

Helene cancels South Carolina music festival featuring Eric Church, others

September 29, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Joe Marusak; Staff Writer | Section: News | 233 Words

Page: 20A OpenURL Link

Organizers of the inaugural outdoor Field and Stream Music Fest in Winnsboro, South Carolina, have postponed the Oct. 4-6 event due to Hurricane Helene, organizers said Saturday.

Eric Church was among the headline acts scheduled to perform along with Lainey Wilson, Lynyrd Skynyrd, ZZ Top and many others.

"It is with heavy hearts that we announce the postponement," organizers said in a statement. "Given the state of emergency and challenging conditions on the ground, this decision has been made out of an abundance of caution."

Hurricane Helene damage "has been severe, with widespread flooding, downed trees and blocked roads," organizers said. "Power is still out on site, deliveries have been delayed, and some areas of the festival grounds remain inaccessible."

The production team for the event and site engineers determined it wouldn't be safe to proceed.

"While we are deeply disappointed, the safety of our fans, sponsors, staff, and crew remains our highest priority," according to the announcement. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those affected by the storm."

To help recovery efforts, festival equipment, including restroom trailers, generators, and food supplies will go to assist FEMA and emergency services, organizers said.

"We are heartbroken but excited to bring you an unforgettable experience next year," organizers said. "New dates will be announced soon. Tickets and camping will automatically roll over to the rescheduled dates, and refunds will be available."

Refunds will begin within two weeks.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Joe Marusak, Staff Writer, 'Helene cancels South Carolina music festival featuring Eric Church, others', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 20A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BE810F2F90B260



4 critically hurt after tornado hits Rocky Mount amid Helene

September 29, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Mary Helen Moore and Adam Wagner; Staff Writer Section: News | 1015 Words

Page: 17A OpenURL Link

A tornado associated with Hurricane Helene, now a tropical depression, touched down in a Nash County city on Friday, Sept. 27, injuring 15 people.

Around 1:30 p.m., the tornado struck two restaurants with people inside, and several other buildings near North Wesleyan Boulevard and Benvenue Road in Rocky Mount, emergency officials said.

"We've had multiple injuries, with four of those being critical," Nash County communications director Jonathan Edwards said at 2:30 p.m.

Edwards said EMS was triaging patients and taking those who required hospitalization to UNC Health Nash. He said they didn't have reports of other serious damage to share yet.

Hing Ta Restaurant suffered heavy damage, with a back wall crumpled and a piece of wood pointing through the roof. Bricks were strewn throughout the surrounding parking lot and several cars in the area had their windows blown out.

The steel frame of the auto repair shop next door was crumpled and one wall was almost entirely blown out, though a gold colored car remained on lifts inside what remained of the business.

A medical supply store had crumbled into a pile of bricks nearby, and El Tapatio Restaurant also suffered damage. The city is still taking stock of the scene.

"We are just manning the area, checking in, making sure buildings are cleared," said Catina Phillips around 4:30 p.m., a spokesperson for the Rocky Mount Fire Department.

Rocky Mount is about an hour east of Raleigh. Another potential tornado touched down in Garland, about 80 miles south of Raleigh in Sampson County. The National Weather Service is sending teams to both scenes to assess the damage.

K&W cafeteria becomes a refuge

Tonya Ward was at work inside the K&W Cafeteria around 1:30 p.m. Friday when her manager shouted to look at the tornado outside.

"You saw the trees and the leaves and everything was rotating. It was dark, it was jet black," Ward said.

Then she saw the sign.

Across the parking lot, about 200 feet away, a sign for Precision Tune Auto Care had been ripped from its post and was twisting and turning in the air. Ward didn't wait around to see where it would land, rushing to huddle in an interior hallway near the bathrooms along with everyone else in the K&W.

Ward described hearing the tell-tale freight train noises and other sounds of destruction. But the tornado seemingly did not damage the K&W.

"It seemed like it hopped over us," Ward said.

When the sound ended, chaos set in.

Customers and workers from Hing Ta restaurant next door streamed into the K&W, tending their wounds and looking for family members. As Ward considered heading over to Hing Ta to help, the first emergency vehicles arrived.

A short while later, she saw the yellow and black Precision Tune sign again.

It ended up landing next to her car, shattering on the asphalt. Somehow, it didn't cause any damage.

'I got lucky. Some people didn't get lucky today.'

Dean Holmes was at work Friday afternoon when he heard a tornado had damaged Hing Ta restaurant. He immediately knew that his home on Short Spoon Circle, less than half a mile away, would have suffered damage, too.

So Holmes wasn't surprised when he came down the street about 4 p.m. and discovered a tree crew at work, the air filled with buzzing from chainsaws and beeping from a small excavator carrying loads of branches to the street.

Short Spoon Circle backs up to a golf course, its comfortable two-story homes surrounded by large, mature trees. The needles scattered across the road - and woody smell in the air - proved that many of those trees are pines.

Ribbons of blue metal were scattered throughout the neighborhood, wrapped around trees and strewn across yards. Holmes believes they must have come from one of the businesses hit by the storm.

A post in a local Facebook group said the storm had carried a sign from Hing Ta into a yard on Short Spoon Circle, but Holmes didn't know whose.

In Holmes' backyard, his son's trampoline was still standing, although it was buried underneath a heap of fallen limbs. One of the two windows in his attic was broken, a set of closed blinds serving as the barrier between inside and outside.

Still, as Holmes gathered fallen leaves and pine needles Friday evening, he knew some of his neighbors had been hit much harder by the storm.

"I got lucky. Some people didn't get lucky today," Holmes said.

'Worst is over'

Helene, which was downgraded to a tropical depression around 2 p.m. Sept. 27, brought heavy rainfall and strong winds to portions of North Carolina. Areas in the west of the state are dealing with flooding and dangerous road conditions in the wake of the storm.

The threat of tornadoes for central North Carolina was over by 2:30 p.m., though wind and flood advisories remain in effect, according to Jonathan Blaes, meteorologist-in-charge for that National Weather Service in Raleigh.

"The worst is over for sure," Blaes said around 3:30 p.m. "The sun's even poking out spots, so things are ramping down pretty quickly."

Flooding could continue to cause issues for several days as rivers crest.

"It's been so wet of late that much of the rain that fell is just washing and draining into creeks and streams," Blaes

said. "So that is a worry."

The National Weather Service Forecast Office in Raleigh issued tornado warnings for most of the Triangle as the band of storms passed through the area at midday, including in Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, Holly Springs and Fuquay-Varina.

Helene and its remnants have caused two deaths in North Carolina, Gov. Roy Cooper said during a morning briefing Sept. 27.

One person died Thursday, Sept. 26, following a motor vehicle crash on a flooded road in Catawba County. Another died Sept. 27 when a tree fell on a house in Charlotte.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Mary Helen Moore and Adam Wagner, Staff Writer, '4 critically hurt after tornado hits Rocky Mount amid Helene', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 17A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BE810F178B2920>



Tornado with - 90 mph winds hit popular NC mountain tourist town before - Helene, NWS says

September 29, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Joe Marusak; Staff Writer | Section: News | 116 Words Page: 20A OpenURL Link

A tornado packing 90 mph winds hit the N.C. mountain tourist town of Blowing Rock ahead of Hurricane Helene, a National Weather Service team confirmed Thursday.

A separate severe weather system spawned the EF-1 tornado that uprooted and snapped trees for just over a half-mile before dissipating, investigators said.

No injuries were reported, according to a report by the team from the NWS office in Blacksburg, Virginia.

The tornado touched down at 6:38 p.m. Wednesday near the intersection of Birch Drive and Hill Street and raced northeast before lifting near Chetola Lake Drive, the team found.

A few tents near Bass Lake Drive and Chetola Lake Drive also were blown down, according to the NWS report.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Joe Marusak, Staff Writer, 'Tornado with 90 mph winds hit popular NC mountain tourist town before Helene, NWS says', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 20A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BE810FED9C4CD0>



A day of tornado warnings across the Triangle, - with 2 twisters reported on the ground in NC

September 29, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)
Author: Tammy Grubb and Mary Helen Moore; Staff Writer | Section: News | 751 Words
Page: 20A
OpenURL Link

Tornado warnings sent Triangle residents scurrying for cover for just over an hour Friday as a strong band of storms spawned from Hurricane Helene - now a tropical depression - passed through the area.

The National Weather Center confirmed two tornadoes in eastern and southeastern NC, and flash flooding and winds affected much of the Triangle.

The National Weather Service issued its first tornado warnings - for northern Chatham County and central Orange County - at 10:38 a.m. Friday, spawning a frenzy of weather updates. UNC-Chapel Hill activated its emergency siren on campus to let students and staff know to take shelter. The warning expired about 20 minutes later, but was activated within 10 minutes.

