

## Governor Details Hurricane Florence Recovery Priorities

By Administrator

Wednesday, 03 October 2018 09:11 - Last Updated Wednesday, 03 October 2018 09:13

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Governor Roy Cooper outlined the highlights of his proposed plan to assist North Carolinians with rebuilding their homes, communities, businesses and infrastructure to be more resilient against future storms.

“For the second time in two years, communities across eastern North Carolina have seen catastrophic flooding and the unprecedented damage means they need our support. Across the state, neighbors are helping neighbors and people are pulling together to rebuild. We must ensure that this recovery is strong, comprehensive, and smart,” said Governor Cooper.

The Cooper administration is already moving forward on many of these proposals and others. Some policy initiatives should be adopted in Tuesday’s session, and a fuller package should be considered next week when the legislature returns on October 9th, Cooper said.

The administration is working with state and federal agencies and local governments to estimate the overall financial cost of Hurricane Florence. As that analysis comes together, the Cooper administration is also building an appropriations proposal to guide state funding.

Cooper is recommending that the following key principles be included:

### **Ensuring People’s Health, Safety and Long-Term Well Being**

- \* Push for maximum federal funding with as much flexibility as possible to promote affordable housing, infrastructure, environmental and flood mitigation and prevention efforts

- \* Offer state mitigation and buyout funds for homes and facilities not covered by federal funding

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- \* Help some homeowners and others to acquire and pay for flood insurance, a requirement for getting federal help and protection against future catastrophic flooding
  
- \* Hire and deploy more environmental experts to keep people safe by monitoring pollution threats such as wastewater runoff and coal ash
  
- \* Help communities build more resilient water treatment systems for wastewater and storm water that can withstand flooding and storm surge and target grants to the hardest hit systems so local leaders can repair or move failed systems
  
- \* Move hog farm lagoons from flood-prone areas by offering farmers buyouts if they have lagoons at risk of flooding
  
- \* Match case workers to survivors, known as case management, as well as wrap-around services such as mental health care to people as they rebuild their lives and communities

### **Supporting and Rebuilding More Resilient Communities**

- \* Have the state pay for counties' matching costs for FEMA sponsored repairs, supporting immediate home repairs
  
- \* Improve people's interaction with state government by increasing staffing and expertise and streamlining recovery operations

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- \* Support construction of resilient buildings and provide local governments and partners with resources to rebuild smart and strong

- \* Establish more affordable housing and secure long-term contractor retention for construction and repairs

- \* Support local volunteer organizations, especially those who partner with the state and FEMA to provide quick repairs to damaged homes

### **Supporting Public Schools**

In addition to his recommendations for rebuilding stronger, more resilient communities, Governor Cooper endorses providing school calendar flexibility for schools that were closed for multiple days and face concerns about making up lost time in an already crowded calendar. Teachers and other school workers should not lose pay due to the disaster. University and community college students and employees in affected areas should not be harmed due to lost classroom time after the storm.

The Governor also believes legislators should consider school damage, assist schools with repairs and budget shortfalls and ensure that students in impacted communities have access to counselors and social workers as their friends and families recover from the storm.

### **Helping People Get Back to Work**

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As people seek to rebuild their homes and entire lives, they often face employment challenges as their previous employers may not be operating. People in affected counties who may be turned down for regular unemployment insurance can apply online through the North Carolina Division of Employment Security for disaster unemployment assistance benefits.

In addition, disaster recovery payments should continue to be excluded from taxable income calculation for individual taxpayers.

### **Helping State Government Support Recovery**

As North Carolina takes on the work of Florence recovery, state government can take certain steps to best support those efforts. Cooper recommends that the use of Historically Underutilized Businesses be maximized.

“Eastern North Carolina has taken a tough hit, but North Carolinians are tougher. I look forward to working with the legislature on these and other items to make sure our communities can recover and rebuild to withstand future storms,” said Governor Cooper.