

## Yancey County Situational Update October 05, 2024

Emergency services- We continue to appreciate the tremendous response from our local first responders and from our partners at the State and Federal level. Partner agencies on the ground in Yancey County include the Sheriff's Offices from Stanly, Catawba, Chatham, Alamance, New Hanover, and the North Carolina State Highway Patrol, as well as the North Carolina National Guard.

Our E911 dispatch center continues to have difficulties receiving 911 calls directly, calls are being routed through neighboring dispatch centers and relayed back to us. We still maintain full dispatch capabilities and radio communications with our crews working in the field.

The Yancey County EMS Director continues to operate with 13 total units augmented by their ambulance strike team request. This staffing increase is a great help for any increased call volume as well as extended response/ transport times.

The Blue Ridge Regional Hospital is up and running on their own power. Unfortunately, due to county wide infrastructure damage there is no running water. The hospital is receiving water via tanker trucks with potable water. Due to this criticality it was determined by HCA Administration the hospital can only function as a stand-alone emergency room and no longer admit patients. If a patient needs to be admitted they will be transferred out to an appropriate facility.

Patients currently in the hospital will be scheduled for discharge or transferred to an appropriate facility.

There is a Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT) field hospital operating in their parking lot to supplement any extra patients that arrive in order to not overwhelm the hospital.

There is a Field Hospital at the Burnsville Fire Department. There are Physicians, NP, Nurses and Paramedics that can treat patients or, if needed, an EMS strike team of additional ambulances and Paramedics that can transport patients to hospitals. If you come to the field hospital, the providers can see you and if needed write prescriptions for needed medications.

Cell phone towers- Still a work in progress, some of the tower sites are still in working order but access to maintain them and get them back up and running is difficult due to post storm conditions. Crews are actively clearing and improving roadways to these sites to allow access for essential crews.

T-Mobile has brought in multiple Cell on Wheels (COW) towers and placed them around the county to assist with their network.

Verizon has multiple Cell on Wheels (COW) towers around the county as well as their Mobile Communications Command Center known as "Big Red" on the way to assist restoration of their network.

Pod sites- We have one centralized Point of Distribution (POD) distributing water, MRE's, and ice located at Altec, 150 Altec Dr. Burnsville, NC 28714.

Shelter sites- We currently have two shelter sites open that are being managed and staffed by the American Red Cross. Those sites are located at Blue Ridge Elementary and Cane River Middle School.

Electric service- Electric service is beginning to come on in areas that are able to safely receive electricity.

We remain thankful for our linemen and the tree crews for their tremendous effort while working under some of the most difficult conditions imaginable. Please keep in mind your generators as crews begin to restore power. Ensure stand by generators are never connected directly to your house as you could end up back feeding into the grid around you and cause injuries to those working on the lines. Generators should be connected to your home through a transfer switch to prevent injuries or fire. Due to areas being re-energized, often without notice, we urge you to treat all downed power lines as a live wire. Home appliances should also be turned off and unplugged in the chance your home has power returned until you can ensure the appliance is safe to receive electricity.

Water Treatment- Pumps and pipes are being sourced to arrive for contractors to be ready when they begin the work of getting water to the water treatment plant. Preliminary sites have been identified to set new pumps and lay new lines and the feasibility of getting power to those areas is being assessed.

Public Works crews, with help from local contractors, have already begun making repairs to known breaks in the distribution system. As the plant is brought back on line, the system will have to be brought back online slowly and in phases as breaks are identified and repaired. Once reestablished, the water must be boiled until the system can be flushed and sanitized.

The water will still be usable for showering and flushing toilets though. Personnel have been brought in to assist in our restoration process as well as relieve our very exhausted crews that have tirelessly working to regain water service.

We recommend turning off your water heater at the breaker until water is restored to prevent the heater from running dry and causing damage to the heater.

Port-a-Johns and shower trailers have been requested and are expected to be deployed around Town as soon as they arrive.

Waste water treatment- The plant is completely offline until major repairs can be completed. Engineers have been brought in to evaluate these issues and expedite repairs.

Volunteer donations- All donation drop-offs are being directed to Mountain Heritage High School at 333 Mountain Heritage HS Road Burnsville, NC 28714 between the times of 10a-6p as space allows.

Currently we are at max capacity for clothing, we are unable to accept any more clothing at our drop off site and encourage you to forward those items to your local goodwill.

Comfort stations- Mobile laundry facilities are available in the GO Grocery parking lot. Updates regarding the setup of shower and bathroom facilities will be provided as those details become available

Volunteers- Anyone wishing to volunteer in supply and donation receiving and distribution sites, helping with emergency shelters, serving food, etc. should report to the Burnsville Town Center located at 6 South Main Street at 9:15am or 1:00pm daily. There is especially a need for the afternoon shift. Volunteers are also welcome to stop by throughout the day for volunteer assignments. Partners Aligned Toward Health is organizing individual volunteers only, NOT those with heavy machinery.

Businesses or individuals offering heavy equipment or operators should complete the Heavy Equipment Volunteer form- found on the Yancey County Government and Yancey County Emergency Management Facebook pages; featured at the top of the Partners Aligned Toward Health Facebook page or found at: [bit.ly/yanceymachinevolunteers](https://bit.ly/yanceymachinevolunteers)

Urban Search and Rescue- We have multiple USAR teams, including teams from North Carolina, Texas, New York, Kansas, and California that continue to operate throughout the county with their searches of homes and debris piles.

Missing persons- If you have any family members that you are looking for we encourage you to download the Yancey County Sheriff's Office app. Once on the app there is a "Helene Response" tab in the middle, once selected you have the option to fill out a missing person's report with full description or a welfare check and logged into the Sheriff's office database.