Alexander Central, at Hibriten

Ashe County: at Alexander Central, vs. Hibriten, at Freedom

Girls Tennis

Watauga: at Freedom, vs. Ashe County

Ashe County: vs. South Caldwell, at Watauga ©2024 Watauga Democrat - Mountain Times Publications, All rights reserved.

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Buzz off: Bees a notable nuisance during relief efforts

October 8, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Jamie Shell news@wataugademocrat.com| Section: Local | 404 Words OpenURL Link

HIGH COUNTRY — As numerous personnel continue to work in the myriad facets of the response to Hurricane Helene, some have noticed an increased presence of bees. In addition to the turmoil that the storm wrought upon people across the High Country, the storm also served to disrupt the ecosystem of various forms of wildlife, including portions of the bee population.

"This time of year, the yellow jacket hives are dwindling down, and they're getting ready to dive for the winter, and I think the hurricane just messed up the hives," Avery County Cooperative Extension Director Jerry Moody said regarding the potential reason for the bee excess during relief efforts. "The hurricane either drowned them, so they had to get out of the hive, or it knocked them out of the trees, so they've been more irritated than normal."

In response to the increase in bee activity, relief workers are using EpiPens and other medications to combat the potential for stinging activity after Helene swept through the region approximately two weeks ago. She took down numerous trees, reshaped the topography, and affected the wildlife populations and insects in much of Western North Carolina.

"Bee activity always happens this time of year, but this year it seems to be really accelerated because they all lost their homes on the same day in the same hour, so I would think that plays more into anything, but if we just avoid being stung, we'll be okay," Moody added.

North Carolina has a significant bee population, which is why health departments are warning about the potential for encounters, especially during this recovery phase. According to the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, there are more than 500 bee species, and a large number are used for honey production. Nests and beehives may have been disturbed during the hurricane, leading to the insects becoming potentially more defensive.

According to Moody, one way that people may help to minimize the potential for excessive bee activity involves reducing sources of sugar that serves to attract them.

"I think being observant is important. Usually, bees are attracted to the apples on the ground that are blighted and whatnot," Moody said. "I think you can pick up any apples on the ground and taking sugar sources away from them helps to limit how much they are able to sting and impact the community." Additional steps recommended include wearing protective clothing and using unscented or non-floral products to lessen bee attraction.

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Boone Walmart offering services, supporting recovery while closed

October 8, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Nick Fogleman nick.fogleman@wataugademocrat.com| Section: Local | 280 Words OpenURL Link

BOONE — The Walmart in Boone has always been a fixture in town, supporting local organizations and Appalachian State University.

Hurricane Helene inundated the store with flood water, but this has not slowed down its support for the community.

"We are focused on supporting communities, leveraging all assets that we have as a business from our transportation, merchandise and philanthropic support," Brooks Nelson, Director of Strategic Initiative for Disaster Preparedness and Response for Walmart, said.

The assessment and repairs at the Boone Walmart location have begun. No estimate of when the store will reopen has been made, but the parking lot has become a support location for those impacted by the hurricane.

"We think a lot about our physical footprint in the communities and what services we can provide in our parking lots, from hot showers and laundry to a hot meal and hot spot and charging stations," Nelson said.

Currently, Walmart has a pharmacy, showers, laundry and hotspot services in the parking lot.

Walmart has also partnered with local organizations like Salvation Army and UNC Health to provide donations and supplies to food distribution sites, donation collection sites and the hospital.

"We work with a lot of national nonprofits as well as local community-based organizations to provide supplies, water, food, and hygiene kits," Nelson said.

Walmart has announced a \$6 million commitment, including a customer donation campaign to the American Red Cross with a one-to-one match up to \$2.5 million in support of Hurricane Helene relief efforts.

Other funds will be used to support local and regional funds to get dollars into the hands of survivors as quickly as possible.

"Whether it's happening in our parking lot or happening organically, we are supporting on both fronts," Nelson said. ©2024 Watauga Democrat - Mountain Times Publications, All rights reserved.

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Nick Fogleman nick.fogleman@wataugademocrat.com, 'Boone Walmart offering services, supporting recovery while closed', *Watauga Democrat, The*(online), 8 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C19E5275E499B0>



App State to resume classes Oct. 16

October 8, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Luke Barber luke.barber@wataugademocrat.com| Section: Local | 449 Words OpenURL Link

BOONE — Appalachian State University Interim Chancellor Heather Norris has announced that the university will resume classes after fall break on Wednesday, Oct. 16.

The decision comes after the university's leadership met with officials from Watauga County, the Town of Boone and the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce and determined classes can resume due to improving infrastructure and conditions.

Moreover, the university will end its condition three adverse weather related closure on Friday, Oct. 11 at 5 p.m.

"We recognize that students, faculty and staff are still managing the consequences of Hurricane Helene, which will continue for some time. As members of our university community are focusing their energy on adapting to a life situation that has changed dramatically, our counseling professionals tell us that a forward focus and routine are important," Norris said.

Academic Affairs is prepared to work with every student to ensure their success, especially those on track to graduate in December, according to the university.

Students, faculty and staff who need financial assistance due to missed work, lost or damaged housing, missing items or other impacts of Hurricane Helene should visit the university's Disaster Relief Hub in Room 324 of Plemmons Student Union, Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Other services available at the resource hub include counseling and psychological services, case management, emergency management, financial aid, off-campus student services, the Student Legal Clinic and insurance quidance.

