

# Biden-Harris Administration Provides More Than \$45 Million to Hurricane Helene Survivors, Continues Addressing Critical Needs Across Southeast

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*FEMA Administrator Criswell Remains in North Carolina Along with FEMA Senior Leaders to Bolster Response Efforts*

WASHINGTON -- As response efforts continue in North Carolina and the Southeast, FEMA remains focused on getting help to people and areas that need it the most. More than 5,600 personnel from across the federal workforce are deployed, including more than 1,500 from FEMA. To date, FEMA has shipped over 11.5 million meals, more than 12.6 million liters of water, 150 generators and more than 400,000 tarps to the region. FEMA has already helped thousands of Hurricane Helene survivors jumpstart their recoveries with more than \$45 million in flexible, upfront funding. Administrator Criswell remains in North Carolina and is actively working with local and state officials on ongoing response efforts. On the ground with Administrator Criswell are FEMA's top senior leaders from around the country including Field Coordinating Officer Thomas McCool, Region 4 Regional Administrator Robert Samaan, Region 3 Regional Administrator MaryAnn Tierney, Region 7 Regional Administrator Andrea Spillars and Chief Financial Officer Mary Comans to help oversee response operations.

Disaster survivors in certain areas of [Georgia](#), [Florida](#), [North Carolina](#), [South Carolina](#), [Tennessee](#) and [Virginia](#) can begin their recovery process by applying for federal assistance through FEMA. People with damage to their homes or personal property who live in the designated areas should apply for assistance, which may include upfront funds to help with essential items like food, water, baby formula and other emergency supplies. Funds may also be available to repair storm-related damage to homes and personal property, as well as assistance to find a temporary place to stay. Homeowners and renters with damage to their home or



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personal property from previous disasters, whether they received FEMA funds or not, are still eligible to apply for and receive assistance for Hurricane Helene.

There are three ways to apply for FEMA assistance:

- **Calling FEMA Helpline at 1-800-621-3362.**
- **Online by visiting [disasterassistance.gov](https://disasterassistance.gov).**
- **Downloading and applying on the [FEMA App](#).**

## Support for North Carolina

**Staffing:** In North Carolina, **more than 575 FEMA staff** are on the ground, with more arriving daily. Over **38 state and federal Urban Search and Rescue teams** are in North Carolina helping people. As of today, these teams have **rescued or supported over 2,500 survivors**. Dozens of Disaster Survivor Assistance staff are on the ground in affected areas to help survivors to apply for FEMA assistance and connect them with additional state, local, federal and voluntary agency resources. **Over 1,000 National Guard Bureau troops** have deployed to North Carolina to support response and recovery efforts. To date, troops have delivered nearly one million pounds of food, water and other supplies. **Experienced FEMA leaders** from around the country are in the field to bolster response efforts. **Field Coordinating Officer Thomas McCool, Region 4 Regional Administrator Robert Samaan, Region 3 Regional Administrator MaryAnn Tierney, Region 7 Regional Administrator Andrea Spillars and Chief Financial Officer Mary Comans** are on the ground overseeing response operations.

**Financial Support:** FEMA has provided **more than \$17 million in housing and other types of assistance** to over **10,000 households**.

**Sheltering:** Over 100 families who cannot return home are staying in safe and clean lodging through FEMA's Transitional Shelter Assistance program. [Transitional Sheltering Assistance](#) is available for North Carolinians displaced by Tropical Storm Helene. Residents in declared counties who have applied for disaster assistance may be eligible to stay temporarily in a hotel or motel paid for by FEMA while they work on their long-term housing plan. People do not need to request this assistance. FEMA will notify them of their eligibility through an



automated phone call, text message and/or email, depending upon the method of communication they selected at the time of application for disaster assistance. Twenty shelters are housing just **over 1,000 occupants**. Mobile feeding operations continue to help survivors in heavily impacted areas, including three mass feeding sites in Buncombe, McDowell and Watauga counties.

**Power and Cellular Restoration:** As of today, **more than 72% of originally reported power outages have been restored. Nearly 8,000 crews** continue to assist with remaining power restoration efforts. Cellular restoration continues to improve, with **less than 30% of cellular sites down** as of today. As of today, only **two counties have 50% or more cell sites down**. Two Federal Communications Commission surveillance teams are conducting inspection operations on equipment in targeted counties. FEMA is boosting response coordination by providing **40 Starlink units to ensure first responders** can communicate with each other. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians has full mobile cellular service.

**Commodities:** Commodity distribution, mass feeding and hydration operations are underway in areas of western North Carolina. FEMA commodity shipments are enroute to support operations. The agency is on track to meet requested delivery timelines for meals and water. Voluntary organizations are supporting feeding operations with bulk food and water deliveries coming via truck and aircraft. The Salvation Army has **nine mobile feeding units** supporting the massive operation. The American Red Cross is engaging in targeted distribution of emergency supplies in low-income communities with high levels of minor or affected residential damage.