Another warning was issued at 11:06 a.m. for Orange and Durham counties, as an air siren was heard blaring across central Durham from the N.C. School of Math and Science. Tornado warnings also were issued for Lee, Harnett and Wake counties, followed by another warning for Chatham County at 11:14 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

The storm moved through quickly, but weather service officials warned the risk of flooding could continue until at least 6 p.m. Friday. Flash flood warnings were issued for Orange, Durham, Wake, Harnett and Cumberland counties.

At least two people had been killed in the state so far, North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper said at a news briefing on the storm Friday morning. One person was killed in Charlotte when a tree fell on a house, and the other died after a traffic crash in Catawba County.

Another 15 people were injured, four seriously, when a tornado touched down in Rocky Mount, hitting two restaurants and other buildings, according to Rocky Mount Fire Chief Darvin Moore.

Fallen trees, flooding

The hurricane was downgraded from a Category 4 storm as it passed over Georgia overnight and turned west, passing through the North Carolina mountains. On Friday, it was downgraded to a tropical storm, and then a tropical depression.

The outer bands of the rain hitting the Triangle reached Alamance and Orange counties in the western part of the area around 9 a.m. Friday morning. Weather and utility officials warned that falling trees also posed a major hazard after days of rain before the storm had already soaked the ground in many places.

Orange County officials reported two homes had trees on them from the storm, and the basement of a home in Carrboro was flooded. At least four roads in Chapel Hill - Umstead Drive, Raleigh Road, Cleland Drive and South Merritt Mill Road - were closed because of flooding or downed trees, a spokesman said.

All roads in Chapel Hill were reported open as of just after 5 p.m. on Friday.

The National Weather Service Forecast Office in Raleigh previously told The News & Observer that the storm could bring 1 to 3 inches of rain and sustained winds of 15 to 25 mph to the Triangle.

Schools in Wake, Durham and Orange counties were closed in anticipation of the weather, and Duke Energy

expected thousands to lose power in the storm's wake.

Tornadoes touch down in eastern and southeastern NC

While the western part of North Carolina was still dealing with major flooding and dangerous road conditions after the storm, Helene only brought heavy rainfall and strong winds to most of the state.

But at least two potential tornadoes were reported Friday afternoon in Rocky Mount, an hour east of Raleigh, and in Garland, which is about 80 miles south of Raleigh in Sampson County. The National Weather Service was sending teams to both towns to assess the damage.

The National Weather Service Forecast Office in Raleigh issued tornado warnings for most of the Triangle as the band of storms passed through the area at midday, including in Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, Holly Springs and Fuquay-Varina.

"Tornadoes aren't uncommon with tropical storms or hurricanes," said Jonathan Blaes, meteorologist-in-charge for the National Weather Service in Raleigh. "This is one of the threats that comes with them."

The threat of tornadoes passed by late afternoon as the sun emerged from the clouds. Wind and flood advisories will remain in effect, Blaes said, noting that flooding could continue to cause issues for several days as rivers crest.

"It's been so wet of late that much of the rain that fell is just washing and draining into creeks and streams," Blaes said. "So that is a worry."

A federal emergency declaration will provide Federal Emergency Management Agency money to help pay for evacuations, emergency shelters and other emergency protective measures in the western part of the state, The News & Observer has reported.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Tammy Grubb and Mary Helen Moore, Staff Writer, 'A day of tornado warnings across the Triangle, with 2 twisters reported on the ground in NC', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 20A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BE810FA62B3D80>



With Adam Thielen out, here's who the Carolina Panthers will turn to at receiver

September 29, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Alex Zietlow; Staff Writer| Section: Sports | 1155 Words Page: 6B OpenURL Link

Jonathan Mingo hasn't been on social media since his college days in an effort to find clarity under the brightest spotlight - to find tranquility despite all the football noise.

So when you tell him that the fantasy football world has taken notice of his potential for a breakout performance in Week 4, his response is what you'd expect:

"Nah," he said with a smile Thursday.

"I don't do that type of stuff," added Mingo, who is projected to score 10 fantasy points this week. "I just try to do my job every day."

The Panthers will need him to do his job at 1 p.m. Sunday when they host the Cincinnati Bengals in Bank of America Stadium - perhaps even more so than in previous weeks.

The second-year wide receiver might hear his name called Sunday a bit more than usual. A lot of that has to do with the hamstring injury suffered by Adam Thielen, the team's No. 2 wide receiver who will now miss at least the next four games on injured reserve.

But a lot of that, too, has to do with how Mingo played Sunday. In the Panthers' 36-22 win over the Raiders - one in which Andy Dalton put on a vintage, 300-plus yard, three-TD performance - Mingo lived up to his role. He notched 49 snaps (66% of all offensive plays), which is a season high. He also caught three of his four targets for 18 yards and took an end-around rush that looked promising before the Raiders defense made a nice play to hold it to 2 yards. (That's the second time in three games they've called an end-around rush for Mingo.)

His biggest play of the day came when he caught a pass in the flat behind the line of scrimmage and then took it for 15 yards with his team backed up deep in its own territory.

How that play came together even more so speaks to Mingo's expected elevated role in the offense.

"We had something else called (out of the huddle)," Mingo told The Charlotte Observer of that 15-yard catch. "Andy checked to a Cover 0 answer. So it was a good check by him, saw he was getting (blitzed). Had a good block on the outside and tried to take advantage of running the ball in space. It's something that I've been trying to prove to people that I can do."

So ... who will replace Adam Thielen in the offense?

It's true that replacing Thielen won't be easy. The 34-year-old is the second-leading receiver on the team and notched three catches for 40 yards and a touchdown in one half Sunday before going down with an injury that'll have him sidelined for a while.

Ask offensive coordinator Brad Idzik, though, and the plan to make up for Thielen's absence is pretty simple. It's designed that way.

"They both did a phenomenal job stepping in," Idzik said of Mingo and rookie Xavier Legette. "And again, it's just a testament to them owning the full game plan. The thing that we value in this offense is guys not just memorizing

one spot, whether it's a heavy tackle coming in and playing tight end for us in the run game or the pass game, or it's a receiver who's typically the Z having to come in and spell us at F or X."

Ideally the plan for the Panthers is to look for Diontae Johnson, who hauled in a career-high 122 yards Sunday, on every passing play. After that, there's Mingo and Legette; the duo will almost certainly round out most three-receiver sets. Legette, like Mingo, also saw some more attention in Thielen's absence. The first-round pick played 44 snaps - 49% - and caught two of three targets for 42 yards, which included a 35-yard catch that was mostly thanks to his speed after the catch.

And then behind them is Jalen Coker, a once-coveted undrafted free agent and practice squad promotion this week who flashed in the preseason enough to make the team's initial 53-man roster.

Coker said Thielen - one of the most successful undrafted free agents in league history himself - has been a great leader to all the rookies, and that has only helped prepare Coker for Sunday.

"He's always going to take you under his wing and try to guide you through this process, which is awesome," Coker told The Charlotte Observer on Wednesday. "Especially because we do have similar backgrounds. So it's really kind of an amazing opportunity for me and experience for me, where I get to learn from probably one of the best guys to ever do it."

Shaq Thompson wanted to play in the preseason

The question of whether the Panthers should have played their starters in the preseason was a storyline for a bulk of training camp. Head coach Dave Canales ultimately chose to not play most of his starters outside of one series in the final preseason game - an approach other teams across the NFL took.

After the Panthers' slow start, that decision lingered under scrutiny. And on Thursday, veteran linebacker Shaq Thompson shared that he wished his defense had played in the preseason.

"That's just my opinion, I'm not the head coach or the GM who calls that shot. But I like playing in the preseason," Thompson said. "Getting all the jitters and all that stuff out. ... But you know what? It is what it is. We got a win last week, and we're 0-0 this week, and we're trying to get a win this week."

He added: "Helps with everything. Communication, tackling, going out with your guys, playing football. It helps with everything."

Quick hits

- * With rain from Hurricane Helene whisking into Charlotte and with the Panthers currently without an indoor facility in their practice space the team practiced in soggy conditions Thursday. That is still optimal, according to Thompson, who said he prefers to play on grass over turf no matter the weather conditions. (Thompson has shared this view before.)
- * There's really only one big change on Thursday's injury report. And that involves arguably the Panthers' most explosive player. Diontae Johnson didn't practice Thursday because of a groin injury; he told reporters that the decision was primarily because of the field conditions and that he'll be good to play Sunday. Those who showed up as "Did Not Participate" on Thursday's injury report: Lonnie Johnson (hip), Damien Lewis (elbow), Shy Tuttle (foot), Taylor Moton (rest) and Johnson (groin). Those who showed up as limited: A'Shawn Robinson (knee) and Nick Scott (quadriceps).
- * Something fun for Panthers fans to look forward to: At halftime of Sunday's game against the Bengals, Julius Peppers will receive his Pro Football Hall of Fame Ring of Excellence, according to a release from the Hall. The legendary defensive end was inducted into the Hall this summer.

