

Efficiency of pre-event planning will be key as Florence hits, urban planner says

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A University of Kansas urban planning researcher who has researched long-term risks and natural disasters in the North Carolina region is available to discuss the potential effects of Hurricane Florence, which is

expected to hit the East Coast in coming days.

Ward Lyles, assistant professor of [urban planning](#) in the School of Public Affairs & Administration, has published numerous journal articles on reducing risks from natural hazards, the use of social network analysis to examine the role of planners in local planning efforts and evaluating the content of planning documents. Lyles also grew up in Durham, North Carolina, and earned his doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Hurricane Florence is predicted to slam into the North Carolina coast late this week and turn inland, which would likely smash the state with a life-threatening storm surge, catastrophically high winds and large amounts of rain in a region that is mostly already saturated.

Lyles, who has conducted research on hazard pre-disaster planning and reducing long-term risk in Onslow and New Hanover counties in North Carolina as well as other coastal locations at risk for large storms like hurricanes Florence, Harvey, Irma and Maria. He is also part of a research team with Elaina Sutley, KU assistant professor of civil, environmental & architectural engineering, studying the relationship of pre-disaster planning and post-disaster recovery, specifically focusing on Hurricane Matthew and now Hurricane Florence.

"Coastal North Carolina is very attractive for vacation and retirement development, alongside its historic agricultural and military sectors. Over the last few decades it has seen a sustained boom of development," Lyles said. "Where and how development occurs, for example, in or out of the floodplain, can make a huge difference in human suffering and property damage. This event may help us better understand how pre-event planning to reduce risks does or does not pay dividends. What we'll be watching closely in the coming days and month is if these communities take a recovery approach that re-creates the risks of the

past or if they chart a more sustainable path forward."

Provided by University of Kansas

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