



# North Carolina Disaster



# Recovery

People Helping People

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FEMA photo by David Saville

An Environmental Protection Agency crew cleans up hazardous material spills.

## Disaster officials respond Floods leave health hazards

This issue of *North Carolina Disaster Recovery* focuses on health problems caused by the storm — contaminated wells, debris, damaged septic tanks and personal health hazards.

Environmental dangers are everywhere. Front yards are piled with debris and furniture and carpeting dragged from homes. Windows are tarred with the greasy slurry of departed floodwaters. Neighborhoods reek with the smell of decaying animals, moldy clothing and carpet soaked with sewage.

These are grave concerns in the recovery effort.

Glenn C. Woodard, federal coordinating officer, has pledged that the federal government is standing ready

to assist the state of North Carolina in long-haul recovery efforts.

The Federal Centers for Disease Control, Health and Human Services and Environmental Protection Agency “are supporting their state counterparts with what they need, at their request,” he said.

Eric Tolbert, director of the North Carolina Emergency Management Division (NCEM) said, “One of our concerns is people re-entering homes that were inundated. Structural safety, mold and spore growth in walls, floors and ceilings, and disposal of food, even canned goods that have been under water, concern us. We will call on county agencies and FEMA to help us warn the public about potential threats.”

### Avoid contact with floodwater

State Health Director Dr. Dennis McBride is advising people to avoid contact with floodwaters resulting from Hurricane Floyd because they may harbor bacterial disease.

“People should assume that any floodwater is contaminated,” Dr. McBride explained. “Wastewater treatment plants have failed. Septic tanks have failed. Hog lagoons have been overrun and swamps have emptied.”

Those who do come in contact with floodwater should bathe and wash their clothes with hot, soapy water.

People whose homes were flooded should assume everything touched by floodwater is contaminated and will have to be disinfected. Most cleanup can be done with household cleaning products. People should remember to wash their hands frequently during cleanup and always wear rubber gloves.

Apply by Phone

1-800-462-9029

(TTY: 1-800-462-7585)

7 a.m. to midnight  
Five Days a Week

TOLL FREE



*A message from*  
**Federal Coordinating Officer**  
*Glenn C. Woodard*

**O**nce again FEMA is a partner with the North Carolina Emergency Management Division to help the state recover from a serious disaster.

We knew after Hurricane Fran that another storm would come, but the sight of Floyd's terrible impact on eastern North Carolina communities is shocking. As we worked together to recover from Fran in 1996, we again work together to restore the state's crippled communities.

The federal government, via its federal response team, has been present in North Carolina prior to landfall of Floyd. Working with our state counterparts, we have created a strong partnership for response and recovery.

While we can't restore communities totally to their pre-disaster condition, the challenge will be to make North Carolina more disaster resistant. *Project Impact*, FEMA's national initiative to end the repetitive loss cycle in disasters, will help the state take measures to prevent the same kind of damage.

This is the future in disaster recovery. Nothing would please me more than to see North Carolina stare a future hurricane in the face and say, "Not this time. We'll come through with minimum damage."

*A message from*  
**Department of Crime Control & Public Safety**  
*Richard H. Moore, Secretary*

**W**henever disaster strikes North Carolina, hundreds of dedicated men and women from numerous state agencies and private organizations unite quickly as members of the State Emergency Response Team (SERT). SERT units have been working tirelessly since the first Hurricane Floyd warnings were received to ensure that each disaster victim gets the best help possible as rapidly as possible.

The SERT is working closely with countless local partners and its federal partner, FEMA, to rapidly meet the needs of disaster victims. It's a proven partnership that has already helped many.

We'll be working together for months before families and communities can regain a sense of normalcy. Ensuring the physical safety and emotional support of victims as the floodwaters recede is critical. Despite our efforts to meet the needs of everyone in shelters, day-to-day life there is difficult at best. We have dedicated and experienced people in place to help during this difficult time.

I want to extend heartfelt appreciation to all North Carolinians and the nation who've responded generously in this massive recovery. The outpouring of support flowing into the disaster areas has touched us all.

## Agencies team up in hurricane recovery efforts

**T**he human stories tell the tale of lives disrupted and careers put on hold, but the statistics give the broad picture of the disaster which Hurricane Floyd brought to North Carolina.

