



VEST SITUATIONAL REPORT

HURRICANE HELENE

October 2, 2024 @ 12:00 pm

Updates highlighted in yellow

Federal Update

- A [Major Disaster Declaration](#) was approved by President Biden on October 1, 2024.
 - The President's action makes Federal funding available to affected individuals in the counties of Giles, Grayson, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, and Wythe and the independent city of Galax.
 - Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster.
 - Federal funding also is available to State and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work in the counties of Bedford, Bland, Buchanan, Carroll, Craig, Dickenson, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pittsylvania, Pulaski, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe and the independent cities of Bristol, Covington, Danville, Galax, Norton, and Radford.
 - Finally, Federal funding is also available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures for the entire commonwealth.
 - Mr. Timothy S. Pheil of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has been appointed to coordinate Federal recovery operations in the affected areas.
 - Damage assessments are continuing in other areas, and more areas and additional forms of assistance may be designated after the assessments are fully completed.
 - Residents and business owners who sustained losses in the designated areas can begin applying for assistance at www.DisasterAssistance.gov, or by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362), or by using the [FEMA App](#). Anyone using a relay service, such as video relay service (VRS), captioned telephone service or others, can give FEMA the number for that service.
- The Commonwealth of Virginia's Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) is performing joint Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) with FEMA following the impacts of Hurricane Helene.
- Virginia will request additional localities be added on to the declaration as they are validated.
- The PDAs for Individual Assistance began on Tuesday Oct. 1, for the following Virginia jurisdictions:
 - Bedford, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pittsylvania, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington and Wythe and the City of Galax
- PDAs for Public Assistance began on Tuesday Oct. 1, for the following Virginia jurisdictions:
 - Bedford County, Bland County, City of Bristol, Buchanan County, Carroll County, City of Christiansburg, City of Covington, Craig County, City of Danville, Dickenson County, City of Galax, Giles County, Grayson County, Lee County, Montgomery County, City of Norton, Pittsylvania County, Pulaski County, City of Radford, Russell County, Scott County, Smyth County, Tazewell County, Washington County, Wise County and Wythe County.



State Actions

- The Virginia Emergency Support Team stood up 4 Task Forces to tackle some of the largest complex issues as they work alongside the localities across the Commonwealth
 - Energy Restoration Task Force
 - Feeding Task Force
 - Volunteer & Donations Management Task Force
 - Debris Management Task Force
- Hardest hit areas (power outage numbers effective as of 0900):
 - Russell County – 4,426
 - Tazewell County – 3,231
 - Carroll County – 2,272
 - Grayson County – 4,383
- Meals and water were sent to support SW VA.
- VDEM PIO requested that FEMA provide additional federal guidance to farmers and growers on additional potential routes for aid.
- There is a spike in spontaneous volunteers (100+ people) in Damascus and that number is expected to increase. Working to see if they can be tasked with assignments working through United Way.
- VA is being supported by 2 EMAC requests (voluntary agency liaison and EOC support staff) and are currently supporting NC with 4 EMAC requests (SAR and swift water).
- Published link for self-reporting damages: o <https://crisistrack.juware.com/public/VDEM/request.html>
- Commonwealth of Virginia Incident Management Team (COVIMT) has deployed a Type 1 Team to enhance the coordination efforts.
 - 42 personnel have deployed to the VDEM Region 4 coordination center as well as into the local impacted jurisdictions.
 - Virginia Employment Commission providing unemployment assistance to people who lost their job or business due to Hurricane Helene
 - VDEM has deployed our communications cache assets to support internet and cellular coverage in impacted areas.

Virginia Department of Emergency Management

- Currently monitoring the Western Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.
 - No tropical threats to the Commonwealth in the next 7 days
- PIO support to SW Virginia is on the ground, coming from Arlington County
 - PIO is liaising with state JIC to coordinate messaging needs and dissemination of information
- We are asking that volunteers please volunteer through organizations that they trust. You can find several reputable organizations at www.virginiavoad.org. Volunteering with trusted organizations ensures their safety and helps public safety officials focus on meeting affected communities' needs. Let's ensure our efforts are safe and coordinated. Spontaneous volunteers and donations can hinder emergency activities and create complications for those involved in managing the effort.
- With the assistance of the United Way of Southwest Virginia a volunteer, donation, and resource needs center has been set up. The hours of operation are Monday-Friday, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
 - For residents that are in need of assistance, you can come to the donation center to speak with a case manager.
 - If you would like to volunteer to help in the cleanup, please sign up at:
 - 744 N. Beaver Dam Ave., Damascus, VA 24236 (across from Food City)



