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How to get around SC road closures during Florence flooding

BY DAVID SLADE DSLADE@POSTANDCOURIER.COM

SEP 21, 2018



A barricade stops traffic heading southbound on Interstate 95 and detours it onto Interstate 40 in Benson N.C., Sunday, Sept. 16, 2018. Several stretches of the major interstate, as well as many major and minor roads were closed due to flooding from heavy rainfall over the past few days from what was Hurricane Florence. (AP Photo/Chris Seward)

CHRIS SEWARD

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(Editor's note: As of Monday, Sept. 24, Interstate 95 was open throughout the Carolinas but more than 500 other roads were closed. To read that update, [click here](#))

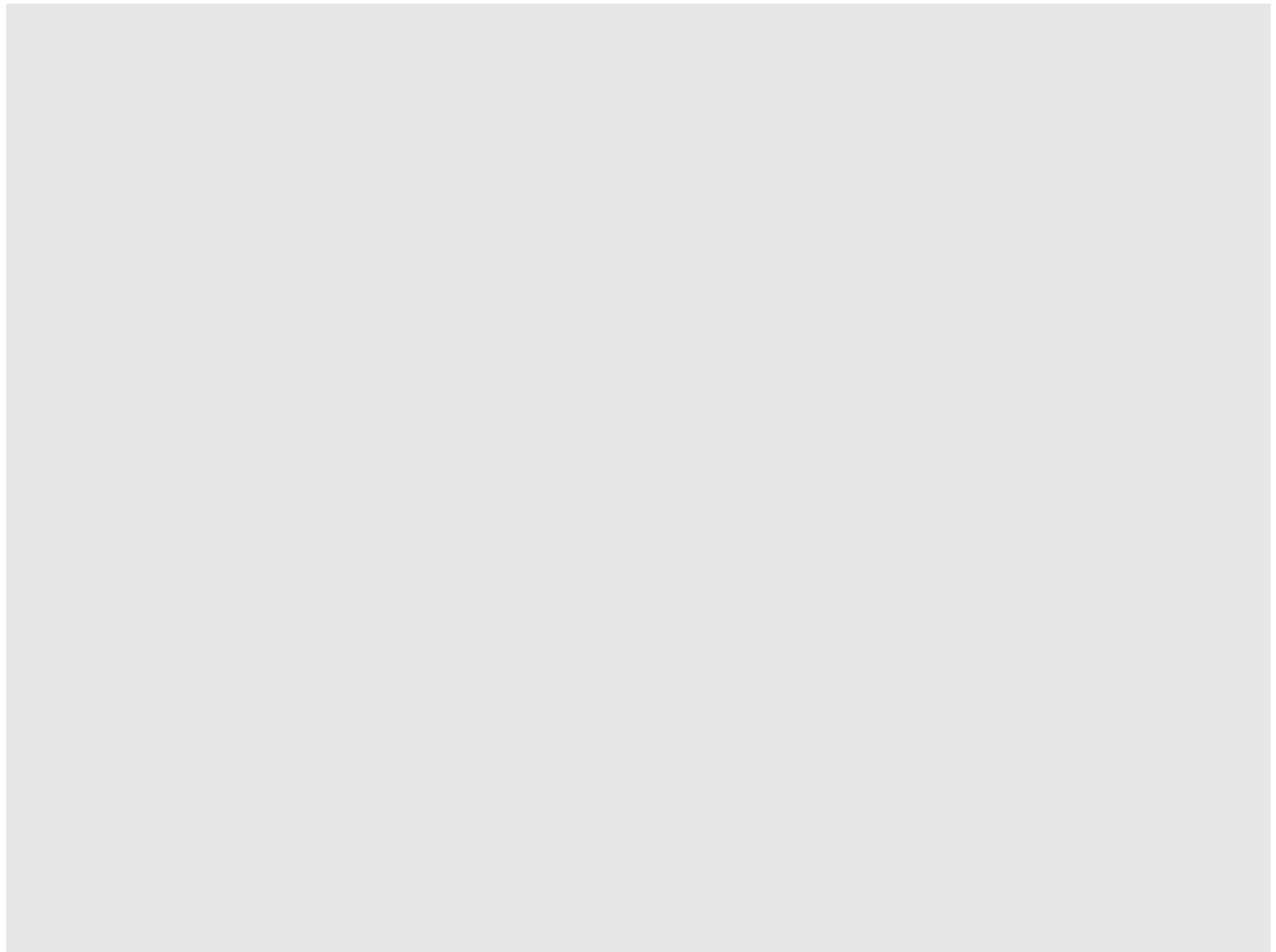
More than a week after Hurricane Florence made landfall, more than 800 roads, bridges and portions of interstate highways remained closed in the Carolinas due to flooding, with little relief in sight.

Sections of Interstate 95, the main east coast artery, remained closed in **North Carolina** and transportation officials didn't expect that to change for at least several days as rain-swollen rivers continue to flood. In South Carolina, part of I-95 near Florence was closed most of Friday due to flooding, but reopened at 4 p.m.

For residents of coastal South Carolina and the Pee Dee, road closures will continue to limit any travel north through North Carolina, with lengthy detours in some cases. Here's what to expect:

Interstate 95

"You won't be going 95 until probably late next week," said Steve Abbott, spokesman for the N.C. Department of Transportation.



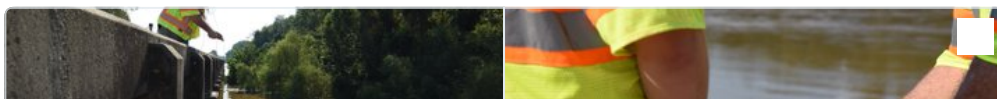
The Lumber River overflows onto a stretch Interstate 95 in Lumberton, N.C., Tuesday, Sept. 18, 2018, following flooding from Hurricane Florence. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)

GERRY BROOME

“We have to wait for the floodwater to go away — and rivers won’t crest until the weekend — and then we’ll need to see what damaged they caused,” he said. “Interstates 95 and 40 are obviously high priorities.”

