OSFM
NC DEPT OF INSURANCE
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: NC Office of State Fire Marshal Statement Regarding Temporary Housing Emergency Rule

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Raleigh, NC - State Fire Marshal Brian Taylor is proud to announce that the North Carolina Building Code Council (NCBCC) has adopted an emergency rule developed by the OSFM Engineering Division to streamline the construction process for temporary housing for North Carolinians displaced by Hurricane Helene. The emergency temporary housing rule – which is enclosed with this press release – was subsequently approved by the Codifier of Rules of the North Carolina Office of Administrative Hearings and entered into the North Carolina Administrative Code with an effective date of December 10, 2024.

As the Winter deepens and temperatures drop – and as FEMA lags behind its prior projection for installation of temporary housing units – many North Carolinians in the counties devastated by Hurricane Helene are without safe and warm shelter. Many of our fellow citizens, churches, and charitable organizations have come forward to provide temporary housing to these North Carolinians but strict adherence to the North Carolina State Building Code and permitting requirements required by the North Carolina General Statutes prevents or significantly delays implementation. Compounding this problem, local inspection departments are stretched thin with their many essential duties helping their counties recover from the devastating storm, making inspecting the wide variety of temporary housing available in their counties – some of which is substandard and poses real danger to their occupants – an impossible task.

OSFM took prompt action to address this dire situation – our engineers developed a list of minimum safety requirements for temporary housing that provides private citizens and charitable organizations with clear and uniform directives to construct temporary housing that will safely shelter our fellow citizens. These minimum requirements address every aspect of constructing safe temporary housing units – from the foundations to the roof sheathing and from the allowed heating appliances to the required life safety measures like carbon monoxide and smoke alarms.

Equipped with these minimum requirements, property owners may now execute an affidavit affirming that the temporary housing structures on their property comply with the emergency rule, exempting the temporary housing structures from permit and inspection requirements, and releasing the State and local government from liability for the occupancy and use of the temporary structures. The affidavit process created by this emergency rule now empowers property owners

to construct temporary shelters for themselves and their neighbors without having to comply with strict adherence to the North Carolina State Building Code and wait for overburdened local inspection departments to issue permits.

The Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM) reaffirms its commitment to supporting local governments in their efforts to provide safe and warm shelter for North Carolinians this winter. By actively seeking feedback from citizens, local governments, and stakeholders, OSFM is dedicated to addressing the challenges faced by our most vulnerable residents. Through collaboration and innovation, we remain focused on delivering effective solutions to meet these critical needs.

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