

RALEIGH -- Gov. Beverly Perdue's staff is taking the blame for failing to alert the North Carolina public sooner that the governor had declared a state of emergency for nearly 40 eastern counties for the approaching Hurricane Irene.

Perdue's press office announced late Thursday morning her declaration, which sets in motion mechanisms for state emergency officials to respond to the storm, activate the National Guard and lay the groundwork for Perdue to seek federal financial assistance.

But Perdue had actually signed the declaration early Wednesday evening and didn't mention it at a media briefing Thursday morning.

Perdue spokesman Mark Johnson said it was the press office's mistake that the declaration wasn't announced sooner. He said the governor didn't mention it because she believed a news release about it already had been sent.

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