While conditions have improved in Boone and some adjacent areas, parts of Watauga County and the surrounding areas still lack power, communications connectivity, and fully accessible roadways.

As students return to the Boone area, the university is asking them to limit the use of individual vehicles to the greatest extent possible, take advantage of rideshare like AppalCART, limit nonessential travel, be mindful that the town and county have a curfew in place, support local businesses, and participate in university-organized volunteer opportunities.

App State will continue to serve hot meals at no charge to anyone who needs them through 8 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 11.

The number of people needing emergency shelter at the Holmes Center continues to decrease as the Red Cross is successfully transitioning those who have been displaced from their homes into non-emergency housing.

"Our continued and heartfelt thanks goes out to our university community, the many first responders, utility workers, law enforcement agencies and medical personnel, town, county and chamber leadership, our elected officials, federal, state and non-governmental agencies, the incredible volunteers and many donors who have been providing and will continue to provide support as we work together to get to the next step in our community's recovery," Norris said.

For more information on App State's disaster relief efforts and community needs, visit appstate.edu/disaster-relief.

To contribute to App State's disaster relief fund, visit appstate.edu.

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App State to resume classes after fall break

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Parkway remains closed as emergency stabilization efforts, damage assessments continue

October 8, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Staff Report news@wataugademocrat.com | Section: Local | 472 Words OpenURL Link

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY — The entire length of the Blue Ridge Parkway remains closed as emergency stabilization efforts and damage assessments continue in the wake of significant, and in some areas catastrophic, damage from Hurricane Helene. Blue Ridge Parkway crews and National Park Service employees from around the country are working on initial damage assessments and actions that will restore critical communications and re-establish safe access to facilities in need of repair.

However, considerable work remains, especially in North Carolina, where crews have so far encountered tens of thousands of trees across the roadway and nearly three dozen rock and mud slides. The slides have occurred above and below the road and have also severely damaged or swept away the roadbed in numerous places. Damage in Virginia is less severe but work still remains to clear roads of trees and brush to make the parkway safe for use.

The National Park Service reminds the public that the full closure of the Blue Ridge Parkway and associated park trails applies to all vehicles and uses – motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. Hazards both seen and unseen endanger unauthorized users and some threats may not be obvious, such as weakened road structures or hanging limbs, which are subject to falling in changing weather conditions. The parkway is also an active work area, with vehicles and heavy equipment moving through the area.

Unauthorized public access not only endangers those entering closed areas but also slows recovery efforts, as crews must stop their work when individuals are present. One crew in North Carolina was forced to stop work over the weekend to evacuate an unauthorized user who was injured while in the park.

"The damage left behind by the storm has created dangerous conditions, some of which are not immediately visible from the road itself," said Tracy Swartout, superintendent of the Blue Ridge Parkway. "We thank the public for their cooperation in respecting closures for their safety and to allow crews to complete their work."

The National Park Service is working diligently to assess and mitigate these hazards, but until the parkway has been reopened, entering closed sections is not only dangerous to visitors and recovery crews, but also illegal and subject to enforcement under Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations. No schedule has been established for reopening the parkway in North Carolina. Once assessments are completed, the National Park Service will be better equipped to project timelines and costs for restoration of North Carolina.

Due to the significantly lighter impacts in Virginia, the National Park Service is finishing up damage assessments and the clearing of debris there and are targeting a phased reopening of most of the parkway in Virginia within the next week.

Updates will be posted on the Blue Ridge Parkway website at www.nps.gov/blri and on the park's social media platforms at @BlueRidgeParkwayNPS (Facebook, X and Instagram).

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BRE: Power outages in Watauga drops below 3,000

October 8, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Staff Report news@wataugademocrat.com | Section: Local | 506 Words OpenURL Link

HIGH COUNTRY — Blue Ridge Energy crews continue around the clock efforts to restore power to the remaining 5,272 members without power after the most devastating storm in recent history hit western North Carolina.

In Watauga County, 2,977 members remain without power as of 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

Despite going on the second week of working 24/7 in some of the state's toughest, mountainous terrain and in many cases the most dangerous conditions, Operations Manager Mike Kincaid said: "Our crews are staying committed and staying focused on restoring the power."

Power restoration is occurring every day and night, however, full restoration, based on damage assessments, is projected for Friday, October 11. This date is for all counties and locations except for homes: that first need homeowner repairs, is no longer present, or where there is total inaccessibility. These cases necessitate restoration extending beyond October 11.

At the height of the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, 63,000 Blue Ridge Energy members were without power. Much of the cooperative's infrastructure was washed away by flooding, taken down by mudslides or demolished by hundreds of fallen trees and raging swift water.

For the protection of those working to restore power as well as the general public, the cooperative continues to emphasize the following safety measures:

Downed Power Line Safety

Downed power lines can still be energized and therefore dangerous, or even deadly, so stay far away. Downed lines can be hidden underneath fallen trees, water and other affected structures so stay alert and use caution around these areas. Only a trained line technician should ever go near a downed power line. Report downed lines by calling 1-800-451-5474.

Protect Line Workers:

Move over and slow down if you see line technicians or trucks working on roadsides. This is especially difficult work under current conditions with many roads washed out, severely damaged, or down to one lane roads. Please slow down for your safety and the protection of all those working to restore power.Be alert for flaggers and other traffic directions and indications of work under way.Don't drive distracted. Road damage and debris is scattered throughout the area.

