

HELENE - KEY MESSAGES

Compiled by the [NC Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network](#)

Monday, 9/30

Good evening NC Inclusive Disaster Recovery Network and NC Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
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Here are the key messages I've gathered today, Monday, September 30. Standby for a Spanish version.

Please feel free to forward/copy, no credit needed. These emails are getting long, so I'm doing my best to curate. You can access past messages [here](#). We are also in the process of revamping our [Living Resource Guide](#).

WHAT'S GOING ON – By the numbers

1. "An Unprecedented Response: State, Local and Federal Partners Surge Resources into Western NC Following Historic Damage from Hurricane Helene." 400 National Guard Personnel ... 1 million liters of water and 600,000 meals ... 29 shelters ... 34 storm-related deaths ... 450,000 customers remain without power ... 400 roads remain closed (Source: [Office of the Governor](#))
2. American Red Cross Midnight Shelter Count: North Carolina: 28 shelters, population of 1,134, or 211 more than yesterday.
3. Crisis Cleanup is receiving "an unprecedented number of calls" across the multi-state impact area. "We received 9,000 calls yesterday and expect ~15,000 calls today. We have over 4,250 calls backlogged in our phone queues."
4. Baptists on Mission, among others, have opened mass feeding sites in 7 counties serving many thousands of meals each day.

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD I BE SHARING?

1. FEMA has begun taking applications for the Individual Assistance Program, which includes money for emergency housing at hotels, immediate recovery needs and more. Call 800-621-3362 or visit [DisasterAssistance.gov](#) for more information or to get started on an application. SEE ATTACHED FOR TIPS IN A PRE-WRITTEN FACEBOOK POST.
2. Department of Homeland Security: "ICE and CBP do not conduct immigration enforcement activities at protected areas such as along evacuation routes, sites used for sheltering or the distribution of emergency supplies, food or water, or registration sites for disaster-related assistance or the reunification of families and loved ones. At the request of FEMA or local and state authorities, ICE and CBP may help conduct search and rescue, air traffic de-confliction and public safety missions. ICE and CBP provide emergency assistance to individuals regardless of their immigration status."

- a. National Low Income Housing Coalition: Even when they stay in-bounds on their policies, the very fact of ICE being there is a chilling effect and contrary to the spirit of the protected areas policy.
 - b. Please take photos of any issues or violations of this policy and send to npatton@nlihc.org to be escalated to federal advocates.
 - c. Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH) for Vibrant Emotional Health: Christian Burgess, Director, cburgess@vibrant.org / cell 917-842-2847 (email easiest) For more info about the DDH 1-800-985-5990 (press "2" for Spanish) 24/7 crisis and emotional support for survivors & responders of natural and human-caused disasters go to samhsa.gov/DDH. For any additional coordination / resources needs in disaster emotional care, please email DDH@vibrant.org.
3. T-Mobile and Verizon are setting up new cell towers with "disaster roaming" so that phones can connect to any available network. Tip: If your cell coverage drops, try restarting your phone to force it to search for a new network. Also, you may be able to access OnStar in "crisis mode" if you have a Chevrolet, Buick, GMC, or Cadillac vehicle.
4. Noticias en Espanol
- a. [Enlace Latino](#)
 - b. [Blue Ridge Public Radio](#),
 - c. [ReadyNC.gov](#) ("Select Language"),
 - d. [FEMA](#)
5. Blue Ridge Public Radio: [Live Updates](#)

HOW CAN I GET HELP FOR SURIVORS?

1. Call 9-1-1 for rescue or other life-threatening situations. Call 2-1-1 for shelter and supplies. *(Editors Note: Both should have interpreter services, but if they do not, please let me know so I can escalate this issue. -Andy)*
2. Call American Red Cross at 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) if you need assistance, including shelters.
3. Call Crisis Cleanup at 844-965-1386 to be connected with volunteer organizations who can assist with issues like trees, debris, tarps, and mucking out. Note: Crisis Cleanup cannot assist with social services such as food, clothing, shelter, insurance, or FEMA registration. Artwork to advertise the hotline is available at <https://www.crisiscleanup.org/disasters>.
4. The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies - Disability & Disaster Hotline: Call/Text: +1 (800) 626-4959, Email: hotline@disasterstrategies.org.
5. Locating loved ones:
 - a. Call 2-1-1 for their reunification service.
 - b. Red Cross has this form: <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/contact-and-locate-loved-ones/hurricane-helene-reunification.html>
 - c. In Buncombe County: Call 828-820-2761 (Buncombe County Register of Deeds). More information at BuncombeReady.gov.

6. Farmers: Contact your local Cooperative Extension to get connected to resources, which will be run by Soil & Water Conservation or USDA Service Centers (Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service).

HOW CAN I VOLUNTEER?

