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Access speaker bios here:

<https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/mission-critical-how-one-hospital-maintained-operations-after-hurricane-helene-speaker-bios.pdf>

Access the recording here: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/recording/8015071879707654148>

Mission Critical: How One Hospital Maintained Operations and Protected Patients and Staff After Hurricane Helene

August 27, 2025



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ASPR TRACIE: Three Domains



- Self-service collection of audience-tailored materials
- Subject-specific, SME-reviewed “Topic Collections”
- Unpublished and SME peer-reviewed materials highlighting real-life tools and experiences



- Personalized support and responses to requests for information and technical assistance
- Accessible by toll-free number (1844-5-TRACIE), email (askasprtracie@hhs.gov), or web form ([ASPRtracie.hhs.gov](https://asprtracie.hhs.gov))



- Area for password-protected discussion among vetted users in near real-time
- Ability to support chats and the peer-to-peer exchange of user-developed templates, plans, and other materials

Select Relevant ASPR TRACIE Resources

- [Hurricanes Resource Page](#)
- [Hurricane Resources at Your Fingertips](#)
- [Exchange Issue 6: Evacuating Healthcare Facilities](#)
- [Major Hurricanes: Potential Public Health and Medical Implications](#)
- [Utility Failures in Health Care Toolkit](#)
- Topic Collections
 - [Healthcare Facility Evacuation/Sheltering](#)
 - [Natural Disasters](#)
 - [Patient Movement, MOCCs, and Tracking](#)
 - [Risk Communications/Emergency Public Information and Warning](#)
 - [Utility Failures](#)



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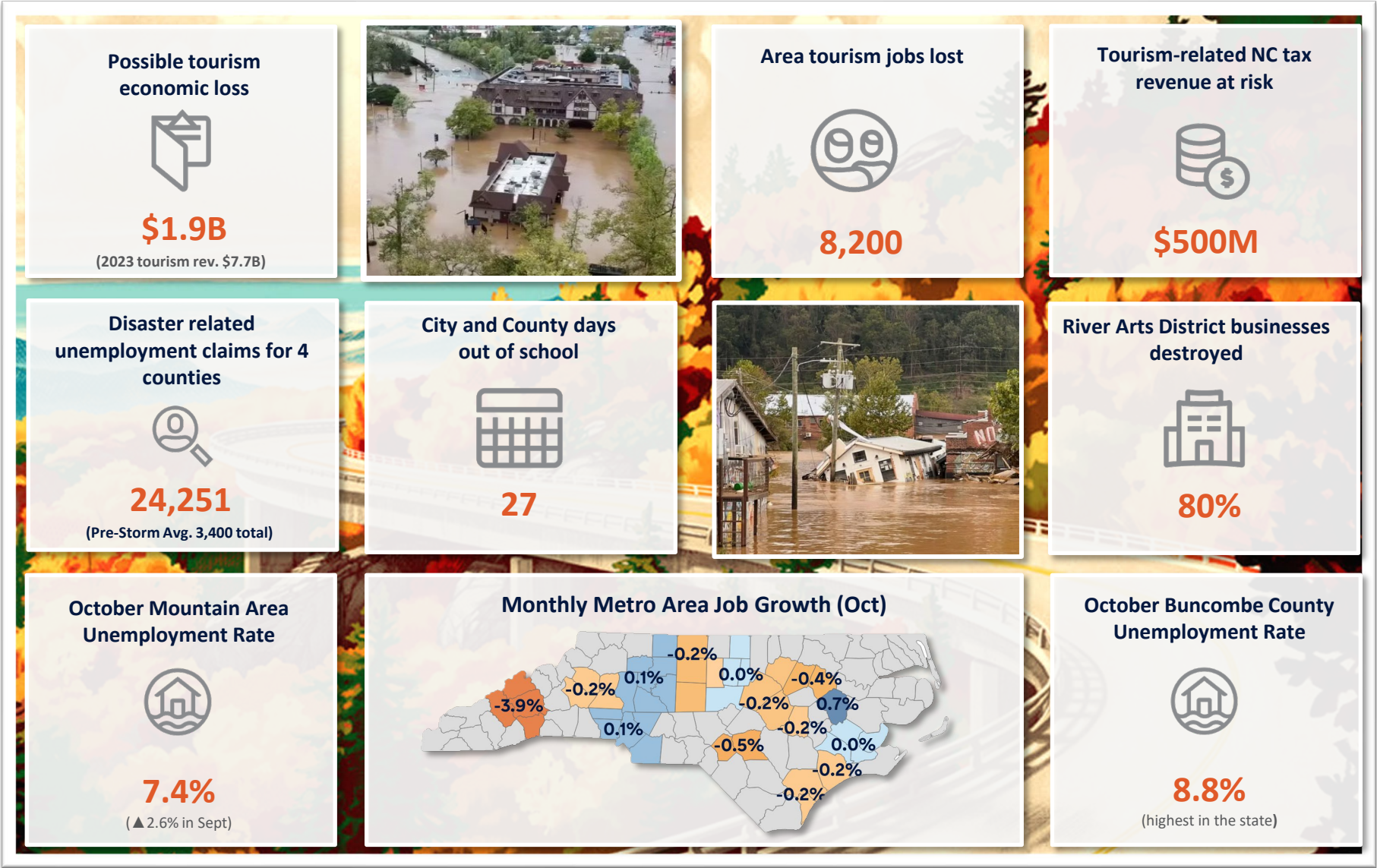
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Chief Executive Officer, TriStar Horizon Medical Center