Generator Safety:

The only safe way to connect a portable generator to your home's wiring is to have a licensed electrical contractor install a transfer switch. Never connect a generator to your home's electrical system. It can "back feed" and potentially harm or kill line technicians working on power lines. Keep generators away from water. Always turn off a generator and let it cool down before refueling. Never use a generator inside your home or garage. Install a carbon monoxide detector for added safety.

To check outage status

Call 1-800-451-5474 to speak with a member service representativeLink to live outage map: https://bremco.maps.sienatech.com/Refer to general restoration estimates at www.BlueRidgeEnergy.comReport new outages by calling 1-800-448-2383 orUse our Blue Ridge Energy mobile app orText "OUT" to 70216 if your mobile number is on your account

Blue Ridge Energy serves some 80,000 members in Caldwell, Watauga, Ashe, and Alleghany counties as well as parts of Avery, Alexander and Wilkes counties. Learn more at www.BlueRidgeEnergy.com or on the cooperative's social media on Facebook, X and Instagram.

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Lumberton - Pageant winner shares thoughts on hometown

October 8, 2024 | Robesonian, The (Lumberton, NC) Author: Chris Stiles The Robesonian | Section: news news-main top-stories | 939 Words OpenURL Link

LUMBERTON — Nicole Hall, the Lumberton native who was recently crowned Miss America's United States, was recognized by Lumberton City Council during the board's monthly meeting Monday, with a proclamation made declaring a city holiday in her honor.

Monday was declared "Miss Nicole Hall Miss America's United States 2024 Day" in a proclamation by Lumberton Mayor Bruce Davis.

"Miss Hall is a product of Lumberton and never misses the opportunity to promote her upbringing about the city of Lumberton," Councilman John Cantey said during the presentation. "And just wait to hear some of the ideas and things she has planned for the city of Lumberton. Nicole, this Council, this city is proud of your achievements and the path that you have taken to uplift your community, your city and all of the goals promoting efforts to ensure that there is food for everyone in the world."

Hall has won numerous pageant titles over the last few years. Her crowning as Miss America's United States came on Aug. 10.

Hall comes from an agricultural background, growing up on the farm in Lumberton. Among her philanthropic efforts are plans to establish a community garden on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in Lumberton, with "the ability to access fresh and locally-grown produce regardless of your socioeconomic background," Cantey said.

Council also approved \$1,400 in Community Revitalization Funds to support an event Hall is involved with, a scholarship pageant on Nov. 2 at Lumberton Junior High School sponsored by the Lumberton alumni chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi.

Hall was also presented with flowers, the Pride in Lumberton Award and the proclamation.

"It's like my pageant day all over again," Hall joked. "Look at these flowers, y'all."

Update on Hurricane Helene recovery efforts

Later in the meeting, City Manager Wayne Horne gave an update on the city's role in Hurricane Helene relief efforts in Western North Carolina.

The city's fire and police departments and the Lumberton Municipal Airport have partnered to collect supplies and send them to the affected region. Airport manager Gary Lewis lined up 14 aircraft to move 4,000 pounds of supplies, with additional larger supplies such as pallets of water being sent by truck. Fire and recreation department employees have worked to weigh, store and load items onto planes and trucks. The airport's upcoming Fly-In event will also make a push for more donations, Horne said.

Some employees from the city's Electrical Utilities Department spent five days working in Kings Mountain, then were relocated to Laurens, South Carolina, to restore power. Some Fire Department employees spent seven days working on storm-related tasks in Old Fort.

Lumberton Fire Chief Chris West was scheduled to leave Tuesday morning to work at an Emergency Operations Center in Yancey County as a resource leader, helping to assign personnel, etc. Director of Emergency Services Tammy McLeod worked in a 911 center in Transylvania County, relieving local dispatchers. The city's Water Rescue Team is currently on standby, Horne said, and may soon be called into service as recovery missions continue.

"Our employees ought to be commended," Horne said.

Other matters

In other business, Council:

- Approved a special use permit for a mental health outpatient facility on Fayetteville Road. The vote was 7-0, as Councilman Leroy Rising recused himself due to a conflict of interest.
- Approved a conditional zoning for a paint and body shop and auto sales business on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, with the condition of a screened fence to close in any wrecked or disassembled vehicles being stored in the rear of the property. The motion passed 7-1, with Councilman Alfred Douglas voting no.
- Awarded a \$1 million professional services contract to The Wooten Company for Phase One of the city's Lead and Copper Inventory project. The project is being funded by a grant from the North Carolina Department of Water Infrastructure; Council also authorized the city to apply for another \$1 million in grants to fund the upcoming second phase of the project.
- Awarded a \$762,000 bid to McGill Associates for a project to clean out the Alum sludge basin at the city's water treatment plant. McGill will compost the materials and return it to a biological mixture at its facility in Sampson County, Public Works Director Rob Armstrong said. The bid was less than the city's original \$1 million estimate; project funds will be paid from the Water and Sewer Capital Reserve Fund.
- Awarded a \$381,280 engineering contract with Wildlands Engineering for a project to reestablish floodplain/wetlands at the former Fuller's BBQ site on Highway 211 near the Mayfair Subdivision. The project will remove any existing structures, asphalt, concrete, etc., and then reinforce the area with wetlands-like materials.
- Awarded a \$448,798.13 bid by Cinderella Partners for the second phase of the city's Memorial Park. The completed first phase included raising the elevation of the park, installing additional drainage and building the first section of parking. The second phase will include installation of things like benches and sidewalks; this will include "pretty much everything except the memorials themselves," Deputy City Manager Brandon Love said. This will be paid for from a combination of North Carolina General Assembly special allocation, General Fund obligations, lapsed salaries and General Fund contingencies.
- Approved the following allocations of Community Revitalization Funds: \$1,000 for Southern Sapphires Dance Company; \$600 to the Lumberton Area Chamber of Commerce to sponsor a float in the Lumberton Christmas Parade; \$501 to Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8969 in support of National Wreaths Across America Day; \$500 for a Community Day in Precinct 8; \$250 each to the homeowners associations in Mayfair subdivision and Mayfair North subdivision for beautification; \$200 to Birthing Place Ministries for a Trunk or Treat event; and \$100 to the Cheer XCel golf tournament fundraiser.