1. Do NOT self-deploy! Do not travel to impacted areas without coordinating with local and state officials. Over 400 roads are blocked or broken. You will likely run out of gas, and gas stations are empty in western NC. Learn about blocked roads at [DriveNC.gov](#).
2. Sign up as a volunteer. "VolunteerNC is looking for volunteers to help serve our state with disaster services." <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DBF2JM9>
3. Sign up to answer calls to Crisis Cleanup hotline. "English and Spanish volunteers *ARE DESPERATELY* needed for our hotline. Info is located here: <https://tinyurl.com/ms3nmw53>. You must be affiliated with an organization to volunteer. If you don't have an organization contact Laura.Block@teamrubiconusa.org
4. For organizations with large numbers of volunteers or supplies, such as feeding 1,000+ people daily, contact NC Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster at sert@ncvoad.org or make an offer on <https://volunteernc.app.needslist.co/>.
5. Other volunteer sites will be posted to this website <https://www.ncvoad.org/volunteer/> as they become available.

HOW CAN I JOIN COORINDATION CALLS?

1. Join volunteer and donations response coordination calls daily at 12:30 PM (time may change) hosted by NC Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. [Simultaneous Spanish-English interpretation is available](#). On Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/96954774349?pwd=b4HofOoZZ8NekO7dVsLRb8kp4Ye4pz.1>, or call 646-931-3860, Meeting ID: 96954774349, Password: 744752.
2. NCVOAD is establishing committees for action-oriented calls. Sign up at <https://www.ncvoad.org/join-a-committee/>.

HOW CAN I DONATE?

1. Do NOT collect donations of clothes or furniture. There's nowhere to process or manage those donations and sending them now could interrupt critical response efforts. Learn more from [FEMA](#) and [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster](#).
2. Cash donations are best. Look for local mutual aid, voluntary organizations, or philanthropies who are setting up disaster relief funds both for immediate needs and for medium/long-term recovery.
 - a. Blue Ridge Public Radio has [this list](#).
 - b. The state has activated the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund: Click the red banner at the top of the page at NC.gov or <https://pay.payitgov.com/ncdonations>.
 - c. NC Community Foundation: "In the wake of the devastation left by Hurricane Helene, we are encouraging donations to groups working to address immediate health,

humanitarian and safety in western NC. However, we know the recovery needs will remain great in the months and years to come. The North Carolina Community Foundation is also accepting donations for its [Disaster Relief Fund](#). The fund will provide grants to charitable organizations on the ground in affected communities to support long-term recovery. We will be creating a page on our website of local and regional relief funds, so please send information about your efforts to Amy Dominello Braun, our Chief Marketing & Communications Officer, at abraun@nccommunityfoundation.org.

3. If you do want to collect supplies: Make cleanup kits ("flood buckets"), with these items:
<https://umcmmission.org/umcor-cleaning-kit/>.
 - a. Contact Hispanic Federation to support Latino-led and Latino-serving organizations. Lariza Garzon, Director for North Carolina and Mid-South, lgarzon@hispanicfederation.org
 - b. Contact NC Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster at sert@ncvoad.org.
 - c. Make an offer on <https://volunteernc.app.needslist.co/>.
4. Farmers
 - a. Crops for mass feeding should contact sert@ncvoad.org.
 - b. "Disaster hay" and other needs/offers can be coordinated through <https://www.ncagr.gov/emergency-programs/disaster-information> or call 1-866-645-9403.
5. Coordinate movement of supplies with the state Business Emergency Operations Center to ensure you have access. You can email your supply logistics or movement requests to BEOC@ncdps.gov, Begin Subject Line with *Logistics Support*. Please include the following info: What are you moving? Why you need special access. When do you plan to move and from where? Where are you going? When will they arrive at the "border to Western NC" and where?

Top Issues and Needs

1. Cash: Credit card systems and ATMs are down. Vendors, including landlords, are demanding payment in cash.
2. Cell phone coverage: Wireless providers are standing up new towers and enabling "disaster roaming" so phones in western NC can connect to any available network. Restart your phone if you lose service.
3. Commercial kitchens: Contact ncvoad@sert.org if you have access to commercial kitchens in western NC.
4. Housing
 - a. Evictions: Contact Legal Aid at 866-219-5262.
 - b. Mucking and tarping: Contact Crisis Cleanup at 8449651386.
5. Fuel: Gas is in low supply across the region.
6. Fears of immigration enforcement actions at disaster relief sites:
<https://www.dhs.gov/news/2024/09/25/dhs-statement-safety-and-enforcement-during-hurricane-helene>
7. Volunteers

- a. Crisis Cleanup hotline operators: Sign up with your organization at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pOon5kUvhV34nbuueOSc-AnQ-yAktxm2/>
- b. Medical Staff: Contact Carlotta.dixon@dhhs.nc.gov
- c. Points of Distribution (PODs): Fill out this form <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DBF2JM9>
- d. Shelters: Fill out this form <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DBF2JM9>

As you hear of resources, patterns of service gaps, or other questions, please feel free to send them my way. I'll do my best to get you connected through our Network.

If this message was forwarded to you and you want to receive it directly, fill out this short form:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NCIDR-Membership>.