HCA Healthcare

Hurricane Helene | Economic Impact



Hurricane Helene | T-3 Days to T-0 Response

- Initial perception was that impact from storm was going to be minimal
- Our risks in western NC were not as obvious as we first thought
- **Key Calls to Action:**
 - Called in all staff with a well-organized check-in and lodging process
 - Pre-staged water, food, and generator fuel on-site and in Asheville
 - Limited visitor access and hospital entry points
 - Established regular cadence of updates from key hospital officers

Hurricane Helene | T-0 to T+24 Response

- Ensure the safety of patients, staff, and providers
- Establish what critical infrastructure systems are/are not functioning
- Keep a close watch on food supply for patients and staff
- **Key Calls to Action:**
 - Establish outside communication channels that have been disrupted
 - Conduct ICC meetings, but limit attendance so recovery can start
 - Assign a liaison to manage vertical communication
 - Get creative on problem solving – bucket brigade, duct tape, etc.

Hurricane Helene | T+24 to T+48 Response

- Ensure there are open channels of communication to stakeholders:
 - City and county governments
 - State and federal agencies
 - Network and non-affiliated hospitals
- Be prepared for your ER to surge to unprecedented levels (275 at Mission ER)
- Be prepared for your morgue to be at or above capacity
- **Key Calls to Action:**
 - Round on your staff to help close gaps in their knowledge
 - Approach your response in terms of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
 - Ensure your staff have somewhere to shower and rest

Hurricane Helene | T+48 to T+96 Response

- Deeply understand your staffing levels for the next 4-5 days
- Ensure that hospital remains secure at all times – visitors will start to return
- **Key Calls to Action:**
 - Engage your infection preventionists to determine gaps/deficiencies
 - Determine if your hospital needs to enact a de-risking plan
 - Develop a specific team and resources for colleague support
 - Consider a colleague redeployment plan, based on hospital needs
 - Establish a system for families of staff to get food, water, etc.

Hurricane Helene | T+96 to T+1 Week Response

- Know that your community depends on your swift response and recovery
- Allow others to help – your team is going to be exhausted
- **Key Calls to Action:**
 - Establish A/B teams for leaders to rest, shower, and simply have a moment
 - Consider transport for anyone coming to assist (FEMA, DMORT, etc.)
 - Get creative in housing options – local hotels, AirBnB, etc.
 - Think through a sequential way to restart surgical operations:
 - Sterile Processing and RO/DI systems
 - Emergent/trauma/OB
 - Urgent inpatient
 - Urgent outpatient