Those statistics, of course, are generated by the agencies which have mobilized to help in the recovery and rebuilding process.

At press time 44,797 residents have applied for federal/state aid. The death toll is now 48, and about 2,000 people remain in 21 shelters. Damage estimates continue to rise.

Here's a snapshot of individual agencies and what they are doing in the disaster recovery effort:

**U.S. Department of Agriculture** in cooperation with **North Carolina Department of Social Services** issued just under \$17 million in food stamp replacement benefits.

**North Carolina Department of Environmental Health** is working to remedy drinking water contamination. Water filtration and distribution systems are non-operational in eight counties.

**North Carolina Division of Forest Resources** estimates \$156 million damage to the forest-based industries.

**North Carolina Department of Agriculture** is operating incinerators 24 hours a day in three counties to dispose of the carcasses of drowned animals. Tobacco crop losses are estimated at \$98 million; livestock losses \$8.5 million; total crop losses \$432 million and total agricultural losses of \$634 million for 44 of the 66 counties included in the disaster declaration.

**North Carolina Emergency Management Division** is purchasing and installing mobile homes and travel trailers through its Temporary Housing Program. This is a joint program administered and managed by the state. FEMA is providing all funding and technical assistance.

**American Red Cross** disaster mental health staff is working with FEMA to address the immediate crisis counseling needs of individuals, especially those families who have experienced fatalities.

# Hazards still high in Floyd's wake

**P**rotecting public health amid the environmental havoc created by Hurricane Floyd remains the overriding concern of disaster recovery officials in North Carolina.

"Our most immediate concern is safe drinking water," said Dr. Dennis McBride, North Carolina state health director. "As in the Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 'There is a whole lot of water out there, but none of it is safe to drink.'"

Officials caution people in the affected areas to make sure they use safe water, take extreme care in reentering their flood-damaged homes, avoid contact with floodwaters and exercise care in handling food. The Department of Health and Human Services gives these guidelines:

**Drinking water:** People should use bottled water, not boiled water for drinking, cooking, brushing teeth, making ice and washing

hands. Young infants and pregnant women should use bottled water instead of boiled water because its nitrates can harm babies and fetuses.

**Water systems, wells:** Residents should continue to boil water until samples show regular water supplies to be safe. Customers of public water systems should contact their utility to make sure the water supply is safe. Private well users should contact their county health departments for water quality guidelines.

**Food:** People should take care in handling food that has been in contact with floodwater. Any food wrapped in plastic, cardboard or paper containers should be thrown away. Cans of food should be washed and sanitized.

**Immunization:** No special immunizations are needed. Residents who cut or puncture themselves should get a tetanus shot unless they've had one in the past 10 years. Experience shows people exposed to floodwaters are not at a greater risk for tetanus, hepatitis A or typhoid fever.

**Homes:** Before returning to a home that was flooded you should turn off the gas line at the meter and let the house air out; turn electricity off at the main circuit breaker and clean and dry out appliances; don't turn on any lights, appliances or gas systems until they have been tested; don't stand in water to get to the breaker box. If you must enter a house at night, use a flashlight and don't smoke.

**Debris:** Household garbage should be kept separate from storm debris for regular pickup.


Similar items should be sorted in stacks: tree limbs and leaves; construction and demolition debris such as lumber, insulation, metal products, gypsum board and roofing shingles; hazardous materials such as paint cans, cleansers, tires, chemicals; and "white goods" such as refrigerators, hot water heaters and stoves.

Information about health and safety issues can be obtained by calling the Department of Health and Human Services at **919-733-9190** and by accessing the department's web site, [www.dhhs.state.nc.us](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us), or [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov).



## To help you, FEMA will....

- Provide you with access to disaster assistance.
- Provide you with an opportunity to tell your story to a responsive FEMA representative.
- Treat you with respect and caring.
- Give you clear, accurate information about available assistance and how to apply for it.
- Explain clearly what you need to do after registration, what you can expect from government agencies and how long the process should take.
- If you are eligible, provide you with disaster housing assistance as promptly as possible and give you an estimate of when you will receive assistance.
- Advise you on how to protect against future losses.
- Use your suggestions to improve our service.



