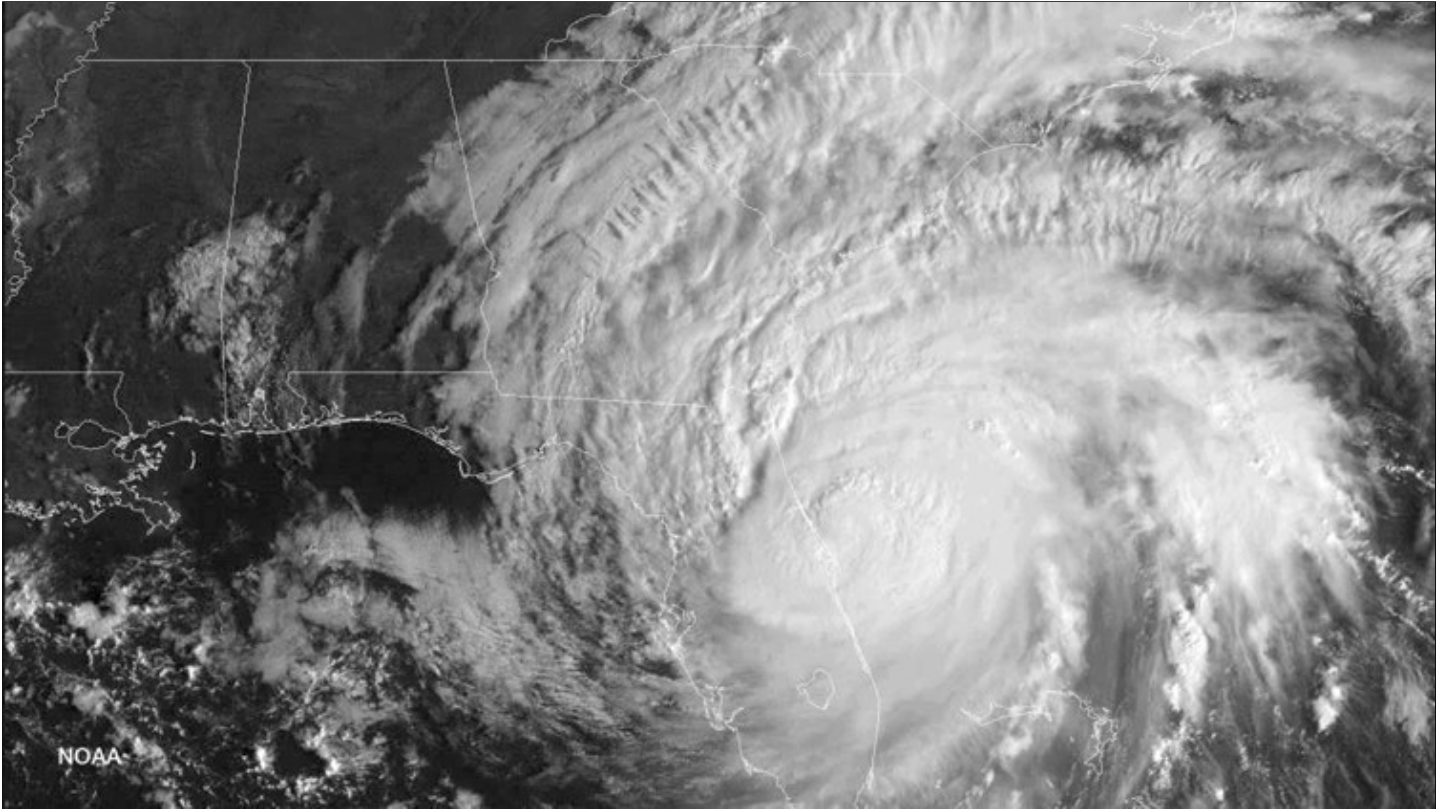


## Georgia emergency official wins hefty pay hike after hurricane dustup

GEORGIA-POLITICS By [Greg Bluestein](#) - The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



4



This image provided by NOAA, taken Oct. 7, 2016, shows Hurricane Matthew over the Southeastern part of the U.S. (NOAA via AP)

Posted: 3:08 p.m. Tuesday, February 21, 2017

---

A top Georgia emergency response official who was threatened with being fired in the middle Hurricane Matthew's wrath received a hefty pay raise as part of a settlement agreement with the agency.

Clint Perkins, director of the Georgia Emergency Management Agency's state operations center, got a salary increase of more than \$20,000 after a dustup with the department's then director, Jim Butterworth, during the response to the deadly October storm.

Documents obtained by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution through a public records request shed light on the internal turmoil buffeting the state's emergency response team while grappling with the hurricane, which left four Georgians dead and tens of millions of dollars in damage in its wake.

**The AJC** previously reported that Perkins sent staffers what appeared to be a farewell letter the Wednesday after the storm struck, thanking colleagues for "overwhelming" support. At the time, the agency said Perkins was still on the staff and had not been terminated.

But documents show there was more to the behind-the-scenes tempest. A November letter from Perkins' attorney Kim Worth sought \$150,000 in compensatory damages and a roughly \$30,000 salary increase for what she called Butterworth's "unlawful retaliation" toward her client.

"Butterworth's deliberate decision to terminate Mr. Perkins at the precise moment when GEMA was deploying its resources to respond to Hurricane Matthew was humiliating and irreparably harmed Mr. Perkins's professional reputation," wrote Worth.

---

---

## *Related*



Photos: Hurricane Matthew's aftermath in Georgia



Photos: Aerial view of Hurricane Matthew's impact on Georgia's coast



Watch: What's in Gov. Deal's new budget?



Hurricane Matthew damages parts of Amelia Island



Homeowners return to St. Simons Island following Hurricane Matthew

---

---

Perkins wasn't ultimately fired.

Meteorologist Brad Nitz has a close-up look at the damage.

In a Jan. 30 settlement agreement, the state agreed to hike Perkins' salary to \$86,500, from the roughly \$65,000 he earned in 2016. The legal compact included no admission of wrongdoing or liability from either party, and no mention of compensatory damages.

Attorneys for the state and Perkins declined further comment. Perkins, too, has declined to comment on what happened.

Shortly after the storm passed, Butterworth sent word that he was leaving for a private-sector job. Deal's top aide said it was a long-planned departure and that Butterworth, a former head of the Georgia National Guard, had briefed the governor on his plans in September.

But before Butterworth left, he weighed in one final time on the Perkins issue. He wrote a Nov. 3 email to an agency attorney, urging him to deny Perkins' "highly opportunistic" request for damages and a salary increase, and he suggested that the state file a countersuit accusing him of "frivolous" litigation if the employee sued.



### About the Author



GREG BLUESTEIN



### Sign up for Newsletters

Want more news? Sign up for free newsletters to get more of the AJC delivered to your inbox.

### Reader Comments 4

### Next Up in Georgia Politics



Georgia Legislature approves budget, giving teachers 2 percent raises



Georgia Senate backs effort to curtail the overprescribing of opioids