

When Disaster Strikes: North Carolina's Response to Hurricane Florence

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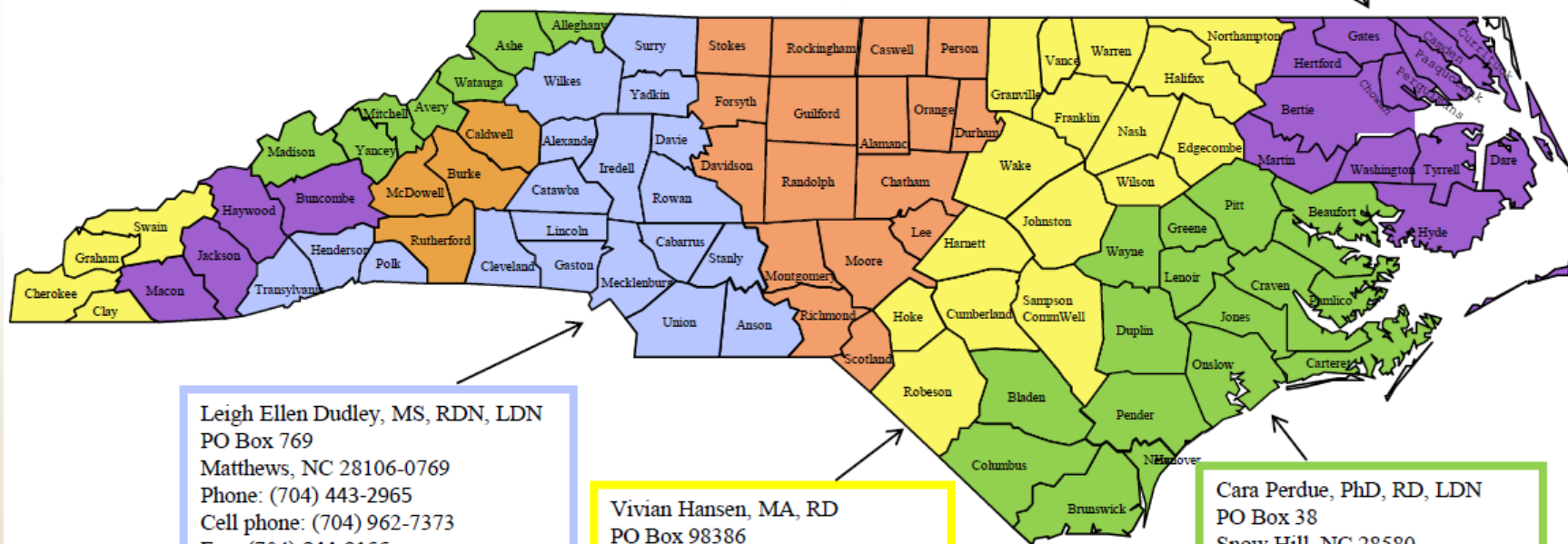
NC WIC

- We contract with 85 independent local agencies
- Guidance is given from the state level from Regional Nutrition Consultants
- Common Language
 - NSB: Nutrition Services Branch
 - Crossroads: Our WIC application
 - Customer Service Desk: provides assistance with Crossroads issues
 - SOAR: Solutran's system, our EBT vendor
 - eWIC: Oct 2017-May 2018

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Correspondence prior to the storm