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Rockingham County transports essential supplies directly to remote areas impacted by Hurricane Helene

October 8, 2024 | RockinghamNow (NC)

Author: STAFF REPORT | Section: Rockingham Now | 209 Words

OpenURL Link

WENTWORTH — Although roads and bridges leading to the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Helene remain impassable, Rockingham County staff and volunteers were able to transport earlier this week directly to remote communities that have otherwise been completely isolated.

Monday afternoon, water and other essential items were transported to Statesville Regional Airport in Iredell County and flown directly to remote locations in western North Carolina. The airlift was the first, but not the last. More supplies are expected to be flown out in the days and weeks ahead.

People are encouraged to help by bringing much-needed supplies directly to the Rockingham County Maintenance Warehouse located at 338 Cherokee Camp Road, Wentworth, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, through next week. Staff will be available to assist and direct.

Rockingham County Libraries will also be taking donated supplies at the following times:

Eden, Madison/Mayodan, and Reidsville libraries — Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.Stoneville — Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Other drop-off points are the town and city halls of Eden, Madison, Mayodan, Reidsville, Stoneville and Wentworth during normal business hours. All of Rockingham's in-county fire departments are also accepting donated goods.

For more information, visit rockinghamcountync.gov.

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Robinson blasts state's response to Helene; blames Cooper

October 8, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC)

Author: Bill West | Section: Local | 659 Words

OpenURL Link

Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson at a campaign gathering Monday afternoon in Rocky Mount called the state-level response to Hurricane Helene in the western part of North Carolina "100 percent abysmal" and placed the blame on Gov. Roy Cooper.

Robinson, who is the Republican nominee for governor in the Nov. 5 election, spoke at the North Winstead Avenue location of Gardner's Barbecue and gave attendees who packed the venue an update about what he has seen in the devastated areas of the state.

"This is not a Republican or a Democrat issue," Robinson said. "That storm blew in and it didn't stop at the door and say, 'Hey, are you a Republican or a Democrat? Let me know before I blow your house over and wash all your stuff away."

Robinson was critical of the state's relief and recovery response to the storm and said he would be just as critical if the governor were a Republican.

Cooper, a Nash County native, is a Democrat in his second term as governor. By state law, he cannot run for a third consecutive four-year term.

Cooper has endorsed the Democratic gubernatorial nominee, N.C. Attorney General Josh Stein.

Robinson said Monday that he believes Cooper does not like him and that he does not like Cooper.

"I don't like the way he treated the people of this state during COVID," Robinson added. "I don't like how many bills he has vetoed — good bills that he has vetoed — just because of his own personal opinion."

Robinson, who is completing his first four-year term as the state's number two official, said that after he took office in 2020, he had hoped that at some point he and Cooper could be seen somewhere together working on something that they agree on.

"The man never calls me," Robinson said. "He never consults with me. He hardly looks at me. I don't even think I exist in his eyes. That is poor leadership, folks."

Robinson criticized the governor for attending a fundraiser in New York while Helene was "brewing."

Robinson also said that once it was known Helene was going to hit, he would have called together the state's executive officials that make up the Council of State and he would have told each member, "I'm doing this — and I expect you to do this."

Robinson also said that he would have told the Council of State members to go to western North Carolina and would have told the members that, "You may be campaigning right now, but guess what? You can put that on hold."

Mary Scott Winstead, who is the senior communication director at Cooper's office, in response to an email from the Telegram seeking comment, said Monday evening that the lieutenant governor was spreading false information.

"Mark Robinson's dangerous lies about the state's response demoralizes the thousands of National Guard soldiers, emergency responders, highway patrol troopers, Department of Transportation workers, state medical personnel

and more who have been on the ground risking their lives and working in a coordinated way under the direction of Governor Cooper to respond to the most catastrophic storm in North Carolina's history," Winstead said.

Winstead also said that Robinson was hurting recovery efforts by misleading voters for political purposes.

Cooper's office, in a news release Monday evening, said that, regarding the response by the National Guard, more than 2,500 soldiers and airmen are now working in western North Carolina, with about 500 more on their way.

The news release also stated that more than 800 Federal Emergency Management Agency staff are in the state to help with the relief effort in western North Carolina.