Sunday, 9/29

1. WHAT'S GOING ON?

- a. **"President Biden has granted Governor Roy Cooper's request for a [Federal Major Disaster Declaration](#) for Tropical Storm Helene** providing immediate federal help for 25 North Carolina counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The declaration means that FEMA will be able to speed additional help to the state, and provide Individual Assistance to people living in those counties, as well as Public Assistance to reimburse local governments, state agencies, and non-profits or other eligible organizations for funds spent repairing facilities and infrastructure." (Source: Office of the Governor). **FEMA has begun taking applications for the Individual Assistance Program, which includes money for emergency housing at hotels, immediate recovery needs and more. Call 800-621-3362 or visit [DisasterAssistance.gov](#) for more information or to get started on an application.**
- b. **"Do not travel in or to Western North Carolina.** I-40 is impassable in multiple locations. I-26 is closed at the Tennessee state line. There are many closed roads that are not listed on this site as many areas are not able to report at this time. All roads in Western North Carolina should be considered closed and non-emergency travel is prohibited." (Source: [NCDOT](#)) Gas stations are also empty.
- c. **Cell service is still spotty** across western North Carolina, but new towers are being stood up regularly and "disaster roaming" has been enabled so that phone can connect to any available network. **Tip: If your cell coverage drops, try restarting your phone to force it to search for a new network. Also, you may be able to access OnStar in "crisis mode" if you have a Chevrolet, Buick, GMC, or Cadillac vehicle.**
- d. American Red Cross Midnight Shelter Count: 24 shelters, population of 922. Find shelters at <https://www.readync.gov/stay-informed/open-shelters>.
- e. **Noticias en Espanol:** <https://enlacinonc.org/>, <https://www.bpr.org/bpr-news/2024-09-28/esto-es-lo-que-necesita-saber-ultimas-actua>

[lizaciones-sobre-el-clima-del-huracan-helene-en-wnc](#), <https://www.readync.gov/> ("Select Language"), <https://www.fema.gov/es/disaster/3617>

- f. **Blue Ridge Public Radio:** [Live Updates](#)

2. HOW CAN I GET HELP FOR SURIVORS?

- a. **Call 9-1-1** for rescue or other life-threatening situations. **Call 2-1-1** for shelter and supplies. *(Editors Note: Both should have interpreter services, but if they do not, please let me know so I can escalate this issue. -Andy)*
- b. **Call American Red Cross at 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767)** if you need assistance, including shelters.
- c. **Call Crisis Cleanup at 844-965-1386** to be connected with volunteer organizations who can assist with issues like trees, debris, tarps, and mucking out. Note: Crisis Cleanup cannot assist with social services such as food, clothing, shelter, insurance, or FEMA registration. **Artwork to advertise the hotline** is available at <https://www.crisiscleanup.org/disasters>.
- d. **Disability & Disaster Hotline:** Call/Text: +1 (800) 626-4959, Email: hotline@disasterstrategies.org. The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies' Hotline "provides information, referrals, guidance, technical assistance and resources to people with disabilities, families, allies, and organizations assisting disaster impacted individuals with disabilities and others seeking assistance with immediate and urgent disaster-related needs."
- e. **Locating loved ones:**
 - i. Call 2-1-1 for their reunification service.
 - ii. Call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) to locate people in their shelters.
 - iii. In Buncombe County: Call 828-820-2761 (Buncombe County Register of Deeds).
More information at BuncombeReady.gov.
- f. **FEMA has begun taking applications for the Individual Assistance Program**, which includes money for emergency housing at hotels, immediate recovery needs and more. Call 800-621-3362 or visit DisasterAssistance.gov for more information or to get started on an application.
- g. **Veteran Disaster Assistance:** See attached, forwarded to me by AARP.
- h. Mental Health: <https://www.naswnc.org/general/custom.asp?page=DisasterResources>

3. HOW CAN I VOLUNTEER?

- a. **Do NOT self-deploy!** Do not travel to impacted areas without coordinating with local and state officials. Half of all roads are blocked or broken. You will likely run out of gas, and gas stations are empty in western NC.
- b. **Sign up as a shelter volunteer.** "VolunteerNC is looking for volunteers to help serve our state with disaster services." <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DBF2JM9>
- c. **Sign up to answer calls to Crisis Cleanup hotline.** "English and Spanish volunteers *ARE DESPERATELY* needed for our hotline. Info is located here: <https://tinyurl.com/ms3nmw53>."

- d. **For organizations with large numbers of volunteers or supplies, such as feeding 1,000+ people daily, contact NC Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster at sert@ncvoad.org or make an offer on <https://volunteernc.app.needslist.co/>.**
- e. Other volunteer sites will be posted to this website <https://www.ncvoad.org/volunteer/> as they become available. Example: <https://www.emerge4unity.org/>.
- f. Join **volunteer and donations response coordination calls** daily at 12:30 PM (time may change) hosted by **NC Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster**. [Simultaneous Spanish-English interpretation is available](#). On Zoom at <https://zoom.us/j/96954774349?pwd=b4HofOoZZ8NekO7dVsLRb8kp4Ye4pz.1>, or call 646-931-3860, Meeting ID: 96954774349, Password: 744752.

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