Mike Kaye contributed to this report.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Alex Zietlow, Staff Writer, 'With Adam Thielen out, here's who the Carolina Panthers will turn to at receiver', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 6B https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BE810FBB52C098>



Catawba County, Hickory, Newton-Conover schools closed Monday

September 29, 2024 | Hickory Daily Record (NC) Author: Billy Chapman | Section: Education | 85 Words OpenURL Link

Catawba County Schools, Hickory City Schools and Newton-Conover City Schools will be closed Monday while the county is recovering from Tropical Storm Helene.

Monday will be an optional teacher workday for all three systems.

Hickory City Schools Director of Communications Natasha Eckard said power outages at Hickory High and Hickory Career & Arts Magnet factored into the system's decision to close.

Catawba County Schools said QUEST childcare will be closed. In the Newton-Conover district, Kid Connection will operate from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. for school-aged children.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Billy Chapman, 'Catawba County, Hickory, Newton-Conover schools closed Monday', *Hickory Daily Record* (online), 29 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BEA5FA16B1B528



McDowell County schools closed all week due to storm impact

September 29, 2024 | McDowell News, The (Marion, NC) Author: Virginia Annable | Section: Education | 223 Words OpenURL Link

McDowell County Schools will be closed all week for students, the school system said in a news release Sunday.

The county canceled school because of the loss of power and water across the county caused by Tropical Storm Helene, the release said.

The school system's leadership team is asked to start work Tuesday at 2 p.m. if is is safe to do so, the release said.

Maintenance and garage staff were asked to begin work Monday if it is safe.

All other employees were asked not to work Monday or Tuesday, the release said.

"We will continue to keep everyone informed as we navigate the coming days," the school system said. "Our top priority is ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our employees and students during this challenging time. The strength of our organization has always been our people, and our commitment to you remains unwavering. Please continue to keep our county, its residence, our students and staff in your thoughts and prayers as we navigate this historic event."

Surrounding counties

Buncombe County Schools canceled school for the entire week as well.

Burke County Public Schools canceled school Monday - Wednesday.

Caldwell County schools are canceled Monday, according to a Facebook post from the school system. It is an optional teacher workday for the system.

Alexander County also canceled school for Monday, Sept. 30, the school system said in a Facebook post.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Virginia Annable, 'McDowell County schools closed all week due to storm impact', *McDowell News, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BEA6E8F1717C68



Curfew, water, gas, school and other things you need to know

September 29, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Aarik Long | Section: News | 729 Words OpenURL Link

No cell service, no internet, no gas, no water, no power: Haywood County is reeling from the effects of Hurricane Helene. The lack of communication and basic services has made it difficult if not impossible to begin the recovery and digging out process, and led to entirely new fears about the dangers of the elderly being home alone — running out of food and water and no way to reach the outside world.

It could be days or longer before society is restored. Here's what was known as of 6 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 29.

Internet and cell service

The vast majority of people have no internet or cell service. Haywood County officials are still unsure about when cell service and internet will be restored.

"Cell service is still pretty spotty," Haywood County Public Information Officer Dillon Huffman said. "I still haven't heard anything about power."

School

Haywood County Schools are closed all week for students. That includes sporting events. For staff, schools are closed Monday and Tuesday with Wednesday through Friday being optional work days.

Curfew

A curfew was imposed across all of Haywood County from 9 p.m. until 7 a.m. while recovery efforts continue. By 9 p.m., no one should be out or on the roads.

This is for multiple reasons. One is because many roads still aren't safe, with crumbling and washed out sections. Another is to prevent looting, since much of the county is still without power. And yet another reason is to simply avoid unnecessary risks since most have no way to call 911 if they need help.

Water: supply and contamination

Many in Haywood County are without water — from those on well water but without power to those on disrupted public water systems.

Many stores have been running out water. Even Walmart ran out of water Sunday morning.

A water tanker is parked at the Canton Plaza for those in need of water until 7 p.m. Sunday. Those who need water must bring their own containers and are limited to one gallon per person per day.

All of Haywood County — expect Waynesville — is under a boil water advisory. Water should be boiled for one minute before it is consumed. Officials are also asking that water be conserved.

Waynesville initially had a boil water advisory due to excess sediment and silt coming in to the water treatment plant. However, lines were never compromised and once the silt dissipated the boil-water advisory was no longer necessary.

Gas, groceries and cash

Conservation efforts are also on-going for fuel. Finding a gas station with open pumps has become a scramble at best and caused panic at worst — with lines of vehicles waiting for a turn stretching up to three-quarters of a mile long.

Only a handful of gas stations seem to have gas at any given time. A tanker will deliver a load, and a rush ensues on that gas station until it's all gone. Many have reported waiting up to two hours in line for gas after finding a station that has some.

"A lot of gas stations are out right now, and these emergency vehicles need the gas," Huffman said.

Many places are only taking cash. As a result, several ATMs are running out of cash.

The Ingles in Hazelwood exceeded the fire marshal capacity on Sunday and were limiting the number of people who could be in the store at once.

Shelter

The shelter at the old armory in Clyde is still open. If you need oxygen, you can go to the emergency shelter. Just bring your concentrator.

Debris

Officials are also asking that debris be placed by the road.

"Please ensure that debris is placed beside, not on, the road," Huffman said. "Debris should be placed next to state maintained road, not private roads."

He added that debris should be photographed for documentation purposes down the road.

The storm hit the entire county this time around.

"It's different this time because it's not just Cruso. We've seen damage across the entire county," Huffman said. "Dozens of landslides and probably more than that."

Search and rescue efforts are on-going. As of Sunday morning, Haywood County officials did not have an update on any death or serious injuries from Helene.

Travel

Drivers are asked to refrain from travel in Western North Carolina. Interstate 40 is impassable at multiple locations. I-40 is closed in both directions from exits 47 to 50. It is also closed from exit 423 in Tennessee to exit 20 in North Carolina. Interstate 26 is closed at the Tennessee line.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Aarik Long, 'Curfew, water, gas, school and other things you need to know', *Mountaineer, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BEA35FD0028E78



Navigating the aftermath of Helene: where things stand in Haywood and how to get help

September 29, 2024 | Mountaineer, The (Waynesville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 1805 Words OpenURL Link

The following is a running list of important updates on flood recovery in Haywood County — from the cell service, power and water, missing person tallies, school status, donation and supply drop points, and more. This list is updated with need-to-know information twice daily online, as well as print editions of The Mountaineer.

If you have something to share in this community bulletin board, stop by The Mountaineer in downtown Waynesville across from the courthouse on Main Street or email bjohnson@themountaineer.com

School sites offering free meals and food

Free, hot meals will be served for any child under 18 starting Wednesday at Bethel Elementary and Jonathan Valley Elementary, between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. weekdays.

"We would love be able to give kids a free hot meal," Haywood Schools Superintendent Trevor Putnam said.

The meals are not just for flood victims, but any child age 0-18.

In addition, nonperishable food and water will be given away at those same two schools, between 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday of this week, with as possible extension into next week.

Internet and cell service

The vast majority of people have no internet or cell service. Haywood County officials are unsure when cell service and internet will be restored. Cell customers with Verizon are facing the most trouble with service. Those with AT&T and T-Mobile have service for the most part.

An AT&T mobile tower has been set up in Waynesville, which has helped with service for those on AT&T. A Verizon mobile tower has been requested but due to high demand, none have been procurred yet. Verizon mobile tours from across the country are being brought to flood areas in WNC, and Haywood hopefully in line to get one at some point.

Power

As of Monday, 13,000 homes in Haywood County were still without power, but that number is getting smaller every day.

School status

Haywood County Schools are closed indefinitely. Advanced notice of 48 hours will be given before school resumes again.

Two schools are still without power — Clyde and Bethel Elementary. Riverbend has no sewer pending a line repair within the next week or so. Busses are unable to traverse their normal routes due to washed out roads, but the school system is planning modified bus routes with community pick-up points where roads aren't navigable by busses.

The biggest obstacle in returning to school is the disruption of phone, cell and internet service — along with the

server that functions as the central nervous system for the school system being down. This poses a safety concern as schools have no way to notify parents in the event of an emergency.