More than \$33 million in FEMA Individual Assistance Funds have been paid so far to western North Carolina disaster survivors and more than 109,000 people have registered for help individually, according to information from the governor's office.

The N.C. Department of Transportation currently has more than 2,050 employees and 1,100 pieces of equipment working on more than 4,100 damaged road sites in the western part of the state, Cooper's office stated.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Bill West, 'Robinson blasts state's response to Helene; blames Cooper', *Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles* (online), 8 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C16226EB8A6878



Tom Campbell: Helene brings out the best — and worst — in us

October 8, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 790 Words OpenURL Link

You can learn a lot about people when they are under stress. We see them at their best — or worst. Hurricane Helene is revealing both.

My family has experienced what it is like to be without power, water and refrigeration, with mud and debris in your home. You feel alone, overwhelmed and sad. We have also rejoiced when strangers we never met came to help muck out the house, haul out furniture and belongings that must be discarded, do carpentry work and saw tree limbs. Their biggest contribution is to provide comfort.

We can't thank these heroes enough. But they aren't looking for thanks. They see this as their responsibility, a calling to help another in times of distress.

These are the people the musical group Alabama sang about in their wonderful song, "Angels Among Us:"

"I believe there are Angels among us,

"sent down to us from somewhere up above.

"They come to you and me in our darkest hours

"To show us how to live, to teach us how to give.

"To guide us with the light of love."

We are blessed by many angels. But times of distress also show the worst side of some.

We all remember when President Trump went to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. His response to the devastation was tossing paper towels into the crowd. It took him weeks to release federal funding for the territory.

His response to Helene wasn't much better. Trump instructed his staff to find a place where the storm had ransacked a business and it was surrounded by rubble. With cameras rolling, he declared his visit wasn't political, then started criticizing Governor Roy Cooper for doing a terrible job and "going out of their way to not help people in Republican areas."

The claim was totally fabricated. It was disgusting political pandering. This is no time for politics.

As has always been the case, there will be scammers preying on the elderly or those desperate for help, charging them outrageous prices. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between genuine helpers and those trying to make a quick buck. True volunteers won't ask for money. Much as you might need help, be cautious.

Those devastated by Helene are wondering why it is taking so long for help to arrive. Our federal and state government could perhaps have been better prepared to respond. They knew by Wednesday that Helene was going to impact Western Carolina and forecasters predicted it was going to be bad.

But no one could ever have imagined just how devastating this storm was going to be. Not since 1916 has the western section of our state had an event so destructive. By Friday afternoon and evening, when it was obvious how bad the damage was going to be, it was too late to put resources in place without potentially endangering their

lives. Surging waters and sheets of rain destroyed roads, landslides demolished buildings and houses were swept away — some with people inside. The death count is far greater than is being reported.

Media coverage has been uneven. Reporters, photographers and news crews were not allowed into many rural areas because of potential danger. Even so, most of the news coverage has focused on Asheville. It had great damage, but the media has largely neglected a great deal of suffering in smaller communities like Linville, Spruce Pine, Banner Elk, Swannanoa and less populous counties.

Folks are desperate for basic needs. They urgently need water — to drink, to wash themselves and flush toilets. Wipes, toilet paper, paper towels and even diapers are needed, along with non-perishable food like pop-top tins of chicken, tuna, beans, applesauce and peanut butter. Granola and protein bars and crackers are very welcome. Candles and flashlights with batteries are essential.

Our western neighbors need the "right here, right now" kind of help. Saying help is on the way when you are thirsty, alone and in darkness doesn't help with immediate basic needs.

There are many ways you can help. Please don't just hop in the car and head west. DOT says heavy traffic on damaged roads is overwhelming efforts to repair roads. But groups of people can band together, accumulate supplies and transport them to coordinated safe staging areas, where they can be transferred to areas of most need. Have a plan for where you take supplies. Recognized charitable organizations will also welcome help.

Money is also badly needed. Fortunately, our state has several billion dollars in "rainy day funds" and the federal government will also provide large amounts of funding. But it is going to take more than money to help restore life for those affected. Regardless of your beliefs, praying for their safety and wellbeing will help.

We are North Carolina, the "goodliest land," with the goodliest people. Let us all do our best to help our neighbors. Copyright © 2024 Rocky Mount Telegram. All rights reserved.

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Michael Nicklas: Climate change is here; it's costly, devastating

October 8, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC)

Author: Bobby Burns | Section: News | 672 Words

OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene carved a path of unprecedented destruction across six states in our region. We are still assessing our tremendous losses, giving thanks to first responders, celebrating every life that was spared and mourning those who we lost.

Now, as we dig out and begin to rebuild, we must take a sober look at what factors caused this devastation. What lessons can we apply from this tragedy to increase our resilience in the face of climate change caused by the burning of fossil fuels over the past century?

Climate scientists have long predicted intensification of hurricanes, floods and disasters similar to Helene because of climate change, and now North Carolinians are paying the price for decades of climate change denial made possible by the fossil fuel industry and its well-paid lobbyists in Washington.

As a citizen, a taxpayer and a voter, I want to know why Republicans have for decades ignored — and continue to ignore — the urgent warnings from climate scientists. I want to know:

Why does Donald Trump call climate change a "hoax" and why does Mark Robinson call climate change "junk science?"

Why does Project 2025, the blueprint for a new Trump administration, eliminate most of the federal government's climate initiatives while abolishing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which provides timely, life-saving weather information that the nation relies upon?