In North Carolina, sections of I-95 were closed at Exit 13 due to flooding between U.S. Highway 74 near Lumberton and I-40.

In South Carolina, [a 5-mile stretch of I-95 was closed](#) at the Great Pee Dee River bridge, until Friday afternoon. In Florence on Friday about 3,000 people were told [to immediately evacuate their homes due to severe flooding](#).





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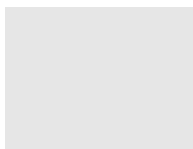
Infrastructure Engineers, Inc., are checking the I-95 Great Pee Dee River bridges in Florence County for damage as river water levels continue to rise on Sept. 20, 2018. All I-95 travel lanes are temporarily closed over the river. (Photos by Cody Crouch/SCDOT)

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While I-95 was open throughout South Carolina by the end of day Friday, less than 50 miles north motorists would find the interstate closed in North Carolina.

South Carolina suggested using I-77 to Charlotte as an alternative to northbound I-95. North Carolina was directing southbound traffic through Charlotte, via I-85.



NEWS

**MONITOR SC ROAD CLOSURES DUE TO FLOODING WITH THIS HELPFUL MAP
BY JENNIFER BERRY HAWES JHAWES@POSTANDCOURIER.COM**

North Carolina

Across the southeastern part of the Tar Heel State, drivers are being urged to avoid all or parts of 17 counties, and the Wilmington area in particular.

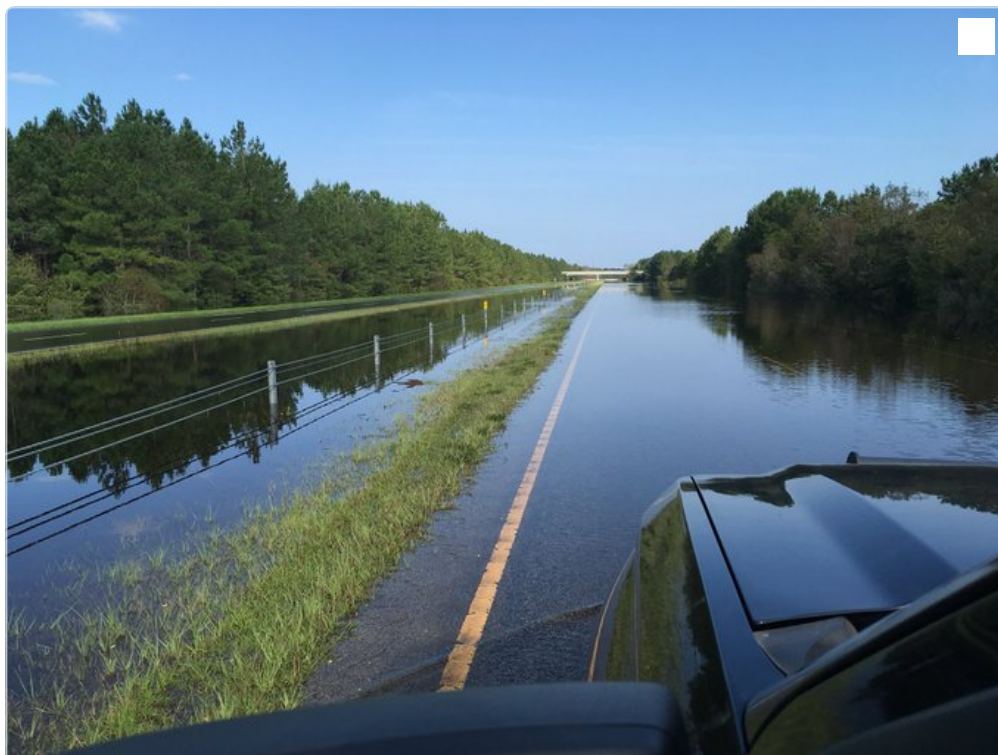
“At this time no safe, stable or reliable route exists for the public to get to and from Wilmington,” the N.C. DOT’s website advised Friday afternoon.

The N.C. counties to avoid were: “Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Western Craven (west of US 17), Cumberland, Duplin, Harnett, Hoke, southern Johnston (south of 70), Jones, Lenoir, New Hanover, Pender, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland, and southern Wayne (south of 70 Business).”

“Those are the primary counties where we are telling people ‘don’t drive there if you don’t have to’ because we can’t guarantee their safety,” Abbott said.

Conway

Ongoing flooding in and around Conway, just northwest of Myrtle Beach, continued to prompt road closures and lengthy traffic delays going into the weekend, with the Waccamaw River rising.



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Photo showing flooded portion of SC 22 (Conway Bypass) between SC 905 and SC 90.

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State workers were attempting to install flood protection measures, but part of U.S. 501 was closed near Lake Busbee and portions of S.C. Highways 22 and 905 were closed due to flooding, along with some local roads.

U.S. 17 remained open Friday, below the North Carolina state line.

“You can get up to Wilmington, but you can’t get out of Wilmington,” Abbott said. “The ground is so saturated that if there’s water on the roadway it’s not draining off.”

Hurricane Florence, and later Tropical Storm Florence, dumped more than 35 inches of rain on parts of North Carolina. There were about 650 roads closed in the state Friday.

In South Carolina there were 169 road and bridge closures as of late Friday afternoon. In every case, the time and date when the road or bridge was expected to reopen was “undetermined” according to [an SCDOT operations report](#).

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DAVID SLADE

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