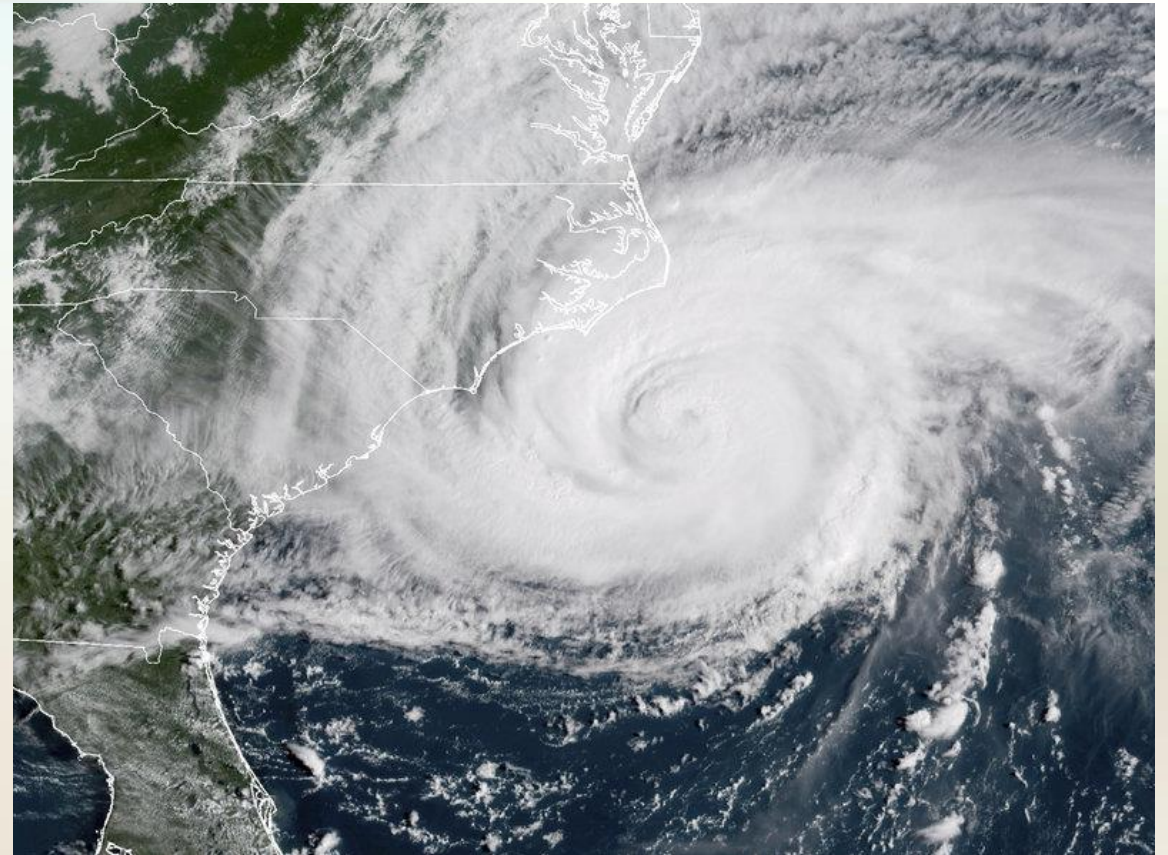
September 10, 2018

- WIC Policies and Procedures During a Disaster Correspondence
 - Verification of Certification (VOC)
 - Certification Extensions
 - Supporting Breastfeeding
 - Replacement of Destroyed WIC Foods
 - Remote Issuance
 - Evacuees and Emergent Needs
- Food Package Accommodations
- Infant Feeding Supplies During Emergencies

Hurricane Florence

Made landfall September 14, 2018
on the NC Coast

- Extensive wind damage
- Widespread power outages
- Record breaking storm surge
- Devastating rainfall
- Catastrophic flooding



<https://www.weather.gov/mhx/Florence2018>



<https://www.weather.gov/mhx/Florence2018>



Extensive flooding and damage in New Bern, NC.



Interstate 40 flooded as a result of Florence, blocking one of the major routes in and out of Southeastern NC. Wilmington was left mostly inaccessible by land.

<https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article218530380.html>



Flooded field and house in Hyde County, NC

<https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2018/09/photos-the-aftermath-of-hurricane-florence/570397/>