- Physical donations (**General cleaning supplies are needed**) can be taken to:
 - 744 N. Beaver Dam Ave., Damascus, VA 24236 (across from Food City)
- **Individuals can also text DONATE to 247-211 to get an updated list on current needs at the donation center**
- VDEM PIO requested that FEMA provide additional federal guidance to farmers and growers on additional potential routes for aid.
- There is a spike in spontaneous volunteers (100+ people) in Damascus and that number is expected to increase. Working to see if they can be tasked with assignments working through United Way.
- VA is being supported by 2 EMAC requests (voluntary agency liaison and EOC support staff) and are currently supporting NC with 4 EMAC requests (SAR and swift water).
- Published link for self-reporting damages: o <https://crisistrack.juvare.com/public/VDEM/request.html>
- Limited local shelters open, so American Red Cross will be opening additional shelters – trying to find places and people to staff.
- DSS published a Boil Water Notice yesterday, however ODW was not made aware and DSS will be correcting that it is incorrect info.
- Website built to provide ongoing Helene information: visit vaemergency.gov homepage or go directly to <https://www.vaemergency.gov/recover/hurricane-helene>

Virginia Department of Transportation

- **As waters recede and VDOT evaluates damages, additional roads may be closed or restricted.**
- Prior to travel, the public should check road conditions by calling 511, visiting www.511Virginia.org or checking the 511 Virginia mobile app.
- Travelers should use extreme caution on the roadways:
 - Obey all “road closed” signage.
 - If traffic signals are out, drivers should treat intersections as four-way stops or follow local law enforcement’s direction.
 - “Turn around, don’t drown.” Do not attempt to travel through flooded roadways.
 - Be alert to debris, downed trees and power lines.
 - Move over for emergency crews operating in or near roadways.
- VDOT’s Traffic Operations Center (TOC) and Safety Service Patrol (SSP) are fully staffed.
- VDOT crews cannot conduct work on downed trees that are entangled in power lines until the local power company has ensured the power line is not energized. Drivers should report trees entangled in power lines to their local power company.

Virginia State Police

- **This (Thursday) morning, VSP is sending 4 drone teams to the Damascus area to help VDOT with damage assessments on some roads that are impassable.**
- **On Wednesday, VSP sent two UTV’s and 4 troopers to Grayson County this morning to help check homes in some impassable areas.**
- **VSP is providing additional specific law enforcement support to Washington County and Grayson County.**
- **VSP continues to have increased staffing across the southwest part of the Commonwealth.**
- **Aviation and Swift Water Rescue resources remain on standby.**
- **To date, VSP Swift Water Rescue Teams had rescued 16 people, 2 dogs and 7 cats. The Aviation Division rescued 40 people from the roof of the Unicoi Hospital in Erwin, TN on Friday.**
- **VSP continues to encourage people to use caution as they travel, as there are road closures in some areas.**



Virginia National Guard

- The Virginia National Guard has approximately 40 Soldiers with tactical trucks capable of high mobility transportation staged in Abingdon Oct. 3, 2024, in order to support the response to impacts of Hurricane Helene. The personnel are trained and ready to conduct movement, debris reduction and supply transport missions.
- On Oct. 3, Soldiers are prepared to accept new missions for debris deduction, commodity movement and other tasks as assigned by VDEM
- On Oct. 2, Soldiers delivered two 5-ton tactical truckloads of food and water to two separate point of distribution sites in the Damascus area.
- From Sept. 27 to Oct. 1, the Soldiers cleared about 98 trees in Scott County, Russell County and Washington County.
- Soldiers assisted the Virginia State Police with a high-water evacuation of two citizens and their two dogs from their home near Damascus Sept. 27 and also assisted first responders with evacuation of 11 citizens over a washed-out bridge near Damascus Sept. 28.
- Soldiers assisted with distribution of food and water in Independence for approximately three hours Sept. 29, and they also delivered supplies to citizens with restricted access to resources in Fries.
- Two Virginia National Guard Black Hawk helicopter crews and Chesterfield County Fire and Emergency Medical Services Scuba Rescue Team members conducted hoist operations rescuing six citizens Sept. 27 and 28, 2024, in the Abingdon area.
- The VNG aviators and Chesterfield first responders form the Virginia Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team, providing rotary wing aviation hoist capabilities and aerial rescue evacuation.
- They also conducted route and area search and rescue flights and transported a ground rescue team.
- A third VNG Black Hawk capable of conducting commodity movement, transportation or damage assessments was on standby Sept. 28 and Sept. 29 in Roanoke.
- VNG aviation capabilities stood down Sept. 30 but are available for recall if needed.
- During domestic operations, the VNG receives missions from VDEM and responds as part of a multi-agency team with other state and local agencies to provide support capabilities requests by Virginia communities. VDEM determines where capabilities are allocated, and the VNG does not respond to direct requests for assistance.
- Localities looking for VNG support should make their requests to VDEM, and they determine which organization can best provide the requested assistance as they coordinate the regional response.

