

# Unicoi County's Ballard Health Hospital Awarded \$9.8 Million to Rebuild After Helene Flooding

---

Release Date: ?? 12, 2025

The State of Tennessee and FEMA have approved **\$9.8 million** to replace Ballard Health's hospital in rural Erwin which was destroyed when Tropical Storm Helene swept across Eastern Tennessee in late September.

The 10 in-patient bed hospital, which sits along the banks of the Nolichucky River in the southern Appalachian mountains, has been serving the local community and surrounding agricultural area since 1953. Over the years, it has expanded and modernized, offering bone density testing, echocardiography, the latest diagnostic imaging technology and a sleep medicine lab. The newest facility was completed in October 2018 at a cost of \$30 million.

Helene's floodwaters encircled the Ballard Health hospital on Sept. 27, rising at least 8 feet inside the single-story building, racing through examining rooms, labs and patient rooms. Trained hospital and National Guard pilots used helicopters to airlift patients and staff to safety from the roof. Emergency workers also rescued dozens of people by boat to a nearby high school.

Under FEMA's Public Assistance program, FEMA's share to rebuild the hospital is **\$7,389,240**; the nonfederal share is **\$2,463,080**. Work to be completed includes architectural and engineering design services that use modern best construction practices and applicable codes and standards.

The cost estimate for replacing the hospital was generated using FEMA's Rapid Assessment with Public Infrastructure Data, which uses geospatial and aerial imagery as well as available Federal Highway Administration and State Department of Transportation data. The scope of work will be updated when the surveys and assessments are completed.



Because Public Assistance is a cost-sharing program, FEMA reimburses state applicants 75% of the eligible costs of repairs to existing structures. The federal share is paid directly to the state to disburse to agencies, local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations that incurred those costs. The remaining 25% represents nonfederal funds.

The Public Assistance program is FEMA's largest grant program, providing funding to help communities responding to and recovering from major presidentially declared disasters or emergencies. Helene swept across Tennessee **Sept. 26-30** and the president approved a major disaster declaration on **Oct. 2**, allowing FEMA to pay for disaster-damaged infrastructure.