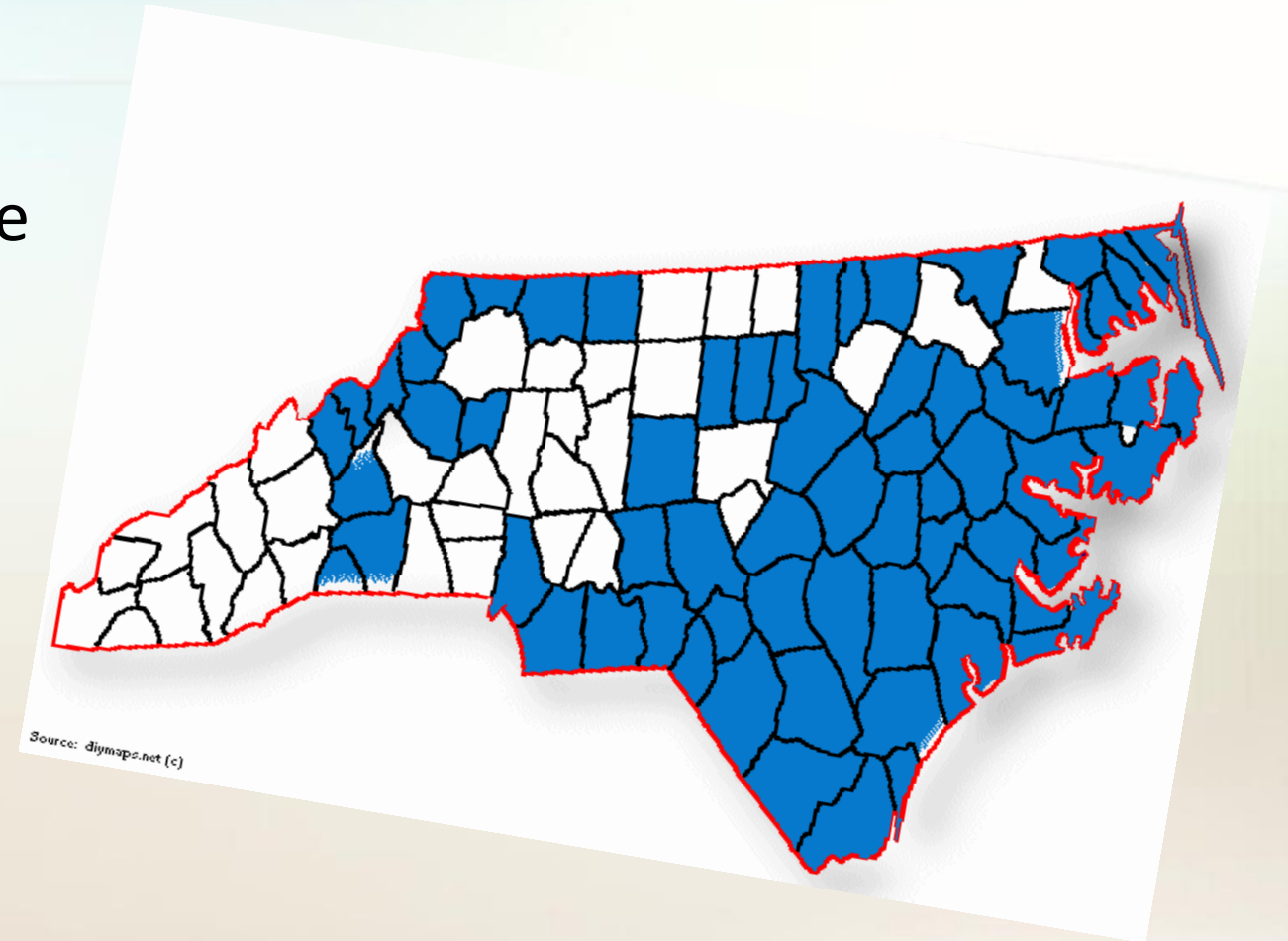
Abandoned cars in Wilmington, NC

New Bern, NC



Background: Impact of Florence on WIC Local Agencies

- 62% of NC local WIC agencies reported some level of closure
- 190 vendors reported storm-related closures.



Objective: Mitigating Participation Loss

- Certification extensions
 - Conducted at the State Level
- Automatically issuing food benefits
 - Through the use of eWIC

Request for WIC Flexibility

September 18, 2018 received FNS approval to:

- Remote benefit issuance
- Waiver of the second nutrition education contact
- Replacement of food benefits already redeemed
- Waiver of minimum inventory requirements
- Suspension of vendor monitoring
- Extension for vendor monitoring

Methods

- Had frequent calls at the State Level to determine status of local agencies almost daily from Sept 10-Sept 28
- Local agencies were contacted
- Decision to automatically issue was determined
- Participants with current benefits available received one month of food benefits

Script Development

- Automatic issuance of benefits
- Initial run yielded large batch
- Daily running of script

Script Development

- Released benefits to participants affected by clinic closures
 - Check for certification
 - Check for issuance availability
 - Will generate **current** issuance based on most recent prescription
 - Error report will be generated (for prescription problems etc.)
- Multi-purpose
- Validation in staging environment
- Updated list of affected clinics