Interstate travel

Haywood County has been hemmed in by landslides on Interstate 40 in both directions, making travel in or out of the region on I-40 impossible.

To the east, a landslide has blocked I-40 around Old Fort, with only emergency vehicles granted passage. To the west, a landslide in the Pigeon River Gorge has prompted an I-40 closure after exit 15. I-40 remains open between Haywood and Asheville.

Meanwhile, I-26 heading north is closed at the Tennessee line due to a washed out a bridge near Unicoi, Tenn.

Curfew

A curfew was imposed across all of Haywood County from 9 p.m. until 7 a.m. while recovery efforts continue. By 9 p.m., no one should be out or on the roads.

This is for multiple reasons. One is because many roads still aren't safe, with crumbling and washed out sections. Another reason is to simply avoid unnecessary risks since most people have no way to call 911 if they need help.

Yet another is to prevent looting, since much of the county is still without power and the public can't call the police. But so far, there have been no reports of looting, according to Sheriff Bill Wilke.

"I would caution anybody who thinks they are going to come up here and take things from the residents of this county, they will find themselves in trouble and probably in my jail. Knowing the residents of this county, it could be very dangerous to their health," Wilke said.

Fatalities

As of Monday afternoon, Haywood County officials have reported four known fatalities in the county during the flood.

An effort has been underway across the county since Saturday to visit homes in the path of the flood or landslides, or rendered inaccessible by washed out roads and bridges. The wellness checks have been a joint effort of law enforcement, firefighters, public works crews, first responders and outside agencies that have come in to aid with response and recovery.

The Haywood County Sheriff's Office has been getting a steady stream of inquiries from people worried about the well-being of unreachable friends and family.

"People who can't get ahold of their loved ones and want to make sure they're OK have called, they've come in person to fire departments, they've sent messages through Facebook," said Gina Zachary, public information officer with the sheriff's office. "As those come in, we're sending officers and firefighters out to check on them, and so far they've all had good turnouts."

Water supply

Many in Haywood County are without water — from those on well water without power to run their pump to those on disrupted public water systems. Stores have been running out water. Even Walmart ran out of water Sunday.

A water tanker is parked at the Canton Plaza at 127 Plaza Loop for those in need of water. Water is also being distributed at the Maggie Valley Fire Deptartment at 2901 Soco Rd. People must bring their own containers and are

limited to one gallon per person per day between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Water is also being distributed at at Woodland Baptist Church on N.C. 209 near the fairgrounds and at Jonathan Valley and Bethel Elementary schools.

Water contamination

Those on public water supplies are under a boil water advisory except for the Waynesville water system, which also supplies Lake Junaluska and Junaluska Sanitary District customers. Water should be boiled for one minute before it is consumed. Officials are also asking that water be conserved.

Waynesville initially had a boil water notice due to excess sediment and silt coming in to the water treatment plant. However, lines were never compromised and once the silt dissipated, the boil-water notice was no longer necessary.

Supply distribution, donations for flood victims

Essential supplies will be distributed at Woodland Baptist Church in Crabtree from 1- 6 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 1, for those affected by flooding. There will be food, water, baby supplies, dog food, and limited cleaning supplies. Woodland Baptist Church is located at 545 Crabtree Rd (on N.C. 209 across from the Smoky Mountain Event Center).

Donations

For those looking to help, Woodland Baptist Church is also accepting donations of supplies to support families in need

"Let's come together as a community to ensure everyone has the resources they need to recover," said Dillon Huffman, Haywood County public information officer.

Mountain Projects in Waynesville is also accepting donations for flood victims, including household supplies.

Mountain Projects is located on the Old Asheville Highway in Waynesville across from Junaluska Elementary School.

The United Way of Haywood County is being established as a centralized flood donation clearinghouse, including monetary donations.

People in North Carolina affected by Helene can apply for disaster assistance on DisasterAssistance.gov, on the FEMA App or by calling 1-800-621-3362.

Flood clean-up assistance

If you or someone you know needs help cleaning up damage from Hurricane Helene at your home/residence or house of worship, call Crisis Cleanup at 844-965-1386 to ask for help.

Crisis Cleanup is 100% free service that connects volunteers from local and national relief organizations, community groups, and faith communities who may be able to assist with mucking out after floods, moving debris to curbs, tarping roofs, and chain-sawing downed trees.

Gas, groceries and cash

Conservation efforts are also on-going for fuel. Finding a gas station with open pumps has become a scramble at best and caused panic at worst — with lines of vehicles waiting for a turn stretching up to three-quarters of a mile long.

Only a handful of gas stations seem to have gas at any given time. When a tanker delivers a load, a rush ensues on that gas station until it's all gone. Many have reported waiting up to two hours in line for gas after finding a station that has some.

Many stores are only taking cash. As a result, several ATMs are running out of cash.

The Ingles in Hazelwood exceeded the fire marshal capacity on Sunday, and do to a skeleton work force, the store could not handle the crowd. Ingles instituted a line outside, limiting the number of people who enter the store as others exited.

Landslides and washed out roads

Landslides have washed out roads and bridges countywide — from Cruso to Maggie Valley. Landslides have left many residents stranded and isolated — without power or communications.

"It's different this time because it's not just Cruso. We've seen damage across the entire county," Huffman said. "Dozens of landslides and probably more than that."

Waynesville Firefighter Luke Palmer was among a team of Waynesville firefighters who hiked through Camp Branch, going door to door to homes cut off by landslides and collapsed roads.

"You have catastrophic mudslides, and the only access to their homes are destroyed," Palmer said.

In Appalachian fashion, neighbors have been pitching in to dig each other out.

"The community came together with their equipment — their dump trucks, dozers, excavators, you name it — and managed to get roads built back to the point people can at least get out."

Dams didn't fail

An alarming but false rumor circulated through Haywood County Friday that the Lake Junaluska dam had failed. Dispelling the rumor in a county with spotty cell, phone and internet service was a challenge.

The following public alert was sent out by the Haywood County Sheriff's Office: "Lake Junaluska dam has NOT collapsed. It is functioning as designed — serving as a spillway to manage excess water. The dam is being closely monitored by officials to monitor safety and proper operation."

Meanwhile, a rumor began circulating in Cocke County, Tennessee, that the Waterville Dam on the Pigeon River in Haywood County at the state line had collapsed. Also not true.

Shelter

The shelter at the old armory in Clyde beside Haywood Community College is still open. If you need oxygen, you can go to the emergency shelter. Just bring your concentrator.

Debris and trash sites

Due to ongoing power, phone, and internet issues, the White Oak Landfill will remain closed Tuesday, Oct. 1.

However, the Materials Recovery Facility and Convenience Centers at Jonathan Creek, Beaverdam, Bethel, Hazelwood, Mauney Cove, Jones Cove, and N.C. 110 will be open. At this time, the county sites can only accept household waste. Storm debris and demolition materials must be held until the landfill reopens—hopefully soon.

Officials are also asking that debris be placed by the road.

"Please ensure that debris is placed beside, not on, the road," Haywood County Information Office Dillon Huffman said. "Debris should be placed next to state maintained roads, not private roads."

He added that debris should be photographed for documentation purposes.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Navigating the aftermath of Helene: where things stand in Haywood and how to get help', *Mountaineer, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BEF735F0E51700



Many schools cancelled; some will offer food, showers to residents

September 29, 2024 | Mt. Airy News, The (NC) Author: Ryan Kelly | Section: News | 469 Words OpenURL Link

Hundreds of homes in Surry County remain in the dark Sunday evening following Hurricane Helene's visit last week. According to ReadyNC.gov there were 2,546 residents of Surry County still in the dark as of 7:30 p.m. Sunday evening.

In response to some residents being without power or having difficulty getting around, most local schools are closed Monday, Sept. 30 with the exception of Elkin City Schools.

Surry County Schools will be closed to students for classes on Monday according to a statement from the district, "Out of an abundance of caution, all Surry County Schools will remain closed for students, Monday, September 30. Tomorrow will be an optional teacher workday."

"In addition, Surry County Schools will be opening East Surry, North Surry, and Surry Central High Schools for our families who are without power from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Monday, September 30. Child nutrition staff will be onsite to serve meals. You are welcome to come by for a meal, take a shower, and use the restrooms. Our locker rooms will also be available for your convenience."

Mount Airy City Schools will be closed Monday, and the district announced there will be meal service for children and adults available.

"Due to power and internet outages across our schools and area, we will be canceling school on September 30. There will also be no after-school activities. We want nothing more than to bring students back into our buildings but there are many factors preventing that from being the safest option at this time.

