



# Hurricane Florence

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Downtown Wilmington

[Twenty-eight counties](#) impacted by Hurricane Florence have been declared eligible for federal disaster assistance. Many of them are communities that have not even fully recovered from Hurricane Matthew in 2016. Much of eastern and parts of central North Carolina are struggling and will need help for the foreseeable future.

Too often people take local governments for granted because they are so monotonously good at delivering important public services. There is no drama and they don't seek credit. During times



of natural disaster, however, local and state government becomes much more visible. Citizens see the value of public officials who work tirelessly to ensure the safety and recovery of their communities. And those officials—our clients—show courage and determination day after day to fulfill their promise of public service. Often they work crushing hours even as their own homes and families have been affected and displaced by the storm.

The School has a special responsibility to assist local governments as they lead the recovery and rebuilding efforts. I've seen firsthand both how our clients and MPA students have responded to this dire situation and how our faculty have been there to answer every urgent phone call and email. Our staff has collected supplies to contribute to [donation drives on campus](#) and [our University has created a fund](#) to support students from affected areas.





## Iconic Bear in Downtown New Bern

### **The Immediate Response**

I have been inspired by our own [Norma Houston](#)'s non-stop postings on the city and county managers listserv. She has been sharing timely information that many public officials desperately need—requirements for local state of emergency declarations, a debris-removal guide from NC Division of Emergency Management, and advisories from FEMA and other agencies. She is pointing people to [her emergency management microsite](#) for sample documents. Norma has worked to make sure that our clients have access to the latest information, and I know that other colleagues have been responding too. The city clerk for New Bern, which was hit incredibly hard, responded to Norma that “the emails that you and others at the SOG have pushed out are greatly appreciated as they provide vital info that otherwise would not be receiving at this point.” Another clerk responded: “I told our HR Director the other day that UNC SOG was better than Allstate—we’ve been covered with helpful information and on different listservs so if one doesn’t get it; someone else does!! We’re in great hands with UNC SOG.” Thanks to everyone for all of your good work.

### **Here in Chapel Hill, But Also in Raleigh**

After the storm had ended, the Governor and legislators realized they needed to come back into session to address pressing issues that are part of the recovery. And when the North Carolina General Assembly convenes—no matter when—our [Legislative Reporting Service](#) is there as it has been for eighty years. So when the legislature convened for a special session on Oct. 2, [our staff](#) was also in Raleigh and published the Daily Bulletin, detailing the legislative response to this catastrophe. As our state legislature continues its work in the recovery effort, the Legislative Reporting Service will keep government officials updated on its activities.



Cleaning Up in Trenton

### Supporting Our Students

A colleague emailed me to share how two of our [MPA@UNC](mailto:MPA@UNC) students were working hard in the throes of recovery. Helene Edwards is health director for [Hoke County](#) and she left her home in Fayetteville to staff shelters there since the flooding began. Eric Wilson, special assistant to the Governor, worked on the state's hurricane preparation efforts and is now addressing the response efforts. It was an important reminder about how many of our master of public administration students are working day in and day out in local and state government and have turned to the School to hone their skills and take their careers to the next level.



A Man and Cat Rescued in New Bern

### **Amazed by Our Clients and Partners**

Every week, I learn something new about our clients and partners and how they are helping their communities. One of our faculty members, Shannon Tufts, learned about the work of the North Carolina Local Government Information Services Association (NCLGISA) and how their volunteer [“Strike Team”](#) members are on standby to deploy wireless. I recently met with the Wake County Manager, David Ellis, and he described how the county provided shelters for busloads of people coming from the coast. Many of them were coming from an assisted living facility and needed more than food and a cot. County employees scrambled to arrange for needed medical care and prescription coverage. Maurice Smith with the Local Government Federal Credit Union sent a heartfelt message to all of their members that offered help in a number of ways, including extra cash or a little more time to make a payment. He said “we are ONE Credit Union community” and



“[i]f you want a shoulder to cry on, we will be here for that too.”

For several years to come, as was the case with Hurricane Matthew, we will find ways to support our students and clients after Florence. North Carolinians are resilient and find a way to continue providing services and getting things done in their community. Thanks to everyone at the School who has been working hard to do our part. We will continue helping local governments as their full partners on the long road to recovery.



Hog Farm Flooded by Hurricane Florence