To receive the publication, "*Rebuilding Your Flooded Home*," call 800-480-2520 and ask for FEMA Publication No. 234.

For the Spanish edition ask for Publication No. 234SP.

Order on the internet at [www.fema.gov/library/repfhtm.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/library/repfhtm.pdf)

# Avoid fraud in home repairs

Steps to take when hiring a contractor to repair storm damage:

- Check with the local Better Business Bureau or the local business trades council to make sure the firm is licensed and has no outstanding consumer complaints.
- Get a written estimate and read the fine print. Compare the services and prices of several reputable contractors. Make sure the contractor has insurance.
- Never sign a blank contract or one with blank spaces.
- Pay with a check and avoid on-the-spot cash payments. Federal law requires a three-day cooling-off period.
- Those who have problems with a contractor are urged to contact the Better Business Bureau or the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division in Raleigh at **919-716-6000**.



Make *sure* disaster aid goes to those who deserve it.

**FEMA Fraud Hotline  
1-800-323-8603**

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, you should contact the federal or state Equal Rights Officer.



FEMA photo by David Saville

*A search and rescue team brings in dozens of stranded dogs in Princeville.*

## Floyd may damage septic tanks

State environmental health officials say that flooding will keep many septic systems from operating correctly until the floodwaters recede. State Health Director Dr. Dennis McBride said homeowners should take the following steps if their septic tank system has failed:

- Avoid using the house's plumbing system if the septic tank or the drain field is still under water.
- Do not use the plumbing system if sewage is backing up into the house.
- Try to reduce the amount of debris entering the septic tank and plumbing systems.
- Avoid contact with the sewage from septic tanks that are not working — raw sewage is a public health problem and can cause disease.
- Contact your local county health department or Environmental Health Section for information on repair or construction of septic systems.

Officials warn that some systems may be so damaged that repairs will be required before they will work again. Significant health problems associated with a septic tank that does not work are the release of untreated sewage to the top of the ground or into stagnant pools left behind by flooding.

For more information about how to deal with failed septic tank systems contact your local health department.

If you have damages from Hurricane Dennis and/or Floyd, call  
**1-800-462-9029**  
(TTY 1-800-462-7585)  
7 am until midnight  
Seven Days a Week



A sea of mops await owners at a distribution center in Wilson.

FEMA photo by David Saville

# Cleaning up the interior of your damaged house

**S**pecialists with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service at North Carolina State University recommend taking these steps when cleaning up inside your house after a flood:

- To prevent further damage, start cleanup as soon as it is safe.
- Make sure that the water is safe to drink.
- Sanitize surfaces, equipment, utensils and other belongings. Make sure the cleaner you choose has sodium hypochlorite at 5.25% as an active ingredient.
- For kitchen utensils use one tablespoon of liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water. Immerse for at least one minute.
- Discard items made of porous material such as plastic, rubber and wood.
- To sanitize sinks, fill with two-thirds of a gallon of water, add one-half cup of liquid chlorine bleach and let stand five minutes before rinsing.
- Bathtubs, showers, floors, vinyl,

tile, woodwork and appliances should be washed with a mix of three-fourths cup of liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of warm water. Let stand 5 minutes before rinsing.

- Dishwashers should not be used until the water is safe. Clean and sanitize before using.
- Household textiles such as towels, sheets and other linens may be disinfected and reused.
- Clothing, carpet, upholstered furniture; draperies and other interior textiles should be thrown away. Throw away items that are embedded with fiberglass or asbestos.
- Heavier textiles such as comforters or quilts should be disinfected in the washer one at a time and may require at least three rinsings in clear, warm water.

Also remember that when clearing debris, put similar items together for disposal. Hazardous household materials such as paint cans, cleansers, tires and chemicals should be separate from other debris piles.

## Getting Copies of Financial Records

As recovery from the flood gets under way, you will need records of your finances for short- and long-term financial planning. If your personal financial documents have been lost, you will need to find copies.

Call your insurance agent or company to get copies of your insurance policies, recent billing statements, cash-value statements and other applicable information.

Contact your local credit bureau and financial institutions (banks, credit union) for copies of credit reports, loan applications, bank statements or other such records.