"Sit-down lunch meals will be available for children 18 and under for free. Adults can buy a lunch for \$4.50. Lunches will be served in BH Tharrington Primary cafeteria and Mount Airy High School's Commons Area from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and those meals will need to be eaten in the cafeteria of the school based on regulation.

Elkin City Schools will resume a normal schedule Monday. They released a statement that read, "We want to extend our deepest gratitude to the power companies and the cleanup crews for their incredible efforts during Hurricane Helene."

"The hard work and dedication ensured that our community was safe and that we are able to return to a regular scheduled school day."

Wilkes County Schools will be closed on Monday. The district said, "First and foremost, we hope that you and your family are safe following this dangerous storm. Wilkes County Schools will be closed for students September 30. This will allow us to assess conditions at our schools and in the community and determine when students can safely return."

"Tomorrow will be an optional teacher workday. Employees who do not feel comfortable traveling should not do so. We will work closely with those who cannot safely return to work tomorrow."

Alleghany County schools and Galax City Schools in Carroll County, Va. will also be closed Monday.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Ryan Kelly, 'Many schools cancelled; some will offer food, showers to residents', *Mt. Airy News, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BEA4418E994630



Scale of damages from Helene in Western NC still unfolding

September 29, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC)

Author: Drew Jackson and Joe Marusak; Staff Writer | Section: News | 646 Words

Page: 17A OpenURL Link

Hundreds of thousands of people remained without power Saturday morning in North Carolina in the aftermath of a tropical storm that started as Hurricane Helene.

Helene's remnants dumped historic levels of rain across the state, leading to devastating flooding in Western North Carolina and a web of impassable roads and interstates.

In a state familiar with the power of hurricanes along its long coast, the level of devastation in North Carolina's mountains, hundreds of miles inland, has been sobering.

Images from newsrooms and social media show houses floating down a muddled French Broad River, submerged cars and the town of Chimney Rock seemingly erased by a mudslide.

Gov. Roy Cooper has asked the federal government for a major disaster declaration for 38 North Carolina counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians that would expand access to assistance to governments, some nonprofits, and individuals.

There were nearly 400 closed roads across the state Saturday, according to the North Carolina Department of Transportation. That is going to hinder efforts to help those harmed.

"The entire emergency response effort will be hampered by the damage to roads and powerlines," said said NCDOT spokesman Jamie Kritzer.

Those closures include multiple sections of Interstates 40 and 26 around Asheville, the main arteries for traveling through the mountainous region. One section of the eastbound lane of I-40, three miles from the Tennessee border, washed out and fell into the Pigeon River.

"At this point, we're still advising people not to travel in Western North Carolina," said NCDOT spokesman Jamie Kritzer. "We're still assessing what the damage looks like but in many spots, the recovery effort will be long term and labor intensive."

Of the 400 closed roads, Kritzer said 64 were primary roads, the state's designation for significant roadways, including highways and interstates. Those closures could impact recovery efforts.

Water supply down, outages widespread

In Buncombe County, I-40 and I-26 are impassable in multiple locations, emergency officials said at a news conference Saturday morning.

A boil-water advisory continues for Asheville. The county also has no cellular coverage, with no estimated restoration time.

As of Saturday morning, around 400,000 in North Carolina were still without power, according to Duke Energy, with most of those outages occurring in the western region.

Most of the outages have no timeline for when power will be restored, as the extend of the damage is still being

assessed, according to the Duke Energy outage map.

In one of Friday's most harrowing moment, an alert was sent out Friday afternoon that the Lake Lure Dam in Rutherford County was set to fail at any moment, with residents below the 100 foot structure ordered to evacuate.

Hours later the Lake Lure Dam continued to hold.

Water levels throughout the Western region reached historic levels of flooding. The Pigeon River crested at more than 25 feet near the Canton station.

People living through the chaos on Saturday were doing what they could to cope. In the town of Hot Springs, where the swollen French Broad river had closed the Bridge Street Bridge, residents met at Sara Joe's Gas Station Saturday morning to try and figure out a way around the road closures. The gas station had posted on its Facebook page Friday afternoon that there was free ice in the cooler and that people could take some if they needed it.

A few hours after that message the French Broad River rose to more than 20 feet, reaching major flood level, according to a water data station in Hot Springs. On Saturday afternoon, the river remained at 15 feet deep.

At the Asheville station, the French Broad peaked at 24.67 feet Friday evening, a level surpassing the Great Flood of 1916, which the city says crested at 21 feet and killed 80 people.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Drew Jackson and Joe Marusak, Staff Writer, 'Scale of damages from Helene in Western NC still unfolding', *News & Observer, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 17A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BE7F8AA2A49B48>



Helene cancels South Carolina music festival featuring Eric Church, others

September 29, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Joe Marusak; Staff Writer | Section: News | 233 Words

Page: 20A OpenURL Link

Organizers of the inaugural outdoor Field and Stream Music Fest in Winnsboro, South Carolina, have postponed the Oct. 4-6 event due to Hurricane Helene, organizers said Saturday.

Eric Church was among the headline acts scheduled to perform along with Lainey Wilson, Lynyrd Skynyrd, ZZ Top and many others.

"It is with heavy hearts that we announce the postponement," organizers said in a statement. "Given the state of emergency and challenging conditions on the ground, this decision has been made out of an abundance of caution."

Hurricane Helene damage "has been severe, with widespread flooding, downed trees and blocked roads," organizers said. "Power is still out on site, deliveries have been delayed, and some areas of the festival grounds remain inaccessible."

The production team for the event and site engineers determined it wouldn't be safe to proceed.

"While we are deeply disappointed, the safety of our fans, sponsors, staff, and crew remains our highest priority," according to the announcement. "Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those affected by the storm."

To help recovery efforts, festival equipment, including restroom trailers, generators, and food supplies will go to assist FEMA and emergency services, organizers said.

"We are heartbroken but excited to bring you an unforgettable experience next year," organizers said. "New dates will be announced soon. Tickets and camping will automatically roll over to the rescheduled dates, and refunds will be available."

Refunds will begin within two weeks.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Joe Marusak, Staff Writer, 'Helene cancels South Carolina music festival featuring Eric Church, others', *News & Observer, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 20A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BE7F8AD8C37A40>



4 critically hurt after tornado hits Rocky Mount amid Helene

September 29, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC)

Author: Mary Helen Moore and Adam Wagner; Staff Writer Section: News | 1015 Words

Page: 17A OpenURL Link

A tornado associated with Hurricane Helene, now a tropical depression, touched down in a Nash County city on Friday, Sept. 27, injuring 15 people.

Around 1:30 p.m., the tornado struck two restaurants with people inside, and several other buildings near North Wesleyan Boulevard and Benvenue Road in Rocky Mount, emergency officials said.

"We've had multiple injuries, with four of those being critical," Nash County communications director Jonathan Edwards said at 2:30 p.m.

Edwards said EMS was triaging patients and taking those who required hospitalization to UNC Health Nash. He said they didn't have reports of other serious damage to share yet.

Hing Ta Restaurant suffered heavy damage, with a back wall crumpled and a piece of wood pointing through the roof. Bricks were strewn throughout the surrounding parking lot and several cars in the area had their windows blown out.

The steel frame of the auto repair shop next door was crumpled and one wall was almost entirely blown out, though a gold colored car remained on lifts inside what remained of the business.

A medical supply store had crumbled into a pile of bricks nearby, and El Tapatio Restaurant also suffered damage. The city is still taking stock of the scene.

"We are just manning the area, checking in, making sure buildings are cleared," said Catina Phillips around 4:30 p.m., a spokesperson for the Rocky Mount Fire Department.

Rocky Mount is about an hour east of Raleigh. Another potential tornado touched down in Garland, about 80 miles south of Raleigh in Sampson County. The National Weather Service is sending teams to both scenes to assess the damage.

K&W cafeteria becomes a refuge

Tonya Ward was at work inside the K&W Cafeteria around 1:30 p.m. Friday when her manager shouted to look at the tornado outside.

"You saw the trees and the leaves and everything was rotating. It was dark, it was jet black," Ward said.

Then she saw the sign.

Across the parking lot, about 200 feet away, a sign for Precision Tune Auto Care had been ripped from its post and was twisting and turning in the air. Ward didn't wait around to see where it would land, rushing to huddle in an interior hallway near the bathrooms along with everyone else in the K&W.

Ward described hearing the tell-tale freight train noises and other sounds of destruction. But the tornado seemingly did not damage the K&W.

"It seemed like it hopped over us," Ward said.

When the sound ended, chaos set in.