Why would Trump overhaul the U.S. Department of Energy to promote oil and natural gas while de-emphasizing our abundant, affordable and reliable renewable energy resources such as solar?

Why did Trump recently promise the well-heeled chief executives of oil and gas companies that if they gave him a billion-dollar contribution, he would "significantly deliver for them once elected?"

Why did every Republican in Congress oppose legislation providing over \$425 million in funding to support communities to prepare for and adapt to worsening threats brought on by the climate crisis?

And perhaps most importantly for North Carolina, why did Donald Trump deny 99 percent of federal recovery funds requested for North Carolina in 2017 after Hurricane Matthew struck Robeson, Cumberland, Edgecombe and Wayne counties?

Why? Because our governor was a Democrat! Of the more than \$900 million requested by our state for this disaster, Donald Trump's administration approved only \$6.1 million. This is brazen, unacceptable conduct for a president of the United States.

Trump sees hurricanes and natural disasters as opportunities to divide our country even further. Look at how he has already exploited the aftermath of Hurricane Helene for political gain, spreading malicious lies about the federal responses. This only underscores the former president's unfitness to hold office or any position of responsibility ever again.

North Carolina experienced 67 climate-driven disasters between 2010 and 2023, and each one had financial losses totaling over \$1 billion. Taxpayers in North Carolina and around the country are footing the rapidly increasing bill for

climate disasters around the country.

The impact of climate disasters on North Carolinians is consistently one of the most significant in the country. In 2018, when comparing the financial losses of climate disasters in relation to each state's Gross State Product, North Carolina experienced the highest disaster costs of any state in the nation, placing the damage between 3% to 5% of our GSP.

And these numbers do not even tally the enormous human costs that we have seen with Helene.

I am sick and tired of Republican politicians like Donald Trump and Mark Robinson denying climate change in one breath and then expressing "thoughts and prayers" for the victims of climate change in the next breath.

Happily, a recent poll (conducted before Hurricane Helene smashed into our region) showed that 72% of North Carolinians believe that action to address climate change is needed today. The great majority of Americans, including 66% of "moderate" Republicans, want our politicians to act now to reduce the amount of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions being dumped into our atmosphere.

When you cast your ballot for all elected offices this year, please remember who would support policies to protect you, your property and your loved ones from future climate-induced disasters.

Hint: It's not Republicans. And that should scare us all.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

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United Way's area tornado recovery fund rekindled

October 8, 2024 | Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC)

Author: Bill West | Section: Local | 299 Words

OpenURL Link

An effort to help victims of the tornado that struck the Twin Counties in July 2023 has been reactivated in the aftermath of the recent tornado that damaged a commercial area and a residential area off the North Wesleyan Boulevard corridor.

United Way Tar River Region Executive Director Ginny Mohrbutter, in a phone interview, said that the Twin County Recovery Fund became active again for people who want to make contributions to help people who have been affected by the tornado that struck the area Sept. 27 when Hurricane Helene was barreling through the western part of the state.

Mohrbutter said if people have been affected by the storm, then they can contact the regional United Way and fill out an application form seeking help.

"We have heard from a couple of residents, so we will move forward in trying to assist them," she said late last month of the number of people seeking help so far.

In a follow-up phone call Monday, Mohrbutter said that the number had increased to three.

She said that the application is short and that the regional United Way has a volunteer committee that reviews the application to see whether the fund's criteria have been met.

She also emphasized that those wanting to seek help will need to provide proof of damage to property, such as photographs, repair bills and other insurance information.

Those interested in applying for assistance may call the regional United Way at (252) 937-2213 or go online to www.unitedwaytrr.org/helene.

Those wanting to support the Twin County Tornado Recovery Fund may go online to www.unitedwaytrr.org/tornadofund.

The regional United Way started the fund the day after the 2023 tornado struck.

After regional United Way officials spoke with the Rocky Mount Area Chamber of Commerce, there was an agreement that the efforts of both agencies would be stronger by joining forces.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Bill West, 'United Way's area tornado recovery fund rekindled', *Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles* (online), 8 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C16226E48E46C0



Letter: The lineman from Rocky Mount are amazing

October 8, 2024 \mid Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Staff Writer \mid Section: Letters \mid 135 Words

OpenURL Link

Our neighborhood on Peach Street in Shelby was devastated on the morning of Sept. 27 by Hurricane Helene. We received 4-5 inches of rain the day before, and the ground was soaked.

The wind and sound of falling trees woke us around 5 a.m.

Needless to say, we were without power, and many of my neighbors had trees on their homes for days.

On Oct. 2, we had 5-6 trucks from Rocky Mount Electric working on our street.

We are so very thankful to them for restoring power. They have been in Florida and now Shelby for two weeks helping with needs from the storm.

Thanks for sharing some of your best folks with us.

We appreciate their hard work and sacrifice. I am looking forward to my best night of rest in a week due to them.

Thank you!

Mitch Hensley

Shelby

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Staff Writer, 'Letter: The lineman from Rocky Mount are amazing', *Rocky Mount Telegram: Web Edition Articles* (online), 8 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C16226D487C0A8



Shelter at local Y to relocate closer to WNC

October 8, 2024 | Salisbury Post (NC) Author: Elisabeth Strillacci| Section: Local | 227 Words OpenURL Link

Shelter at local Y to relocate closer to WNC

Published 12:05 am Tuesday, October 8, 2024

By Elisabeth Strillacci

SALISBURY — The local YMCA had been prepared to serve as a temporary shelter for those affected by Helene, but the state Department of Health and Human Services announced today they will close the shelter at 8 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 8.