Department of Forestry

- DOF chainsaw crews are completing local and state missions in Lee and Washington Counties.
- DOF is coordinating with the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service to complete a forest damage assessment for the impacted areas.
- DOF chainsaw crews have opened 2,592 miles of roadways.

Department of Forestry

- Wednesday (10/2) 0900 Report
 - DOF has three chainsaw crews working local and state requests in Scott and Washington Counties.
 - DOF's out of region forest wardens will be released to return to their homework areas this morning. Any remaining assignments will be handled by local wardens.
 - DOF chainsaw crews have opened 2,582 miles of roadways.



Virginia Department of Fire Programs

- VDFP is supporting an Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) mission with one staff member deployed to North Carolina with VDEM personnel.
- State Fire Marshal's Office personnel from the western region are assisting with damage assessments in Southwest Virginia.

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

- All court service unit offices are open on Oct. 2, 2024.
- The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice deployed media staff and drone equipment to assist with VDEM coverage and reporting. Various court service units in the agency's Western and Mid-West regions – including the 21st, 22nd, 25th, 27th, 28th, 29th, and 30th districts – closed temporarily during and immediately after the storm's arrival, with impacted staff reassigned or working remotely. On-call staff supported intakes as needed.

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

- **DBHDS responsibility: Support ESF6** (Mass Care – DSS lead) with state-level sheltering needs. There are a few local shelters open with any support needs being met by the Red Cross. There are no open requests for state-level sheltering support. DSS is also leading the Feeding Task Force which is operational and will continue to be for the foreseeable future.
- **DBHDS responsibility: Support ESF8** (Health and Medical – VDH lead) with health and medical needs. There are no open requests for state-level health and medical support at this time. If we have a role to play in this, it will be as the response ends and the communities shift to recovery.
- We've been in touch with all CSB leaders in the impacted region. Highlands CSB and Mount Rogers CSB appear to be the hardest hit. I have good detail of the assessments and impacts at Mount Rogers that I can share if you'd like. I have less detail from Rebecca but have had several exchanges of info with her. There is a resource center in operations as of today and Highlands is prepared to staff that for at least the first week.
- **The top-line for Region 3 CSBs is this:** All 24/7 services and residential services are operational and doing OK – clients are safe and being well-cared for. We're starting to see the CSB spirit come through – ES workers staying in hotels with power/phone access so they can be deployable.
- FEMA will be in [VDEM Region 4](#) today completing assessments. Here is a breakdown of the anticipated Disaster Declaration (likely to come by the end of the week) localities as it relates to our CSB coverage area.
- The circumstances of the storm have created challenges for **ten of those 40 CSBs** (25% of Virginia's system of community behavioral healthcare) to function at full operational capacity.
 - 4 of these CSBs are anticipated to receive disaster declaration in **100%** of their service area (Mt. Rogers, Highlands, Cumberland Mountain & Dickenson)
 - 1 (10%) out of the 10 affected CSBs is anticipated to receive disaster declarations in **80%** of their service area (NRVCS)
 - 1 (10%) out of the 10 affected CSBs is anticipated to receive a disaster declaration in **75%** of their services area (Planning District 1)
 - 1 of the affected CSBs (10%) is anticipated to receive a disaster declaration in **50%** of their service area (Danville-Pittsylvania)
 - 2 (20%) affected CSBs are anticipated to receive a disaster declaration in **25%** of their service area (Blue Ridge Behavioral Health & Alleghany Highlands)

1 CSB (10%) is anticipated to receive disaster declaration in **20%** of their service area (Horizon Behavioral Health).



Power Outage Data

- <https://poweroutage.us/area/state/virginia>

Power Outage Data

- <https://poweroutage.us/area/state/virginia>

Local Emergency Manager Directory

- [Local Emergency Managers Directory \(virginia.gov\)](#)