Customers and workers from Hing Ta restaurant next door streamed into the K&W, tending their wounds and looking for family members. As Ward considered heading over to Hing Ta to help, the first emergency vehicles arrived.

A short while later, she saw the yellow and black Precision Tune sign again.

It ended up landing next to her car, shattering on the asphalt. Somehow, it didn't cause any damage.

'I got lucky. Some people didn't get lucky today.'

Dean Holmes was at work Friday afternoon when he heard a tornado had damaged Hing Ta restaurant. He immediately knew that his home on Short Spoon Circle, less than half a mile away, would have suffered damage, too.

So Holmes wasn't surprised when he came down the street about 4 p.m. and discovered a tree crew at work, the air filled with buzzing from chainsaws and beeping from a small excavator carrying loads of branches to the street.

Short Spoon Circle backs up to a golf course, its comfortable two-story homes surrounded by large, mature trees. The needles scattered across the road - and woody smell in the air - proved that many of those trees are pines.

Ribbons of blue metal were scattered throughout the neighborhood, wrapped around trees and strewn across yards. Holmes believes they must have come from one of the businesses hit by the storm.

A post in a local Facebook group said the storm had carried a sign from Hing Ta into a yard on Short Spoon Circle, but Holmes didn't know whose.

In Holmes' backyard, his son's trampoline was still standing, although it was buried underneath a heap of fallen limbs. One of the two windows in his attic was broken, a set of closed blinds serving as the barrier between inside and outside.

Still, as Holmes gathered fallen leaves and pine needles Friday evening, he knew some of his neighbors had been hit much harder by the storm.

"I got lucky. Some people didn't get lucky today," Holmes said.

'Worst is over'

Helene, which was downgraded to a tropical depression around 2 p.m. Sept. 27, brought heavy rainfall and strong winds to portions of North Carolina. Areas in the west of the state are dealing with flooding and dangerous road conditions in the wake of the storm.

The threat of tornadoes for central North Carolina was over by 2:30 p.m., though wind and flood advisories remain in effect, according to Jonathan Blaes, meteorologist-in-charge for that National Weather Service in Raleigh.

"The worst is over for sure," Blaes said around 3:30 p.m. "The sun's even poking out spots, so things are ramping down pretty quickly."

Flooding could continue to cause issues for several days as rivers crest.

"It's been so wet of late that much of the rain that fell is just washing and draining into creeks and streams," Blaes

said. "So that is a worry."

The National Weather Service Forecast Office in Raleigh issued tornado warnings for most of the Triangle as the band of storms passed through the area at midday, including in Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, Holly Springs and Fuquay-Varina.

Helene and its remnants have caused two deaths in North Carolina, Gov. Roy Cooper said during a morning briefing Sept. 27.

One person died Thursday, Sept. 26, following a motor vehicle crash on a flooded road in Catawba County. Another died Sept. 27 when a tree fell on a house in Charlotte.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Mary Helen Moore and Adam Wagner, Staff Writer, '4 critically hurt after tornado hits Rocky Mount amid Helene', *News & Observer, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 17A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BE7F8A9E98D320>



Tornado with - 90 mph winds hit popular NC mountain tourist town before - Helene, NWS says

September 29, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Joe Marusak; Staff Writer | Section: News | 116 Words Page: 20A OpenURL Link

A tornado packing 90 mph winds hit the N.C. mountain tourist town of Blowing Rock ahead of Hurricane Helene, a National Weather Service team confirmed Thursday.

A separate severe weather system spawned the EF-1 tornado that uprooted and snapped trees for just over a half-mile before dissipating, investigators said.

No injuries were reported, according to a report by the team from the NWS office in Blacksburg, Virginia.

The tornado touched down at 6:38 p.m. Wednesday near the intersection of Birch Drive and Hill Street and raced northeast before lifting near Chetola Lake Drive, the team found.

A few tents near Bass Lake Drive and Chetola Lake Drive also were blown down, according to the NWS report.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Joe Marusak, Staff Writer, 'Tornado with 90 mph winds hit popular NC mountain tourist town before Helene, NWS says', *News & Observer, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 20A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BE7F8AE85AFE60>



A day of tornado warnings across the Triangle, - with 2 twisters reported on the ground in NC

September 29, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Tammy Grubb and Mary Helen Moore; Staff Writer | Section: News | 751 Words Page: 20A OpenURL Link

Tornado warnings sent Triangle residents scurrying for cover for just over an hour Friday as a strong band of storms spawned from Hurricane Helene - now a tropical depression - passed through the area.

The National Weather Center confirmed two tornadoes in eastern and southeastern NC, and flash flooding and winds affected much of the Triangle.

The National Weather Service issued its first tornado warnings - for northern Chatham County and central Orange County - at 10:38 a.m. Friday, spawning a frenzy of weather updates. UNC-Chapel Hill activated its emergency siren on campus to let students and staff know to take shelter. The warning expired about 20 minutes later, but was activated within 10 minutes.

Another warning was issued at 11:06 a.m. for Orange and Durham counties, as an air siren was heard blaring across central Durham from the N.C. School of Math and Science. Tornado warnings also were issued for Lee, Harnett and Wake counties, followed by another warning for Chatham County at 11:14 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.

The storm moved through quickly, but weather service officials warned the risk of flooding could continue until at least 6 p.m. Friday. Flash flood warnings were issued for Orange, Durham, Wake, Harnett and Cumberland counties.

At least two people had been killed in the state so far, North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper said at a news briefing on the storm Friday morning. One person was killed in Charlotte when a tree fell on a house, and the other died after a traffic crash in Catawba County.

Another 15 people were injured, four seriously, when a tornado touched down in Rocky Mount, hitting two restaurants and other buildings, according to Rocky Mount Fire Chief Darvin Moore.

Fallen trees, flooding

The hurricane was downgraded from a Category 4 storm as it passed over Georgia overnight and turned west, passing through the North Carolina mountains. On Friday, it was downgraded to a tropical storm, and then a tropical depression.

The outer bands of the rain hitting the Triangle reached Alamance and Orange counties in the western part of the area around 9 a.m. Friday morning. Weather and utility officials warned that falling trees also posed a major hazard after days of rain before the storm had already soaked the ground in many places.

Orange County officials reported two homes had trees on them from the storm, and the basement of a home in Carrboro was flooded. At least four roads in Chapel Hill - Umstead Drive, Raleigh Road, Cleland Drive and South Merritt Mill Road - were closed because of flooding or downed trees, a spokesman said.

All roads in Chapel Hill were reported open as of just after 5 p.m. on Friday.

The National Weather Service Forecast Office in Raleigh previously told The News & Observer that the storm could bring 1 to 3 inches of rain and sustained winds of 15 to 25 mph to the Triangle.

Schools in Wake, Durham and Orange counties were closed in anticipation of the weather, and Duke Energy

expected thousands to lose power in the storm's wake.

Tornadoes touch down in eastern and southeastern NC

While the western part of North Carolina was still dealing with major flooding and dangerous road conditions after the storm, Helene only brought heavy rainfall and strong winds to most of the state.

But at least two potential tornadoes were reported Friday afternoon in Rocky Mount, an hour east of Raleigh, and in Garland, which is about 80 miles south of Raleigh in Sampson County. The National Weather Service was sending teams to both towns to assess the damage.

The National Weather Service Forecast Office in Raleigh issued tornado warnings for most of the Triangle as the band of storms passed through the area at midday, including in Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill, Holly Springs and Fuquay-Varina.

"Tornadoes aren't uncommon with tropical storms or hurricanes," said Jonathan Blaes, meteorologist-in-charge for the National Weather Service in Raleigh. "This is one of the threats that comes with them."

The threat of tornadoes passed by late afternoon as the sun emerged from the clouds. Wind and flood advisories will remain in effect, Blaes said, noting that flooding could continue to cause issues for several days as rivers crest.

"It's been so wet of late that much of the rain that fell is just washing and draining into creeks and streams," Blaes said. "So that is a worry."

A federal emergency declaration will provide Federal Emergency Management Agency money to help pay for evacuations, emergency shelters and other emergency protective measures in the western part of the state, The News & Observer has reported.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Tammy Grubb and Mary Helen Moore, Staff Writer, 'A day of tornado warnings across the Triangle, with 2 twisters reported on the ground in NC', *News & Observer, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 20A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BE7F8ACFEBE998>



With Adam Thielen out, here's who the Carolina Panthers will turn to at receiver

September 29, 2024 | News & Observer, The (Raleigh, NC) Author: Alex Zietlow; Staff Writer | Section: Sports | 1155 Words Page: 6B OpenURL Link

Jonathan Mingo hasn't been on social media since his college days in an effort to find clarity under the brightest spotlight - to find tranquility despite all the football noise.