According to the Red Cross, the state initially reached out to the Red Cross and a sheltering contractor with a plan that called for the use of a Red Cross-approved shelter, cots and blankets, the sheltering contractor, HEROES out of Missouri, would run the site and the state would manage meals, transportation, showers and toilets.

The shelter at the Salisbury Y was prepared to house up to 200 people, and was prepared to accommodate pets and service animals and remain open until all residents had found safe housing.

A spokesperson for DHHS said the state was "grateful for the local willingness to help, but it appears we need to move it closer." She said while many are in need of shelter, they want to remain closer to home.

The shelter will be relocated to Hudson, N.C., and a Red Cross spokesperson said his organization will remain a partner until it is no longer needed. The operational plan remains the same. Hudson is west of Statesville and near Lenoir, closer to the impacted areas.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Elisabeth Strillacci, 'Shelter at local Y to relocate closer to WNC', *Salisbury Post* (online), 8 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C137D5EABFFC28



Sheriff's officers answer the call - Law enforcement join the growing number of Sampsonians lending a hand in the NC mountinas

October 8, 2024 | Sampson Independent, The (Clinton, NC) Author: Sherry Matthews smatthews@clintonnc.com | Section: news news-main top-stories | 669 Words OpenURL Link

(Editor's note: See a story later on officers' experiences in the mountains)

The call went out Friday night from the N.C. Sheriff's Association that manpower was needed in western North Carolina and, to a person, Sampson law enforcement were ready and willing to meet the need.

On Sunday morning, the first six of a continuing crew of Sampson County Sheriff's Office staff packed up gear, supplies and a van they loaded with bottled water, food, generators and tools and headed to Asheville, ready and willing to go where they would be directed once they arrived.

That crew — comprised of Capt. Scott Hodges (team leader), Lt. Kevin Perry (assistant team leader), Kevin Jackson and SROs Emory Brown, Phillip Jones and Donnel Taylor — will return Wednesday and another six-man team will take their place, rotating on and off until four different crews will have a turn to assist, if they are needed.

According to Sheriff's Cat. Marcus Smith, the second team will be led by Lt. Donald Carter and Dewayne Barber, with deputies Austin Taylor, Chris Cantrell, Austin Hardison and Luis Rios making up the crew. The other four teams, he said, are on standby to deploy if needed beyond week one.

Sheriff Jimmy Thornton said Sunday that sending the first crew was made easier because there was no court this week, making it possible for deputies who normally work in District or Superior court to fill in at the schools so deputies normally handling school resource officer duties could deploy to Buncombe County.

"It allows us to help without putting a lot of pressure on those who are here," Thornton said, noting that sparing the manpower wasn't easy but doable.

Thornton said the initial call went out the Saturday after Hurricane Helene left devastation across the North Carolina mountains, with the state Emergency Management group asking law enforcement across the state to be prepared to assist in needed areas.

"Early Monday morning, Sept. 30, Sheriff Thornton directed command staff to develop a comprehensive response plan in anticipation of requests for assistance. Within minutes, four specialized response teams were assembled,"

Thornton said everyone wanted to help.

"I mean, seriously, everyone would have gone today (Sunday) if they could have," the sheriff attested. "I really appreciate that kind of dedication, that kind of heart. And we are going to do everything we can to ensure that everyone that wants to go can go if they are needed."

"I'm very proud of every single officer for stepping up."

While Thornton said information was spotty on what officers might be called on to do, he suspected their mission would vary, including providing shelter security, guarding assets, and deploying with rescue teams. The rough, mountainous terrain, flooded areas, and lack of power and adequate water supplies present significant challenges for rescue efforts.

The sheriff said law enforcement from all 100 counties, along with first responders, dispatchers, utility workers and

fire crews, were either boots on the ground in the mountains or awaiting the call to go.

"Everyone is stepping to the plate," Thornton said, noting again that he was especially appreciative of his employees and their willingness to help.

"Having faced our own challenges with past hurricanes, we have witnessed first hand the generosity of countless first responders from other agencies rushing to our aid. This is our opportunity to return the favor and help those in need. Helping others transcends jurisdictional boundaries and should always be guided by a heartfelt desire to assist. We stand ready to support our fellow North Carolinians and contribute to the recovery efforts in any way we can. I cannot begin to fathom the horrific experiences these citizens and first responders have endured; it's truly heartbreaking"

Smith, too, said watching people come to the aid of their fellow man was heartening.

"We have all watched with pride as great Americans from every corner of this nation pull together and lend a hand. Despite the devastation and difficulties faced, the American spirit and grit will prevail. Together through prayer and teamwork we will help our friends and neighbors overcome these devastating events," Smith said.

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Kids Kloset hosting event for western North Carolina

October 8, 2024 | Sanford Herald, The (NC) Author: Caleb M. Soptelean csoptelean@sanfordherald.com| Section: Archives | 193 Words OpenURL Link

Kids Kloset COLLECTION

A local business is hosting an event to benefit residents of western North Carolina.

