



Two dead, 20 people missing after Haywood County flooding



As of noon, search and rescue efforts were underway in Cruso and Lake Logan. (WYFF/NBC)

By WITN Web Team

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CANTON, N.C. (WRAL) - Officials in Haywood County confirmed Thursday that two people were found dead overnight and 20 others are still missing.

The remnants of Tropical Depression Fred hit parts of western North Carolina hard, triggering flooding and mudslides. Several communities in Haywood County had to be evacuated late Tuesday night as rivers flooded into the streets, prompting Gov. Roy Cooper to issue a State of Emergency.

On Wednesday afternoon, Haywood County officials [told WRAL News](#) approximately 35 people are missing, but more were found as of Thursday. Search and rescue crews are looking for the missing people via land, water and air.

Several people were located, according to Haywood County officials, and several others were added to the list throughout the day as loved ones called in.



Search teams ended for the day around 7 p.m. to protect searchers as it started to get dark. Additional teams will help with searches on Thursday.

Haywood county officials said engineering teams will also be arriving to assess damage and build temporary bridges.

Gov. Cooper later said around 98 people have been rescued after several communities had water levels reach 3 to 7 feet higher than their previous high watermark. Up to 50,000 people were without power at one point, though that number was closer to 11,000 on Wednesday afternoon.

"With more rain in the forecast at the end of the week, we know that more flooding is possible," Cooper said. "North Carolina is all too familiar with devastating flooding events. We'll continue to monitor and provide support from the state level."

Athletic fields at Pisgah High School were seriously damaged. Bleachers were flipped over at a softball field and the football stadium had portions of its recently installed field turf ripped up. The football stadium had been recently renovated.

One woman had emergency officials pounding on her door on Tuesday night.

"They told me come down or we'll carry you out," said Canton resident Virginia Clements. "I don't know when I'll be able to get back into my home."

Nearly 9 inches of rain was reported in Haywood County as the National Weather Service issued a Flash Flood Emergency. There was a life-threatening flood wave moving down the Pigeon River through Canton, Clyde, and into Lake Waterville at around 8:30 p.m. People were advised to evacuate to higher ground immediately.

The town of Canton was one of the hardest hit areas. Search and rescue task forces from Cary and New Hanover County traveled west to help residents there and shared photos of flooded neighborhoods.

The day after in Canton revealed no confirmed loss of life, but plenty of physical damage and disappointment at the Community Kitchen, a soup kitchen that's served hot meals for the last 12 years. They are almost always open, but the kitchen closed Tuesday night in anticipation of flooding. Chairman Chris Jennings said they lost 200,000 pounds of food.

"This is obviously nasty," Jennings said. "I'm sure there's sewage in it and everything else. I know people lost their homes last night. I know people lost everything they have. So for us to be down, it's not a real good time for us to be down."

Many emergency crews are coming to Haywood County to help with the recovery effort. One task force includes 26 members of Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill fire departments. The crews are compromised of water rescue, paramedics and helicopter rescue teams. Raleigh Fire Capt. Wayne Motley is leading the effort in Waynesville.

"Everywhere you look, they're struggling a bit," Motley said. "They're suffering right now. There are houses gone, entire buildings gone."

Crews were floating in front of homes on rafts looking for people to rescue. Thirteen adults and two children were rescued on that mission, officials said.

Jessalyn Owensby, a Canton resident, posted photos and a video on Facebook that she saw parts of houses, a pool, a building and a truck all wash away in floodwaters. She said she even saved a mouse from drowning.

A mudslide was reported on the American Thread Road in McDowell County Tuesday at around 8 p.m. It's unclear if anyone has been injured at this time.

The risk for flash flooding on Tuesday night was "as high as it gets," according to WRAL meteorologist Kat Campbell.

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