Preparing for the Next Event | Key Considerations

- Prepare for the worst, but be ready to demobilize quickly
- Have a clearly established “battle rhythm” for ICC and standard scripting
- The most vital link to recovery is dependable communications – test, test, test
- Basic needs have to be met before re-establishing any sort of operations
- Allow your leaders to have autonomy, but be rigid about status updates
- Leverage relationships with vendors, civic organizations, etc. – they want to help
- Establish plans to endure prolonged outages
- Non-clinical departments are a recovery accelerator – harness their power
- Give yourself and your team grace

BY THE NUMBERS

HURRICANE HELENE COLLEAGUE RECOVERY SUPPORT

HCA+
Healthcare®

MISSION
HEALTH



**wells
dug to
operate
chillers**

16



heavy-lift helicopters
transporting regional supplies



5 therapy
dogs

Colleague Supplies

400K bottles of water

95K gallons of fuel

75K meals

168 mobile laundry
and shower units

10 mini-marts

1 mega mart

5 colleague hotels

HCA+ Healthcare
**HOPE
FUND**



1,210+
grants approved
to date



\$918,000
approved for
colleagues

200K+
**GALLONS OF
TANKER WATER
DAILY**



colleague support sessions
by Optum Wellbeing

*We
show
up*



400+

HCA Healthcare nurses, physicians, and
other colleague support traveled from
sister hospitals to relieve caregivers



3,500+
patients



70+
babies
delivered



5,000+
clinic visits

Caring in initial Helene aftermath



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HCA Healthcare

Hurricanes Helene & Milton: HCA Healthcare Enterprise Response

Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton Timeline

Sept. 23

- EEOC activated for Disturbance 35 in the Caribbean, showing signs of strengthening.
- Potential to strengthen into a major hurricane over the next 72 hours.
- West Florida and North Florida Divisions began de-risking critical patients, evacuating hospitals, and preparing facilities to shelter-in-place.

Sept. 24

- Tropical Storm Helene formed in the Gulf of Mexico.
- Incident Response Teams deployed to FL.

Sept. 26

- Hurricane Helene made landfall in Florida's Big Bend as a powerful Category 4 storm.
- Record-breaking storm surge.
- Incident Response Team deployed to NC.

Sept. 27

- Helene moved north through GA, NC, and TN, bringing powerful winds and flooding in some communities.
- In GA, Memorial Satilla Health, Memorial Health Meadows Hospital and Doctors Hospital of Augusta lost access to city water and/or communications.
- Western NC, the home of Mission Health, was hit especially hard with catastrophic flooding.

Sept. 28 – Oct. 5

- EEOC continued to support Helene response efforts by mobilizing resources to deploy to impacted facilities and assessing the needs of the impacted communities.

Oct. 1

- HCA Healthcare announced the organization will contribute \$1 million through community organizations to aid in Hurricane Helene relief in NC.

Oct. 6

- Amid Hurricane Helene support, the EEOC also began preparations for Tropical Storm Milton.
- Hurricane projected to travel across FL peninsula.
- Incident Response Teams deployed to FL.

Oct. 7

- Milton rapidly intensified to a Category 5 storm with winds at 160 mph.
- Patient de-risking and hospital evacuations began from West Florida Division facilities.

Oct. 9

- Milton made landfall south of Tampa Bay as a Category 3 storm.
- Numerous tornadoes were spawned by Milton in southern and central FL.
- During the storm, patients were transferred from HCA Florida Highlands Hospital.

Oct. 10

- In the pre-dawn hours, Hurricane Milton exited Florida.
- As soon as the storm passed, HCA Florida Largo Hospital transferred 239 patients due to flooding in the basement that caused a loss of primary and generator power to 75% of the hospital.

Oct. 11

- Established a modular, free-standing emergency department at HCA Florida Largo Hospital.

Oct. 18 – Present

- HCA Healthcare committed to contributing up to \$750,000 through community organizations and colleague matching to aid in Hurricane Helene and Milton relief efforts in FL and NC.
- EEOC continues to support hurricane response efforts.

Hurricane Helene: Before the Storm

Hospital readiness

- 27 HCA hospitals across 4 divisions engaged in readiness activities for the storm.

