

# Notes from Statewide Multifamily Housing Industry on Hurricane Helene Relief

## Thursday, October 31, 2024

### 1. Special Guest: Michael Myers, President of Envirolink

- **Company Models:** Envirolink operates under a few primary models:
  - **Asset Ownership Model:** Envirolink owns the infrastructure assets and charges end-users directly for services provided.
  - **Operational Model:** In cases where Envirolink does not own the assets, they oversee operations and maintenance under agreements with asset owners.
- **Observations in Western North Carolina:**
  - **Geographic Impact:** Water and sewage issues are widespread but vary greatly by area, with significant problems south of Buncombe County, in Boone (particularly student housing), Banner Elk, and Linville.
- **Water Quality & Public Health:**
  - **Precautionary Notices:** Notices indicate areas with suspected contamination but no confirmed potable water. Boiling water is essential if microbial contamination is suspected.
  - **Surface Water Plant Challenges:** Although Michael isn't directly involved with this system, given publicly available information, it is anticipated that turbidity levels may take a few weeks to drop to acceptable limits. Currently, damage to filtration systems is causing turbidity levels to exceed safe limits (20+ vs. safe limit of 5.49). Repairs are expected to take 3–4 weeks, with efforts focused on gradually restoring proper filtration.
- **System & Regulatory Standards:**
  - **Pressure Concerns:** Regulations require additional testing if water mains drop below 20 PSI to ensure chlorine residuals are maintained for safety.
  - **Filtration & Flushing Programs:**
    - Flushing begins at the treatment plant and moves outward through the main pipes; each area will need to conduct its own flushing to remove residual contaminants.
    - **Fire Line Safety:** Buildings with separate fire lines connected to water mains are advised to use them cautiously, as sediment can clog sprinkler systems and impact firefighting efficiency.

### 2. Community Reports & Water Testing Recommendations

- **Resident Concerns:** Residents have reported brown water with a slight odor, prompting questions about safety for bathing and drinking.
- **Testing & Safety Recommendations:**
  - **Magnesium (Black Water):** Elevated magnesium, while not a health risk, causes black discoloration, which affects aesthetic quality.
  - **Iron Oxidation (Red Water):** Iron levels contribute to reddish water; though safe, it can be unappealing.
  - **Lab Testing:** Residents are encouraged to test water samples. Testing costs approximately \$20 and checking for chlorine residuals and total coliform is critical to confirm potability.
- **Communication Challenges:** Updates from water treatment facilities are often outdated by the time they reach residents, contributing to mixed messages and potential mistrust. Backcountry brand filters are effective, but tenants need to keep up with the maintenance of these or any other point-of-use filters.

### 3. FEMA Housing Assistance

- **AAWNC Resource Page:** <https://www.aawnc.org/news/participation-in-fema-housing-funds->
- **Laura Williamson with ACRS: Update**  
(Contact: lwilliamson@locatehousing.com, 864-304-2415)
  - **Support for FEMA Participation:** Laura has been instrumental in creating a resource page to support property managers and displaced tenants.
  - **Partnering with Insurance and Relocation Companies:** She recommends involving these partners to simplify tenant relocation, especially to secure temporary leases with varying terms (3–18 months, pet-friendly options, etc.).
  - **Background Check Delays:** FEMA processes can be delayed due to background checks for temporary housing placements.
  - **Alternative Solutions:** FEMA and insurance funds are available, but creative approaches—like using third-party companies for tenant relocation—can maximize access without direct evictions.

### 4. Water Distribution Efforts - Chadwell Supply (Bert Wray)

- **Coordination of Bottled Water Delivery:** Bert is organizing water distribution. AAWNC has a list of properties in need. Reach out to [info@aawnc.org](mailto:info@aawnc.org) to confirm if a property is on the list.
- **Volunteer Support Request:** Given the expense and weight involved in transporting water, AAWNC encourages volunteer assistance to deliver bottled water to affected residents.

### 5. Upcoming AAWNC Member Celebration

- **Event on December 5th in Asheville:** AAWNC is hosting a member appreciation event. Details are forthcoming; members interested in attending should contact AAWNC for further information.