Kids Kloset's semi-annual consignment sale at Lee County Fairgrounds runs from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. Certain winter clothing items that remain after the sale will be donated to Hurricane Helene-affected residents.

"This year all of the clothes that usually are donated to local thrift stores (after the sale) will be donated to a group requesting winter clothing from Banner Elk," said Mark Kirk, who co-owns the business with his wife Karen.

"We will also be taking additional donations for coats, hats, gloves, long pants and shirts. I will be personally delivering those items on Monday," Oct. 13, he said.

Those who want to donate winter clothing for kids and adults can bring it to the agriculture building at the fairgrounds this week while the consignment sale is going on, but the best time is between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Sunday, Kirk said.

Banner Elk is located in Avery County northwest of Grandfather Mountain, northeast of Asheville.

Kids Kloset is located at 505 N. 7th St. The phone is (919) 356-4646.

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p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1499C4A248AD8>



Jetport's Family Day draws a crowd

October 8, 2024 | Sanford Herald, The (NC) Author: MARK ROGERS MROGERS@SANFORDHERALD.COM| Section: Archives | 377 Words OpenURL Link

Planes circled in the skies as children and their families watched during Raleigh Exec's annual Family Day on Saturday.

Dozens of aircraft were on display and other exhibits were scattered across the airport. Food trucks offered a variety of cuisine, and there were even bounce houses for the kids to play in.

"The weather helped us get a large crowd," Raleigh Exec Jetport Director Bob Heuts said. "Out staff was well prepared — first of all to make sure we got all of the aircraft we wanted out there and give people choices to look at."

Heuts said visitors could see everything from "old warbirds" to new aircraft.

"We had a little bit of everything out here for people to see," he said.

Heuts also talked about efforts to collect supplies for victims of Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina.

"Today has been a big day for that," he said. "It seems like everybody's got a bag — or two — or three, and sometimes a truckload, and we'll load it up on the Pilatus and we'll do it on the Kodiak shortly — tomorrow we'll do it with something else."

There have been many flights with supplies out of Raleigh Exec in the past week, according to Heuts.

"There have been 12-13 aircraft a day leaving this airport with goods that were collected from the community," he said. "The community is stepping up and the pilots who have their aircraft here are stepping up. It's just been unbelievable. It's been nonstop."

Heuts noted a pallet containing cases of water sitting next to one of the planes.

"It will fly out this afternoon," he said. "Whatever is being done today is probably not enough for the people that are suffering through the effects of the hurricane."

Heuts said the collections would continue indefinitely.

"We're not going to stop," he said. "We're going to keep collecting here, and we'll figure out ways to get it there. You'll probably see transitions from airplanes and airports to trucks going to some of the different communities now that some of the roads are opening up. They are getting better every day."

Heuts said on Saturday there were flights going to Morganton and Hickory.

"From there, the supplies will either be helicoptered in or trucked in to the communities where they are needed," he said.

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FEMA head blasts Trump's claims on Helene recovery

October 8, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC)

Author: Zac Anderson; USA TODAY | Section: News | 512 Words

Page: A7 OpenURL Link

With the federal response to Hurricane Helene becoming a major focus of the presidential campaign in the home stretch, the Biden administration continued to push back on Sunday against former President Donald Trump's unfounded claims about storm recovery.

Appearing on ABC's "This Week" Sunday, Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Deanne Criswell said her agency has all the resources it needs to respond to Helene, which ravaged parts of Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and other states.

North Carolina and Georgia are key swing states in the Nov. 5 election, which has heightened the political stakes for the recovery effort and the jockeying around it.

Criswell defended FEMA's response and shot down Trump's claims that the agency is short on disaster relief funds because money has been diverted to help undocumented immigrants, and that help is being withheld from Republican areas, calling such assertions "frankly ridiculous and just plain false."

"This kind of rhetoric is not helpful to people," she added. "It's really a shame that we're putting politics ahead of helping people."

Criswell noted that state and local officials have rebutted "this dangerous, truly dangerous narrative that is creating this fear."

Trump has made a series of unfounded claims about Helene recovery at multiple recent events. He said at a rally in Saginaw, Michigan, on Thursday that "Kamala (Harris) spent all her FEMA money, billions of dollars, on housing for illegal immigrants."

"They have almost no money, because they spent it all on illegal immigrants," Trump said, adding that "They stole the FEMA money, just like they stole it from a bank, so they could give it to their illegal immigrants."

FEMA does have a housing program, the Shelter and Services Program, that provides "financial support to non-federal entities to provide humanitarian services to noncitizen migrants following their release" from detention facilities, according to its website. It has \$650 million in funding, but that is separate from disaster relief funds.

"No money is being diverted from disaster response needs. None," the White House said in a news release.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas told reporters during a White House briefing last week that FEMA has enough disaster relief money to meet current needs, but not for additional storms.

"We are meeting the immediate needs with the money that we have," Mayorkas said. "We are expecting another hurricane hitting. We do not have the funds. FEMA does not have the funds to make it through the season and ... what is imminent."

Congress recently appropriated \$20 billion in disaster funds, but Biden said in a letter this week that more is needed. "Without additional funding, FEMA would be required to forego longer-term recovery activities in favor of meeting urgent needs," Biden wrote, saying the Small Business Administration is particularly in need of funds.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., was asked on "Fox News Sunday" about Biden's letter and said "Congress will provide; we will help the people in these disaster-prone areas."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

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