So when you tell him that the fantasy football world has taken notice of his potential for a breakout performance in Week 4, his response is what you'd expect:

"Nah," he said with a smile Thursday.

"I don't do that type of stuff," added Mingo, who is projected to score 10 fantasy points this week. "I just try to do my job every day."

The Panthers will need him to do his job at 1 p.m. Sunday when they host the Cincinnati Bengals in Bank of America Stadium - perhaps even more so than in previous weeks.

The second-year wide receiver might hear his name called Sunday a bit more than usual. A lot of that has to do with the hamstring injury suffered by Adam Thielen, the team's No. 2 wide receiver who will now miss at least the next four games on injured reserve.

But a lot of that, too, has to do with how Mingo played Sunday. In the Panthers' 36-22 win over the Raiders - one in which Andy Dalton put on a vintage, 300-plus yard, three-TD performance - Mingo lived up to his role. He notched 49 snaps (66% of all offensive plays), which is a season high. He also caught three of his four targets for 18 yards and took an end-around rush that looked promising before the Raiders defense made a nice play to hold it to 2 yards. (That's the second time in three games they've called an end-around rush for Mingo.)

His biggest play of the day came when he caught a pass in the flat behind the line of scrimmage and then took it for 15 yards with his team backed up deep in its own territory.

How that play came together even more so speaks to Mingo's expected elevated role in the offense.

"We had something else called (out of the huddle)," Mingo told The Charlotte Observer of that 15-yard catch. "Andy checked to a Cover 0 answer. So it was a good check by him, saw he was getting (blitzed). Had a good block on the outside and tried to take advantage of running the ball in space. It's something that I've been trying to prove to people that I can do."

So ... who will replace Adam Thielen in the offense?

It's true that replacing Thielen won't be easy. The 34-year-old is the second-leading receiver on the team and notched three catches for 40 yards and a touchdown in one half Sunday before going down with an injury that'll have him sidelined for a while.

Ask offensive coordinator Brad Idzik, though, and the plan to make up for Thielen's absence is pretty simple. It's designed that way.

"They both did a phenomenal job stepping in," Idzik said of Mingo and rookie Xavier Legette. "And again, it's just a testament to them owning the full game plan. The thing that we value in this offense is guys not just memorizing

one spot, whether it's a heavy tackle coming in and playing tight end for us in the run game or the pass game, or it's a receiver who's typically the Z having to come in and spell us at F or X."

Ideally the plan for the Panthers is to look for Diontae Johnson, who hauled in a career-high 122 yards Sunday, on every passing play. After that, there's Mingo and Legette; the duo will almost certainly round out most three-receiver sets. Legette, like Mingo, also saw some more attention in Thielen's absence. The first-round pick played 44 snaps - 49% - and caught two of three targets for 42 yards, which included a 35-yard catch that was mostly thanks to his speed after the catch.

And then behind them is Jalen Coker, a once-coveted undrafted free agent and practice squad promotion this week who flashed in the preseason enough to make the team's initial 53-man roster.

Coker said Thielen - one of the most successful undrafted free agents in league history himself - has been a great leader to all the rookies, and that has only helped prepare Coker for Sunday.

"He's always going to take you under his wing and try to guide you through this process, which is awesome," Coker told The Charlotte Observer on Wednesday. "Especially because we do have similar backgrounds. So it's really kind of an amazing opportunity for me and experience for me, where I get to learn from probably one of the best guys to ever do it."

Shaq Thompson wanted to play in the preseason

The question of whether the Panthers should have played their starters in the preseason was a storyline for a bulk of training camp. Head coach Dave Canales ultimately chose to not play most of his starters outside of one series in the final preseason game - an approach other teams across the NFL took.

After the Panthers' slow start, that decision lingered under scrutiny. And on Thursday, veteran linebacker Shaq Thompson shared that he wished his defense had played in the preseason.

"That's just my opinion, I'm not the head coach or the GM who calls that shot. But I like playing in the preseason," Thompson said. "Getting all the jitters and all that stuff out. ... But you know what? It is what it is. We got a win last week, and we're 0-0 this week, and we're trying to get a win this week."

He added: "Helps with everything. Communication, tackling, going out with your guys, playing football. It helps with everything."

Quick hits

- * With rain from Hurricane Helene whisking into Charlotte and with the Panthers currently without an indoor facility in their practice space the team practiced in soggy conditions Thursday. That is still optimal, according to Thompson, who said he prefers to play on grass over turf no matter the weather conditions. (Thompson has shared this view before.)
- * There's really only one big change on Thursday's injury report. And that involves arguably the Panthers' most explosive player. Diontae Johnson didn't practice Thursday because of a groin injury; he told reporters that the decision was primarily because of the field conditions and that he'll be good to play Sunday. Those who showed up as "Did Not Participate" on Thursday's injury report: Lonnie Johnson (hip), Damien Lewis (elbow), Shy Tuttle (foot), Taylor Moton (rest) and Johnson (groin). Those who showed up as limited: A'Shawn Robinson (knee) and Nick Scott (quadriceps).
- * Something fun for Panthers fans to look forward to: At halftime of Sunday's game against the Bengals, Julius Peppers will receive his Pro Football Hall of Fame Ring of Excellence, according to a release from the Hall. The legendary defensive end was inducted into the Hall this summer.

Mike Kaye contributed to this report.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Alex Zietlow, Staff Writer, 'With Adam Thielen out, here's who the Carolina Panthers will turn to at receiver', *News & Observer, The* (online), 29 Sep 2024 6B https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19BE7F8ADC045918>



Helene's devastation changed everything about their wedding, except the important part

September 29, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Martha Quillin, News & Observer | Section: north carolina | 503 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene whittled down the guest list by more than half. Her father couldn't get there to give the bride away. And the caterer and photographer were shut out by downed trees and power lines and submerged highways.

But the love between Sereyna Bianchi and Gavin Walker was deeper than any floodwaters, so the pair stood before 45 of their most intrepid friends Saturday night to promise it would last forever.

The wedding at The 1927 Lake Lure Inn was both a demonstration of the kind of flexibility marriage requires and a desperately needed bit of joy in the face of a natural disaster.

"It never really occurred to me we would not do it," said Bianchi, a graphic designer and project manager in Raleigh.

lakelurechmineyrock_27.JPGThe North Carolina National Guard stops to congratulate the newlyweds, Sereyna and her husband Gavin Walker in Lake Lure, N.C. on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

The remnants of Helene caused historic devastation across Western North Carolina. It killed at least 30 people in Buncombe County alone, the sheriff there announced Sunday.

Lake Lure and its close neighbor Chimney Rock were hit by a powerful flood Friday as Helene's rains filled the Broad River to overflowing. In Chimney Rock, the river went crashing down Main Street, sweeping away the pavement and more than half of the buildings that lined it, along with houses, cars and infrastructure. Much of that came to rest at the top of Lake Lure or against or on top of the bridge over the Broad that connects the two communities.

The wedding couple's original wedding venue, Morse Park, was obliterated by the flood. No problem; Bianchi simply moved it to a grassy area beside the pool at the inn.

No caterer? No servers? No worries. Bianchi's family rallied. A cousin who's a chef toured the inn's pantry and coolers and, with the innkeepers' blessings, put together a perfect reception dinner of prime rib.

lakelurechmineyrock_28.JPGThe North Carolina National Guard stops to congratulate the newlyweds, Sereyna and her husband Gavin Walker in Lake Lure, N.C. on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

Bianchi, a devoted do-it-yourselfer, had brought with her a van full of decor to create a "Great Gatsby" theme, with Art Deco gilded mirrors and floating candles on the tables. The hotel, built just before the Great Depression, provided the perfect backdrop.

Sara Walling, Bianchi's aunt, said her niece was the opposite of the petulant bride who pouts when her best-laid plans go awry.

"She had been planning this for a year, down to the last detail," Walling said. "Then this storm comes along, and that's all out the window."

lakelurechmineyrock_13.JPGSereyna, left, and her husband Gavin Walker share a kiss after their wedding ceremony at The 1927 Lake Lure Inn and Spa in Lake Lure, N.C. on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

During the reception, the bridal party crossed the muddy parking lot of the inn to take photos with the lake behind

them. Just then, several trucks carrying uniformed troops from the N.C. National Guard rolled up, finished for the day, and stopped to wish the happy couple well.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Martha Quillin, News & Observer, 'Helene's devastation changed everything about their wedding, except the important part', News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (online), 29 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027C35DB0490>



"There's just nothing left.' Helene wipes out Chimney Rock's Main Street

September 29, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Martha Quillin, News & Observer | Section: north carolina | 967 Words OpenURL Link

For a while on Friday morning, it looked as if Chimney Rock and Lake Lure had been spared the worst of Hurricane Helene

And then worse than the worst happened, as a wall of water came rushing down the Broad River, wiping out most of the structures along Main Street - and Main Street itself - in the Village of Chimney Rock, and straining the dam that holds back Lake Lure.

chmineyrock_06.JPGTwo people and a dog are escorted to a rescue boat in Chimney Rock, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

"I've never seen concentrated damage like we've seen here," said Chris Murray, an emergency manager in Pamlico County who came to help lead teams of rescuers as soon as Rutherford County could send an S.O.S. "There's nothing left."