Script Criteria

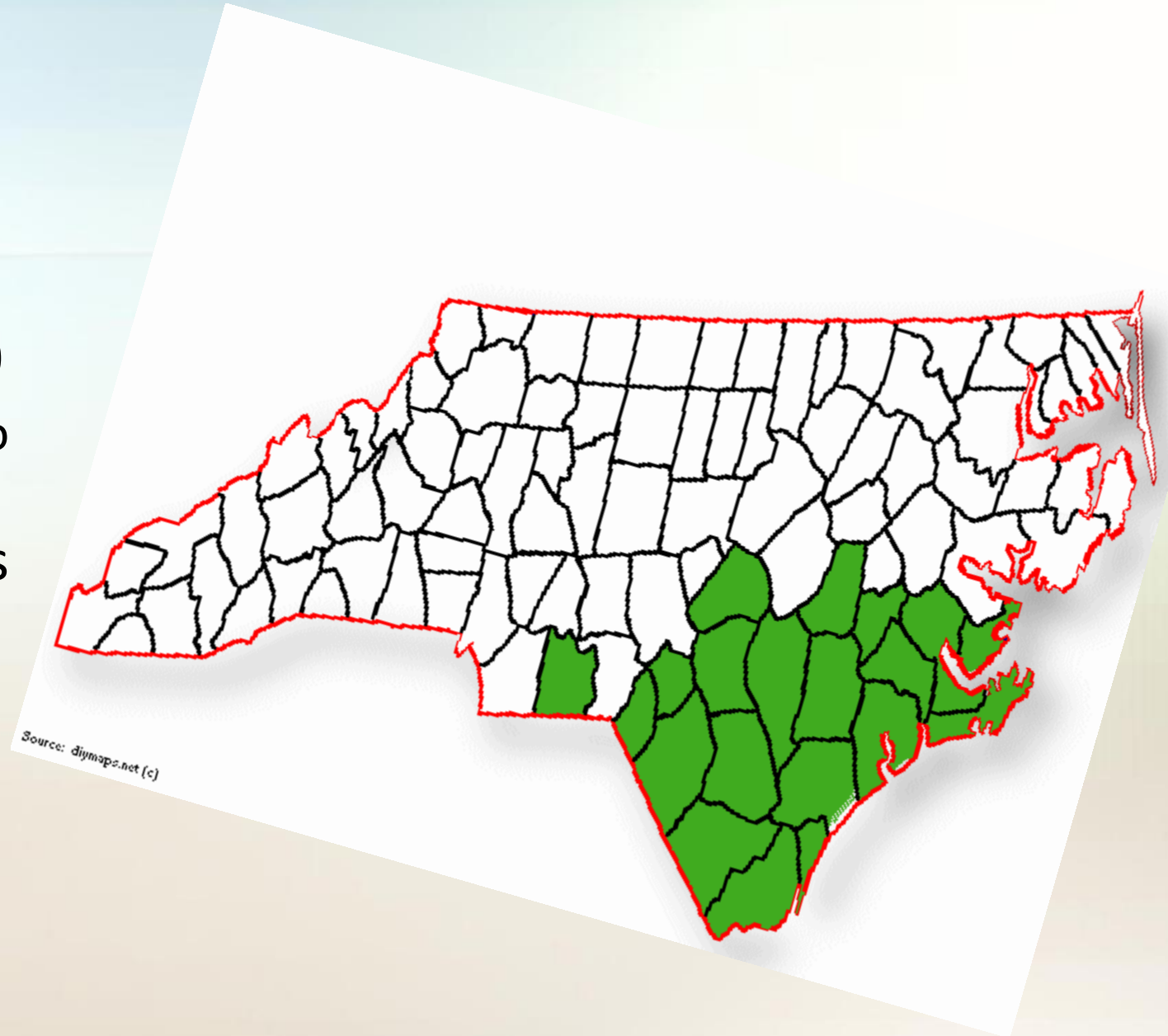
- Select Clinics
- Participant has green dot – Automate issuance
- Current Issuance month
- Script
 - Confirm everyone that is certified
 - Check for issuance
 - If no issuance, issue per last Issuance
 - Write prescription
 - Script can be run anytime
 - If error occurs, generate an error report for State to view

Testing/Script Validation

- Ran the script in Staging and provided an “after” spreadsheet with results
- Compared “before” and “after” data
- Results as expected
- No errors generated

