

# Helmets

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## **IN NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **Celebrating 10 Years of Alps in North Carolina**

**Covered by Kellem Hall, Independent Reporter**  
**Reviewed by Jaxon Treau, Alps News and Blogs**  
**Posted 2998 days ago, Last Edited 2993 days ago**

Before the Alps Processing Center, life was very different in the Tidewater region, which includes south-eastern Virginia and most of eastern North Carolina. Hurricanes and rising waters had incentivized many families to seek higher elevation. For many residents, Hurricane Randy was the final straw, dealing about 135 million dollars' worth of damage across the region.

Alps CEO, Steven Benedict, announced the Greenville Processing Center during a hope-seeking mission to the area. The ubiquitous image most will remember from the news coverage featured Benedict in his red Alps-branded

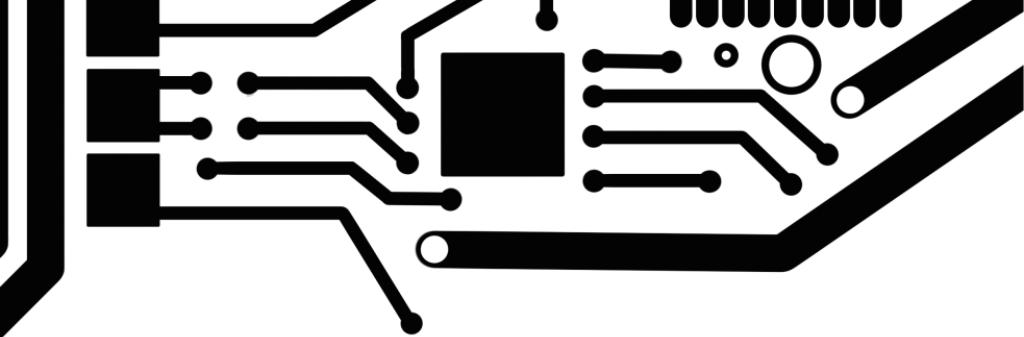
life jacket. The image itself doesn't offer anything to indicate where his visit had taken him, but we know now that it was to one of the hardest hit districts of Greenville. In the impromptu announcement, he said, "Alps will clean this all up. We will build a center and a community to house all the victims of Randy."

Following the announcement, Alps set up medical pop-ups, distributed ready-made meals and life vests, and made immediate job and property offers to the neighborhood residents. I spoke with a few of the original residents, asking them about what Alps' aid had meant to them during that difficult time. Henry Thomas was happy to speak with me about Alps, "I never did see Steven Benedict, but I just knew he'd been here. People were acting like people again, smiling and being friendly. Only a man like that could swoop in and really get things moving." Thomas even showed me the life vest he'd gotten when he first approached the Alps pop-ups, he chuckled, "Just in case we get another Randy."

These days, the probability of another Randy is difficult to calculate. The Corporate Council's Oceanic and Atmospheric Committee attributes that to Greener Pastures, a sustainability focused project backed by, then bought by Alps, which rapidly captures carbon and redirects excess heat from notorious polluters.

I asked Thomas and his partner Del what they thought of the work Greener Pastures had done in Suffolk-Franklin-Windsor (SFW) zone. Their reviews were mixed. But, Thomas thought the work was paying off, bringing more predictable weather and crop yields.

This month, the Greenville Processing Center kicks off their 10-year anniversary, planning various events and activities for processors, associates, community members, and families to participate in. If you drop by, look out for Henry and Del Thomas, or the 1300+ other original residents who still work at the center. A full schedule of activities is available on the Alps events page [here](#).



# Helmets

I WANTED TO THROW the phone across the room. “You’re sure?” I wished Teena wasn’t.

“I’m sure of it. Saw it myself.” On the other end of the line, Teena had some broadcast playing in the background. It was loud enough that I could hear it. The news anchor was reporting a new food group that the school system planned to add to the menu. “He and Jarrod were walking back with the cat food, and they picked them up. Something about curfew.”

“But the curfew isn’t until 9,” I seethed, pushing the words through gritted teeth. I flicked my eyes to the clock tile set into the kitchen backsplash. It read 9:02. “Fuck those bots.”

Teena hummed. “I know that’s right.”

I needed to do something with my hands. I needed to tear something apart. I put my phone down carefully,

making sure not to let my anger go unchecked in the moment of handling the thin piece of glastic. Once the fragile, polymer rectangle was on the counter, I tapped at the speaker button. “Didn’t the mayor say that if you were on your way home then the rocops let you go home?” I pulled a head of cabbage from the fridge, unwrapped the waxy paper around it, then ripped the leaves off.

“That’s what he says, but that’s not what I saw.” The news anchor had moved to another news story; this one was about biotic pollinators—called buzzers—melting during their migrations. “I saw two kids get stopped, helmeted, and taken away to the central facility.” She sighed. “I thought about going out there, but there’s nothing that says they wouldn’t have just put me in one of them helmets too. Somebody’s gotta be out here to pay the fine.”

I was furious in a cold way and unsurprised in a hot way. I hadn’t been sure what to expect of the rocops when they first were introduced, but I had known it wouldn’t be good. While our area wasn’t one of the pilot programs, it was one of the first places where it was instituted after the pilot ended. The pilot programs were in places like Louisiana, Florida, Texas; places where processing centers were already a booming economic successes. They also happened to be places that wanted perfectly obedient

and scalable police forces, which was what the corporate contract had provided them.

Rocops weren't actually robots, but the processing helmets and bio armor precluded them from being people. In many ways, they were exactly the same as Jarrod and Nezzer. The steps they took swayed the same. The hands they used were blistered the same. But the words that fell from their mouths were wrong, chewed up by systems they were plugged into.

There was nothing I could do until the morning, after the curfews lifted.



“Did Nez get home?” Dad looked over to the empty chair to his left, across from me. “No,” he answered himself, “his dishes would be there.” He reached a slow hand over to the spot and ran his palm over the ridges of the placemat. “Where’s Nez?” He turned his eyes - always a little glassy, always a little wet - toward me.

I chewed the bite of dinner in my mouth extra long, not because I had to think of what to say, but because I had to steel myself to answer. I swallowed harder than stewed cabbage necessitated. “Nez will be home tomorrow.” I