De-risking efforts/patient transfers

- HCA Healthcare's EEOC, division and hospital colleagues remained on high alert ready to take steps to ensure patient safety.
- 74 HCA Florida West Tampa Hospital and HCA Florida Pasadena Hospital patients were transferred to sister hospitals.

Flood mitigation

- 6,500 feet of tiger dam set up at HCA Florida Pasadena Hospital



Hurricane Helene: Florida and Georgia Response

HCA Healthcare facts and figures

West Florida, North Florida and South Atlantic Divisions

11 

generators for hospital operations

9 

fuel trucks to support colleagues, first responders and generators

8 

6k gallon tanker trucks to provide potable water into hospitals

8 

Incident Response Team members deployed

1 

Tiger Dam flood mitigation system (6,500 feet) deployed at HCA Florida Pasadena Hospital

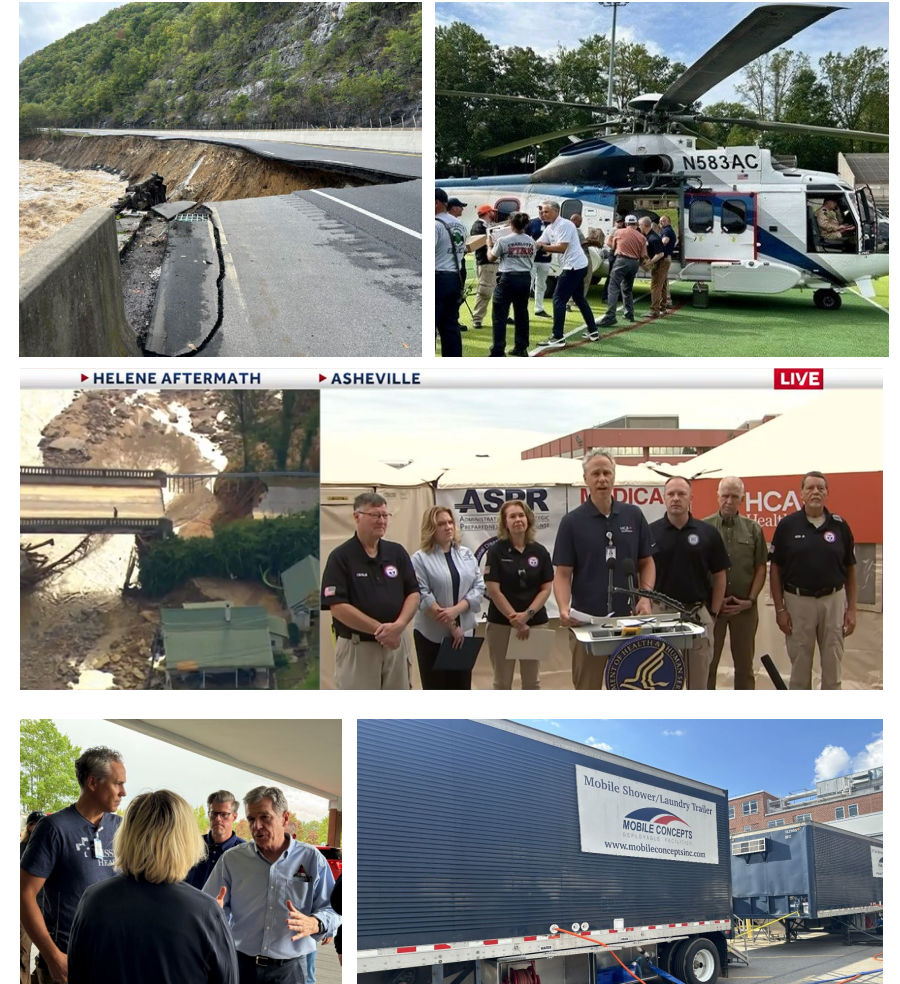
1 

20k gallon tanker truck to pump large amounts of potable water to maintain hospital operations

