

Unicoi County Awarded \$2.1 Million to Restore Rail Access to Industrial Park

Release Date: Mas 20, 2025

The State of Tennessee and FEMA have approved **\$2.1 million** to repair a rail system spur in Unicoi County, which provides access to the county's Riverview Industrial Park. Floodwaters from Tropical Storm Helene severely damaged and displaced a key section of railroad track as the storm swept across Eastern Tennessee in late September.

FEMA's Public Assistance program will cover eligible costs to repair **6,707 linear feet** of the railroad track, remove and replace **816 rail cross ties** and replace **13.5 tons** of limestone railroad ballast, using best construction practices and National Standards for Rail Construction.

FEMA's share for this project is **\$1,582,189**; the nonfederal share is **\$527,396**.

The funding is crucial to Unicoi County's economic recovery as the industrial park in Erwin accounts for a significant portion of the county's tax base. The industrial park is also the area's largest employer -- more than 200 have been without work since the storm.

Federal funding is authorized for emergency work and permanent work under FEMA's Public Assistance program. This includes funding to repair roads, bridges, water control facilities, public buildings, public utilities, parks and recreational facilities.

Communities are reimbursed at 100% of the total eligible costs for a period of 120 days of the state's choosing within the first six months after Helene. This allows communities to maximize cost savings by selecting the 120 days when the greatest costs were incurred.

Public Assistance 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 eligible disaster-damaged infrastructure and emergencies.