Methods

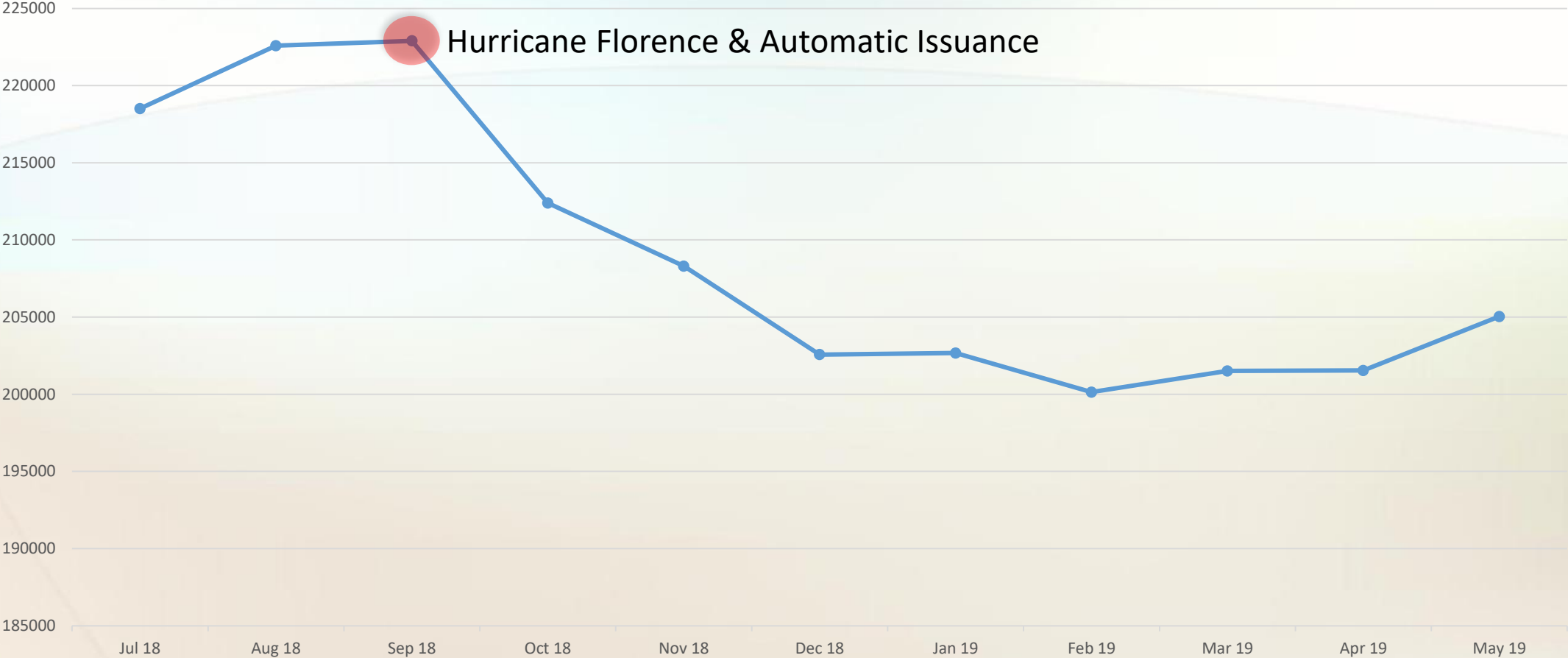
- Issuance occurred after business hours from September 17-September 30
 - Cut off of Sept 30th was due to formula change
- Actively certified participants received one month of benefits
- 25% of NC local agencies requested automatic issuance



Automatic Issuance and Participation

- September 2018 was the highest participation (222,901) compared to the six months prior (219,155)
- Automatic issuance had a protective effect on participation and mitigated participation loss during a disaster

NC WIC Monthly Participation Trends



Issuance follow-up

- After each issuance, a report was sent to each affected local agency
- Staff were encouraged to contact participants who received issuance
- Participants were notified of issuance if they had alerts set up on their BNFT app

Replacing Benefits for WIC Participants

September 20, 2018

- Only for the current month
- Affidavit attesting to WIC food benefit loss in Hurricane Florence
- NC WIC Program does not allow the following:
 - Issuing benefits early or changing family issuance dates
 - Replacement of expired participant food benefits
 - The purchase of hot or prepared foods