The IRS has copies of your tax records and filings for the last three years. For federal records call 1-800-829-1040. The North Carolina Department of Revenue, which keeps individual income records back to 1990, can be reached at 919-733-3991.



*Recovery* is published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the North Carolina Emergency Management Division with help from other federal, state and voluntary agencies. It provides timely and accurate information about disaster recovery programs. Comments and inquiries about *Recovery* may be directed to 1-800-525-0321.

Internet/World Wide Web  
<http://www.fema.gov>  
 DR 1292

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# Getting disaster help in the field



FEMA photo by David Gattley

A FEMA representative helps an applicant at a Greenville Disaster Recovery Center.

**W**ithin a few days of Hurricane Floyd's visit to North Carolina, FEMA sent more than 50 community relations specialists into the field to meet directly with storm victims and explain assistance programs. FEMA has opened recovery centers in the disaster areas. However, you still must apply for assistance by phone before visiting a center. Centers are open in these counties daily from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

- Craven County**  
2101 Neuse Blvd., New Bern
- Duplin County**  
512 E. Railroad St., Wallace
- Edgecombe County**  
3003 N. Main St., Tarboro
- Greene County**  
229 Kingold Blvd., Snow Hill
- Hertford County**  
500 W. Main St., Ahoski
- Jones County**  
110 S. Market St., Trenton
- Lenoir County**  
107 S. Queen St., Kinston
- Nash County**  
300 SE Main St., Rocky Mount
- Nash County**  
1006 Eastern Ave., Nashville
- Pender County**  
101 S. Wright St., Burgaw
- Pitt County**  
Carolina East Center, Suite 10  
S. Memorial Dr., Greenville
- Wayne County**  
208 W. Chestnut St., Goldsboro
- Wilson County**  
116 S. Goldsboro St., Wilson
- Beaufort County**  
632 W. 5th St., Washington
- Bertie County**  
129 S. King St., Windsor
- Bladen County**  
311 S. Poplar St., Elizabethtown
- Brunswick County**  
1420 Old Ocean Hwy., Supply
- Columbus County**  
415 S. Madison St., Whiteville



CLIP & Save

## IMPORTANT phone numbers

### ■ FEDERAL AGENCIES

- FEMA Registration . . . . . 800-462-9029  
(TTY for hearing/speech-impaired) . . . . . 800-462-7585
- Disaster Information Helpline . . . . . 800-525-0321  
(TTY for hearing/speech-impaired) . . . . . 800-462-7585
- FEMA Fraud Detection . . . . . 800-323-8603
- National Flood Insurance Program . . . . . 800-720-1090
- Internal Revenue Service . . . . . 800-829-1040  
(TTY for hearing/speech-impaired) . . . . . 800-829-4059
- Housing and Urban Development Hotline . . . . . 800-669-9777
- Social Security Administration . . . . . 800-772-1213
- Veterans Affairs . . . . . 800-827-1000
- U.S. Small Business Administration . . . . . 800-359-2227

### ■ STATE AGENCIES

- Governor's Disaster Hotline . . . . . 888-835-9966
- Department of Transportation  
Customer Service . . . . . 877-368-4968
- Attorney General's Office  
Consumer Protection Division . . . . . 919-716-6000
- Environment . . . . . 877-623-6748
- Human Services . . . . . 800-662-7030

- Insurance . . . . . 800-546-5664
- Legal Services . . . . . 800-662-7407
- Social Services . . . . . call county office
- Social Security . . . . . 800-772-1213
- Tax Assistance . . . . . 919-733-3991
- North Carolina Donations Hotline  
Goods and Services . . . . . 888-786-7601
- Water Quality (surface and ground water) 919-733-5083
- Public Water Supply . . . . . 919-733-8276
- Public Health . . . . . 919-733-0802
- Hog Lagoon Information . . . . . 919-733-5083
- Dead Animal Disposal . . . . . 919-733-7601
- Price Gouging . . . . . 877-253-2436
- Travel and Tourism . . . . . 800-847-4862
- Mental Health . . . . . contact county office
- Debris and Solid Waste  
Removal . . . . . contact county or city office

### ■ VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

- American Red Cross . . . . . 800-958-2351
- Salvation Army . . . . . 800-SAL-ARMY
- Church 2 Church Cleanup . . . . . 888-595-1459