

Relief Efforts Continue in South Carolina

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Hurricane Joaquin may have missed the United States, but on its way to Crooked Island, Bahamas, the hurricane brought a torrent of rain and wind. The east coast was inundated with rain, especially in South Carolina where Gov. Nikki Haley described the severe flooding as "a storm of historic proportions." According to the National Weather Service, at least 12 counties in South Carolina received at least 18 inches of rain from Oct. 1-5. On Oct. 6, the SC Department of Transportation reported 284 road closures and 154 bridge closures.

Robin Whiteman, a Meredith junior from Cheraw, South Carolina described the traffic travelling through South Carolina to Florida as "atrocious." I-95 was blocked around Columbia because of flooding and construction, causing a massive delay with five lanes of traffic merged into one. When asked what she observed, Whiteman said "[we weren't even allowed to] get close to [...] the damage." Her home town fortunately was not hit, but areas near her home had approximately five inches of standing water. Whiteman's

parents recently completed American Red Cross training to help with relief efforts. Whiteman said that while at a restaurant in lower South Carolina, they could only order milkshakes and bottled water because of the shortage. About 40,000 people were without water on Monday, Oct. 5. South Carolina's Public Health and Environmental Detection Agency urged people to stay away from flood waters for fear of drowning and infections.

After the threats of flash flooding subsided, relief and recovery efforts began immediately. The Red Cross opened 35 emergency shelters in North and South Carolina. In addition, other groups have volunteered such as AERObriidge, a nonprofit disaster relief and coordination group that organized general aviation pilots to fly three tons of food and water from Columbia, SC to Georgetown County Airport in Georgetown. The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association is cooperating with AERObriidge and donated \$5,000 dollars for supplies going to South Carolina, and \$5,000

to the even more devastated Bahamas. A major recovery effort also came from Newspring Church, which has campuses across South Carolina. They started an initiative called #FloodSCWithLove, and are collecting various items such as canned goods, water, and diapers. They are also organizing construction crews to rebuild houses.

Christian Costa, a freshman at Meredith, lives five-hours-away on James Island, South Carolina. On her way back to Meredith, Interstate-95 was closed, and the backroads were flooded, forcing her to turn around and miss a day of classes. Costa said, "The South Carolina Department of Transportation was full force immediately. They had the roads cleared, and did a good job of setting up call centers to help reroute people. And they did a good job of fixing the roads. People who were displaced because their homes were flooded, were quick to begin reconstruction," and "helping people fill out insurance forms is a big thing, too. There have been centers around the state where

insurance companies have come out to help people start filing claims."

"Everyone I know is fine or hasn't lost anything, but I know there has been severe destruction in a lot of places so to see people work together has been great. It has been really encouraging to see people in South Carolina unify and help each other," said Costa. Local, state, and federal governments are also on the move to help. Gov. Haley announced that 600 National Guardsmen were deployed to help with evacuations and rescues, along with eleven aircraft and eight swift water rescue teams. Gov. Haley organized the SCDOT and volunteered at Red Cross relief centers. President Obama declared South Carolina a state of emergency and ordered federal aid. The Federal Emergency Management Agency is operating Disaster Recovery Centers and encourages anyone who was affected by severe flooding to register for disaster assistance from FEMA by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or to go online at disasterassistance.gov.