"The village? There's just nothing left."

'Not so bad' at first

lakelurechmineyrock_16.JPGThe bridge that connects Lake Lure and Chimney Rock in Lake Lure, N.C. on Saturday, September 29, 2024.

For a couple of days, the wreckage left the two communities as isolated as they were a century ago.

Townspeople and visitors awoke Friday morning after a restless night to more of what they had seen the day before: tree branches falling in heavy rain and wind as the remains of what became Tropical Storm Helene cut through Western North Carolina. Power had been out since Thursday.

Tracy Stevens had left her house in Chimney Rock Thursday night and gotten a room at the Lake Lure Inn, which had a generator and was staying open through the storm. The two towns, both popular tourist destinations, are walking distance to one another, joined by a bridge across the Broad River in the mountains of Rutherford County.

"I got up around 7 and went down to the lobby and got a cup of coffee," Stevens said. "I was looking at the lake out the window of the inn, and I thought, Is that all? OK. This is not so bad."

But when she checked again, it looked like the lake had risen. The next time she looked, she was sure the water was coming up. And by 8:30 a.m., it was several feet higher, nearly covering the door of a small building next to the lake.

helene 942.jpgin Lake Lure, N.C. on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

The National Weather Service reported that in some places just west of the two communities, more than 19 inches of rain fell. And it kept falling, down the mountainsides and into the creeks and rivers.

Broad River rises

No official source has said yet how deep the water rose in the Broad River, normally so tame that bars and

restaurants on that side of Main Street in Chimney Rock serve drinks and meals on patios overlooking the stream.

chmineyrock_03.JPGTwo people and a dog are escorted to a rescue boat in Chimney Rock, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

Some of those buildings had stood since at least the 1950s. A few had gotten wet during historic floods such as one that followed a pair of hurricanes in 1996, "but this is 10 times worse," said Patrick Bryant, a Lake Lure town commissioner who lives in Chimney Rock.

"This is Katrina-level damage," Murray said.

With the help of teams from many other North Carolina counties and some from outside the state, Murray said rescuers had fetched more than 150 people by sundown Saturday who had been stranded by the rushing water.

chmineyrock_01.JPGTwo people and a dog are escorted to a rescue boat in Chimney Rock, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

As the water plowed through, it carried the buildings and their contents with it, slamming all that material against the concrete bridge between Chimney Rock and Lake Lure with such force that it exploded refrigerators and trees.

It took a day of heavy equipment and chainsaw work to make one lane of the bridge passable to emergency vehicles and residents who wanted to leave Chimney Rock.

Meanwhile, water completely took out another bridge across the Broad River, this one to Chimney Rock State Park. The park was closed.

Wall of water

On Lake Lure, the water relocated the marina docks and all the boats that had been moored on them. Sunday, the boats seemed to sit on top of a spilled box of toothpicks, some of the remains of the structures swept in from Chimney Rock.

Search-and-rescue teams Sunday were reaching more remote places, and were still finding survivors, including one woman and her dog who appeared to have been pulled from a collapsed home on the riverbank.

Officials have not said whether there were deaths or if anyone still was missing by midday Sunday. Across Western North Carolina, at least 30 people were reported dead and that number was likely to climb, Gov. Roy Cooper said.

helene 2165.jpgin Lake Lure, N.C. on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

While rescuers looked for people, the N.C. National Guard and local chainsaw-wielding volunteers began cutting trees to allow people to leave their homes and neighborhoods. Power was expected to be out in Chimney Rock and Lake Lure for several days at least, but with trees cleared to open at least one lane, residents whose cars weren't too damaged to drive began making their way out.

Word spread quickly about spots outside of Lake Lure where there might be a cellphone signal, and people congregated in those, calling relieved relatives or reaching out to insurance adjusters with bad news.

Nick Stamper, who lives in Green River Cove, a few miles from Chimney Rock and Lake Lure, had to make some difficult phone calls Saturday night. His house was moved several feet off its foundation by what he estimated was a 20-foot wall of water that came down the Green River, normally more than 100 yards from his house.

He counted 13 other homes that disappeared in the flood.

"Washed completely away," he said. "Just, gone."

He was calling the owners to let them know.

helene_2165.jpgin Lake Lure, N.C. on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Martha Quillin, News & Observer, 'There's just nothing left.' Helene wipes out Chimney Rock's Main Street', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 29 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027C3ABCB670>



Photos: Search for victims of 'apocalyptic' flooding in NC continues with many still cut off from help

September 29, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Scott Sharpe, News & Observer | Section: weather news | 203 Words OpenURL Link

Across North Carolina, many residents are impacted by the devastation left by Tropical Storm Helene, a disaster that has left thousands without power, safe roads, cell phone service or potable water. At least 11 people are dead as of Sunday and shelters are opening across the state.

See photos from the aftermath below.

Helene_092924_TEL.JPGA search and rescue team out of Atlantic Beach, N.C. examines a van swept into the river in Swannanoa, N.C. by flooding from Helene. They were assisting in the community, Sunday, Sept. 29, 2024.

chmineyrock_06.JPGTwo people and a dog are escorted to a rescue boat in Chimney Rock, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

chmineyrock_02.JPGTwo people and a dog are escorted to a rescue boat in Chimney Rock, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

helene 2165.jpgin Lake Lure, N.C. on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

chmineyrock_03.JPGTwo people and a dog are escorted to a rescue boat in Chimney Rock, N.C. on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

Helene2_092924_TEL.JPGPeople examine some of the extensive damage caused by flooding from Helene along the Swannanoa River in Swannanoa, N.C., Sunday, Sept. 29, 2024.

helene 2165.jpgin Lake Lure, N.C. on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

helene 1001.jpgin Lake Lure, N.C. on Saturday, September 28, 2024.

'Apocalyptic' damage: Helene kills at least 11 in Western NC, severs power, water, roads

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Scott Sharpe, News & Observer, 'Photos: Search for victims of 'apocalyptic' flooding in NC continues with many still cut off from help', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 29 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C653E270A1E7C8>



Lake Lure Dam in Western NC stable after imminent failure warning; emergency repairs begin

September 29, 2024 | News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (Raleigh, NC) Author: Drew Jackson and Tammy Grubb, News & Observer | Section: north carolina | 305 Words OpenURL Link

The Lake Lure Dam, which was feared doomed to collapse on Friday, is stable and emergency repairs are set to begin.

At the peak of Helene's rains, a warning went out that the Lake Lure Dam was at imminent risk of failing, as water spilled over the top of its 124-foot tall structure. An evacuation order was issued for residents below, but the dam held. On Friday, an engineer assessed the dam and found the water level receding.

By Sunday, the water level was lowered an additional 3 and a half feet, so emergency repairs could be made, according to Josh Kastrinsky, spokesman for the NC Department of Environmental Quality.

"The structure remained intact following the storm," Kastrinsky said in an email. "Water caused erosion on both sides of the dam abutments but it was not undermined."

The town of Lake Lure announced on its Facebook page Sunday afternoon that the dam is stable. Previously, town officials discouraged any unnecessary travel to the area and said to stay off Lake Lure roads unless trying to leave town.

The Lake Lure Dam was assessed Saturday by Schnabel Engineering and a plan for emergency repairs was determined, the town said. Officials from FEMA are also expected to asses the dam.

0927-NWS-dampost

The dam, built in 1925 and 1926, is a tourist and recreational destination for the rural county. It also harnesses the Broad River and two creeks to power a hydroelectric plant producing electricity for Duke Energy from two hydroelectric turbine generators.

Dam workers typically lower the water in the lake by as much as 8 inches below the normal lake level before big storms, according to a document posted on the town's website. The town manager approves lowering the lake by more than that amount, it notes.

Most residents in Lake Lure remain without power, as of Sunday, according to town officials.

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Drew Jackson and Tammy Grubb, News & Observer, 'Lake Lure Dam in Western NC stable after imminent failure warning; emergency repairs begin', *News & Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 29 Sep 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C6027C3863A758>