

# The News-Journal

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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## 300 get FEMA grants, 1,800 apply

By CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

More than 1,800 families in Hoke County filed for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency following an historic rainfall event and Hurricane Matthew earlier this year,

and just more than 300 of them have received funding to help rebuild their lives.

The latest numbers from FEMA show that 309 households in Hoke County received a total of \$691,610.76 in grant funding from the agency through December 20. That figure is dwarfed in com-

parison to the amounts needed to help support people in Robeson and Cumberland counties who were impacted by the storms: in Robeson County, over 18,000 people applied and received more than \$22 million in assistance from FEMA, while in Cumberland County, more than 14,000

people applied and received over \$14 million in FEMA funding.

Nearly 78,000 statewide sought help from the federal agency after the storms, with total statewide FEMA dollars approved adding up to just over \$85 million.

The money distributed in Hoke County is in the form of grants

that won't have to be paid back, according to FEMA spokesperson William Rukeyser.

Most people approved for the funding usually receive it within one or two days if they were able to provide bank account information to FEMA so an agent could (See FEMA, page 4)



Flooding in Hoke County, such as at this home on Goose Pond Road in the south, wasn't generally as severe as in neighboring Robeson County. (Ken MacDonald photo)

## Hurricane, election, threats, abuse top stories in 2016

This week, we take a look back on the biggest stories that were the talk of the town for Hoke County over the last year. In no particular order, these are our picks for the issues that delivered the most impact in 2016.

### Hurricane Matthew, historic rainfall

Hoke County saw its first major hurricane damage in nearly 20 years when Hurricane Matthew brushed the southern North Carolina coastline, sending strong winds and torrential

rains far enough inland to impact the Sandhills. The gusting winds knocked down hundreds of trees and dozens of power lines. Some parts of the county received nearly a foot of rain, resulting in flooding that damaged roads and even threatened homes in low-lying areas.

Although Hoke County did not experience the extent of damage that neighboring Cumberland and Robeson counties struggled with, thousands of residents were without electricity for days and thousands more were also left without running



The mosque in east Hoke County, guarded earlier this year by a sheriff's cruiser.

water due to power issues at some county water services sites. The main road to the county's solid waste transfer site also washed out, leaving no way in or out and forcing workers to truck garbage can by can to landfills in other counties.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation has worked ever since the storm to repair roads that washed out across the county, especially in the highly populated eastern areas where rainfall was heaviest. The city of Raeford also worked to repair washed-out sections of Prospect Avenue and Elwood Avenue. At the end of December, most roads were back open across the city and county.

Hoke County Schools were closed for a week after the storm and students and teachers continue working to make up the lost time, with Saturday school scheduled for several weekends in 2017.

County officials and emergency management (See STORIES, page 6)

### This Week

Man charged with child sex assault  
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Man charged with identity theft  
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The raid at The Haven. Hundreds of pets were removed.



The hat contest, a highlight of Stoneybrook.

## City: hurricane is 'in rear view,' new water meters in 2017

By CATHARIN SHEPARD  
Staff writer

Hurricane Matthew was the biggest issue the city of Raeford faced in 2016, and working on utility improvement projects – including an initiative to replace all city water customers' water meters – will be the focus of 2017, according to City Manager Dennis Baxley.

The hurricane was the most impacting event of the year, one that cost the city hundreds of thousands

of dollars in damage and even changed the landscape and appearance of some neighborhoods due to the number of large trees that came down in the storm.

Most of the biggest issues are cleared up now, Baxley reported.

"We've got that in our rearview mirror. We did finally get everything cleaned up, at least the majority of it. We've still got some piles isolated here and there. We've recovered nicely. We've got Prospect (Avenue) back open," Baxley said.

There's one major issue remaining that still needs work: repairs to Oakwood Avenue, a road that completely washed out in the flooding caused by the hurricane.

"Oakwood (Avenue), we're meeting with FEMA Thursday to do site visits and hopefully start writing some projects and start getting some reimbursements," Baxley said.

The Prospect Avenue repairs cost about \$65,000, and it will likely cost about \$300,000 to repair Oakwood Avenue.

The fallout from Hurricane Matthew showed officials the city needs to work on emergency preparedness in terms of what documentation is in place for quicker recovery, the city manager said.

"The big thing is we need to have some pre-approved contracts in place if this happens again. We make a phone call and the contractor comes in, and we can carry on with our daily activities," he said.

Otherwise, the city fared fairly (See CITY IN 2017, page 6)



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