Hurricane Helene: North Carolina Response

North Carolina devastation

- Road damage cut off Blue Ridge Hospital from ground access, forcing resources to be delivered via HCA-contracted **cargo helicopters**.
- Communications services were cut off for days. Fewer than **10%** of all cellphone services were fully functioning **3** days after the storm.
 - EEOC set up **Starlink Satellite kits** to restore connectivity at hospitals completely cut off from communication.
- **5** HCA hospitals in NC lost access to community water. **8+** weeks after Helene, Asheville still does not have utility-provided potable water.
- To maintain hospital operations, HCA Healthcare deployed:
 - **tanker trucks** to provide water to hospitals.
 - **engineers** from HCA facilities across the country to develop **innovative solutions** to allow water to travel from tanker trucks through the facility's faucets.
 - **portable showers and laundry units** for colleagues without access to water.
 - **generators and tanker trucks for hotels** throughout Asheville to house colleagues supporting Mission Health and local colleagues and their families displaced during the storm.



Hurricane Helene: Supporting Healthcare Operations

HCA Healthcare facts and figures North Carolina Division

- 11 generators for hospital operations
- 28 6k gallon tanker trucks to provide potable water into hospitals
- 5 6k gallon tanker trucks to provide potable water into hotels for colleagues we brought into North Carolina to provide assistance
- 2 20k gallon tanker trucks to pump large amounts of potable water to maintain hospital operations
- 1 20k gallon tanker truck to pump large amounts of potable water to support all plumbing at hotels for colleagues providing support
- 2 wells were dug to provide water to cool HVAC units
- 5 Starlink Satellite kits to support communications
- 2 Satellite Cell on Light Trucks (COLTs) to support communications
- 17,000+ cases of bottled water
- 400+ nurses deployed
- 50+ physicians deployed
- 21 Incident Response Team members deployed
- 4 Behavioral Health Response teams, including therapy dogs, deployed
- 2 Disaster Medical Assistance Teams
- 545 hotel rooms for colleagues from divisions across HCA Healthcare to provide relief
- 26 fuel trucks to support colleagues, first responders and generators
- 2 cargo helicopters to supply hospitals cut off from road access
- 10 GMR ALS ambulances to transport patients from outlying hospitals to a higher level of care



Hurricane Helene: During the Storm

Ensuring access to care

Patients were transferred from outlying North Carolina hospitals to Mission Health for a higher level of care.

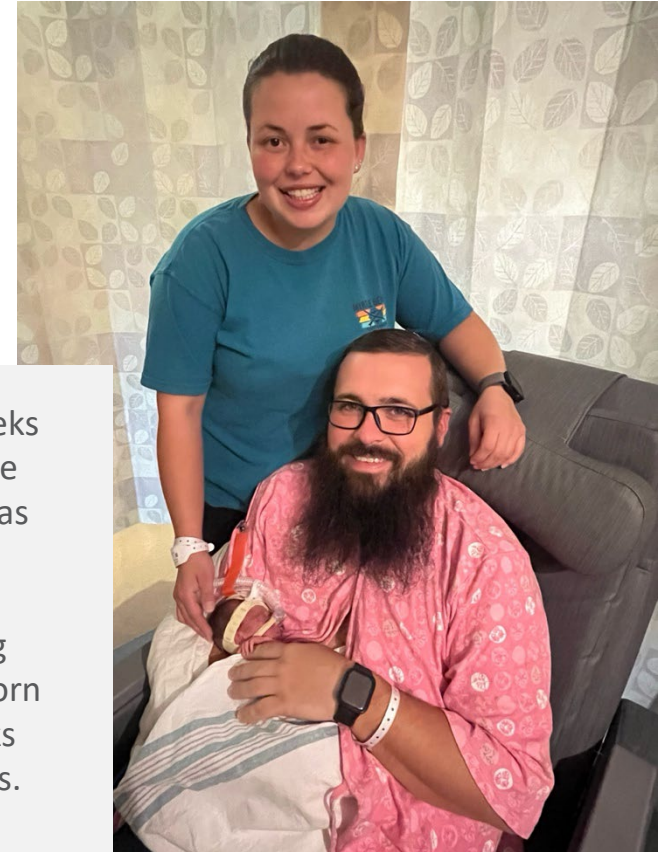
2,500+

patients cared for across
Mission Hospital*

60+

babies born at
Mission Health*

During Hurricane Helene and in the weeks that followed, more than **60** babies were born at Mission Health. Among them was Phoenix, whose arrival left a lasting impression. On September 27, while Hurricane Helene was heavily impacting western North Carolina, Phoenix was born at Mission Hospital. He arrived 10 weeks early, only weighing 2 pounds 10 ounces. Phoenix was immediately taken to the hospital's NICU for expert care.