Replacing Benefits for WIC Participants

- 47 families were re-issued 181 benefits
- 102 of those benefits were redeemed at a total cost of \$1,486.72

North Carolina WIC Program Notice

AFFIDAVIT ATTESTING TO WIC FOOD BENEFIT LOSS IN HURRICANE FLORENCE

Family ID _____

Family Issue Date _____

The North Carolina WIC Program may replace current food benefits for the month of September 2018 that were redeemed but damaged, destroyed or stolen due to Hurricane Florence. WIC benefits are current if the Last Date to Spend (LDTs) is equal to the current day or is in the future. If the LDTs is in the past, the benefits are expired and cannot be replaced.






I understand that by signing and dating this form I am certifying that redeemed food benefits were lost due to Hurricane Florence.

(Participant/Parent/Guardian/Caretaker Signature) (Date)

(Staff Signature) (Date)

Lost Benefits:

September 2018 Timeline of Events

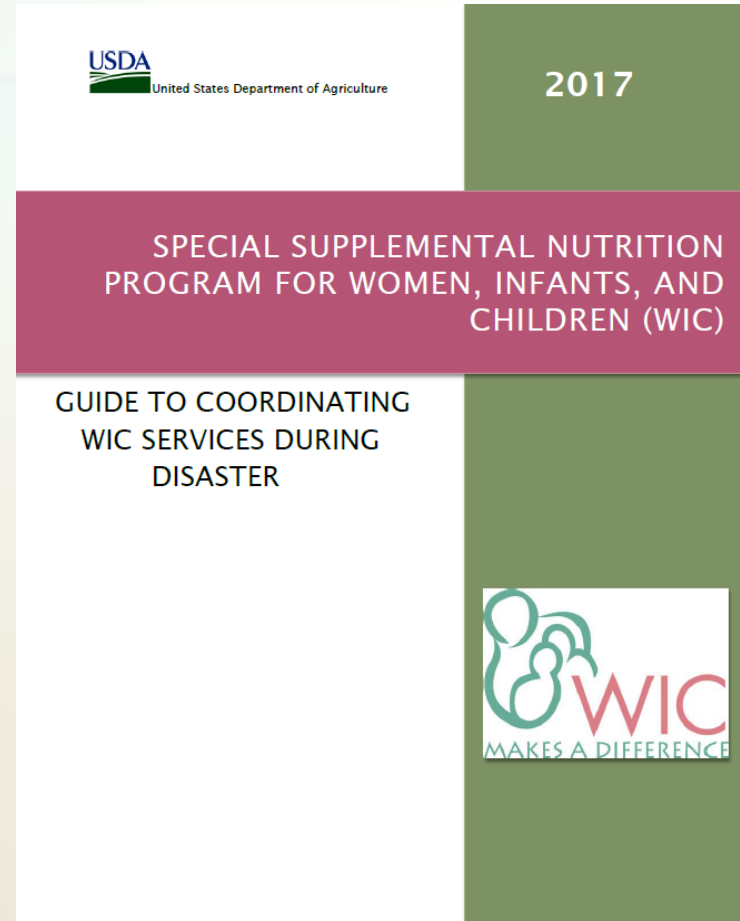
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10 NSB Correspondence & Check-in calls start 	11	12	13	14 Hurricane Florence makes landfall 	15
16	17 County closures & automatic issuance 	18 FNS approval for WIC flexibility 	19	20 Benefit replacement starts 	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 Last day of automatic issuance						

Conclusions & Lessons Learned

- Communication
 - Before
 - During
 - After
- Mitigating participation loss
 - Certification Extensions
 - Script development
 - Automatic Issuance
- Flexibility
- Challenging

Updates to the WIC Program Manual

- Disaster policies for local agencies
 - Eligibility requirements
 - Food benefits
 - Coordination
 - Supporting Breastfeeding



Hurricane Dorian



ALERT



- Memo to local agencies for WIC Policies and Procedures
- Automatic issuance started September 4, 2019
- Replacement of destroyed WIC foods
 - Affidavit attesting to WIC food benefit loss

References

- <https://www.weather.gov/mhx/Florence2018>
- <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/article218530380.html>
- <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/business/article223328915.html>
- <http://diymaps.net/userimages/135568.gif>
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2018/09/photos-the-aftermath-of-hurricane-florence/570397/>

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1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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