Hurricane Helene: After the Storm

Patient transfers

HCA Healthcare, with assistance from the state, transferred patients who were able to be discharged from Mission Hospital but did not have a safe location in the immediate area to skilled nursing facilities and medical shelters outside the areas hardest hit by the disaster. This allowed Mission Hospital to free up resources to address the most urgent medical needs of the community.

Communication support

Five Starlink Satellite kits were deployed to North Carolina to provide temporary network connectivity at facilities that had been completely cut off from all communication.



Supporting colleagues

- **7** mini marts supporting colleagues
 - Food, cleaning supplies, and personal hygiene products
- **1** mega mart supporting colleagues
 - Mini-marts, plus gasoline for colleagues' vehicles, and portable shower and laundry facilities
- **33,646** gallons of gasoline for colleagues' vehicles
- **56** portable showers
- **18** portable laundry units
- **1,970** Hope Fund grants for Hurricane Helene assistance totaling more than **\$1.6 million**. More than **1,047** Hope Fund grants totaling more than **\$817,000** were provided to North Carolina Colleagues.*
- **3** therapy dogs from Methodist Healthcare and **1** from GMR

Hurricane Milton Overview

Big picture storm facts

Category 3 hurricane at landfall
near Siesta Key, Florida

24+ people died

125+ tornado warnings

18+ inches of rain in St. Petersburg

5+ foot storm surge

2+ million without power

Second storm to reach Category 5
strength this hurricane season



HCA Healthcare facts and figures

18 HCA hospitals across **3** divisions engaged in readiness activities for the storm

660 patients transferred before, during and after the storm

239 patients transferred from HCA Florida Largo Hospital due to flooding

1 modular free-standing Emergency Department established to provide care while the hospital is closed

225+ colleagues deployed to assist Hurricane Milton-affected facilities

13 Incident Support Team members deployed pre-storm and
27 generators pre-positioned

36 fuel trucks and **11** water trucks

3 tiger dams deployed

Social Commentary About HCA Healthcare's Hurricane Helene and Milton Response

"So proud to work for this amazing company. Thank you for helping my city... we truly care like family."

"In the aftermath of Helene in Western North Carolina, watching and working with the HCA EEOC team was an honor to say the least. Throughout all of my years working on the facility services side, there has never been a better group of professionals than this group. If not for HCA EEOC, the spirit of WNC would have been crushed by Helene!!! Our community can never thank you enough!!!"

"The devastation is far reaching, but the fact that our hospitals and medical facilities are still up and running and accessible is AMAZING! Truly appreciate you, your team, and your efforts!"

"Everyone of us that live in Western NC are grateful for the help and support of HCA-Mission. Mission is a vital part of our community and continues to provide for the people of WNC and the mission of HCA-Above All Else!! Thank you for being here."



"Grateful for our colleagues who have worked tirelessly through back-to-back storms supporting each other through the unimaginable but never forgetting why we do what we do - 'Above all else, we are committed to the care and improvement of human life!!!!'"

"HCA lives up to their motto to 'Care Like Family'. Not only do they take care of our patients and our employees, but they consistently show up to take care of the communities we serve. I could not be more proud to have been part of this amazing organization for the past 25 years."

"So proud to be an HCA Nurse! We are super thankful for the leadership teams at our EFL Division, Group and Corporate levels, who help guide and support us through these storms and after. We are HCA Strong"

"I'm always in awe watching this team work. Being a part of HCA a few years ago and seeing this with in action with hurricane Harvey and Maria, just amazing work by this team."

"I have been with HCA for almost 30 years all told - HCA cares about the communities where we have medical facilities. Thoughts and prayers with those in Asheville."

"EM Planning & Execution + Teamwork = Proper response and patient care. Great job HCA!"



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Panel Roundtable

Question & Answer



Contact ASPR TRACIE



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