### Information for Residents

- Residents can visit: [ncdps.gov/helene](https://ncdps.gov/helene) to get information and additional assistance.
- Residents should not travel to western North Carolina to keep the roadways clear for search and rescue teams and utility crews.
- Residents can get in touch with loved ones by **calling 2-1-1** or **visiting [unitedwaync.org](https://unitedwaync.org)** to add them to search and rescue efforts.

### Support for Florida



**FEMA**

On Thursday, President Biden visited the state to survey damage and meet with state and local leaders.

**Staffing:** FEMA specialists are canvassing Florida communities impacted by Hurricane Helene to help survivors apply for assistance. Additionally, FEMA inspectors have begun visiting applicants' homes to verify disaster-caused damage. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is conducting either debris assessments or water/wastewater assessments across seven counties.

**Financial Support:** FEMA has provided more than **\$23 million** to more than **4,400 households**.

**Commodities:** The American Red Cross is engaging in targeted distribution of emergency supplies in low-income communities with high levels of minor or affected residential damage. **More than 450 volunteers** continue conducting direct emergency feeding and working with feeding partners to provide distribution in support of partner production. The Salvation Army has active mobile feeding units serving meals and distributing supplies in 13 counties. Plans to expand distribution to hard hit counties are being explored.

**Sheltering:** **16 shelters** remain open with less than **475 occupants**.

Residents in need of information or resources should call the State Assistance Information Line (SAIL) at **1-800-342-3557**. English, Spanish and Creole speakers are available to answer questions.

## Support for Georgia

On Thursday, President Biden visited to survey damage in various affected areas of Georgia.

**Staffing:** FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams are on the ground in neighborhoods across the affected counties helping survivors apply for FEMA assistance and connecting them with additional state, local, federal and voluntary agency resources. FEMA continues to prioritize rural communities to help restore private roads, bridges and wells and septic systems.

**Financial Support:** FEMA has provided over **\$150,000** to survivors.



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**Power Restoration:** More than 71,000 customers have had power restored, with over 80% power restoration from peak outage. USDA Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) programs are in place to give food assistance to low-income households with food loss or damage caused by a natural disaster.

**Commodities:** The Salvation Army has 30 active mobile feeding units providing meals and support to 10 counties in the affected areas. The American Red Cross is engaging in targeted distribution of emergency supplies in low-income communities with high levels of minor or affected residential damage. The organization continues to conduct direct emergency feeding and working with feeding partners to provide distribution in support of partner production. More than 13,000 hot meals and over 2,300 shelf stable meals have been distributed.

**Sheltering:** Two new shelters have opened, totaling 11 shelters with over 520 occupants.

**Resources:** Residents can find resources like shelters and feeding sites at [gema.georgia.gov/hurricane-helene](http://gema.georgia.gov/hurricane-helene).

## Support for South Carolina

**Staffing:** FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams are on the ground in neighborhoods across the affected counties continuing to help survivors apply for FEMA assistance and connect them with additional state, local, federal and voluntary agency resources. South Carolina is monitoring river rises along coastal communities. **Region 10 Administrator Willie Nunn** continues to be on the ground to help oversee response and recovery operations in the state.

**Financial Support:** In South Carolina, FEMA has provided over \$4.5 million to over 5,600 households.

**Commodities:** The American Red Cross is engaging in targeted distribution of emergency supplies in low-income communities with high levels of minor or affected residential damage. One shelter closed on Thursday. **Ten shelters are open with around 200 occupants.** The American Red Cross will begin distributing FEMA-supplied boxed food and water in Aiken County. The state has



established a Mass Feeding Task Force to include multiple voluntary agencies. Three Salvation Army mobile feeding units are in hard hit areas. FEMA is supporting the state's feeding mission with Meals Ready to Eat and drinking water.

**Debris Removal:** Team Rubicon is continuing to route clearance operations in Spartanburg County and continues planning for clearing other areas.

### Information for Residents

- Residents with questions on Hurricane Helene can call the state's toll-free hotline, open 24 hours a day, at **1-866-246-0133**.
- Residents who are dependent on medical equipment at home and who are without power due to Helene may be eligible for a medical needs shelter. Call the state's **Department of Public Health Care Line** at **1-855-472-3432** for more information.

### Support for Virginia

**Federal Support:** Several federal agencies, including FEMA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Energy and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, are already in Virginia and working hard with their counterparts with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and other state agencies. Priorities include coordinating the removal of debris and restoration of critical infrastructure.

**Financial Support:** FEMA has provided **more than \$124,000 to survivors**. Residents of Giles, Grayson, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington and Wythe counties, as well as residents of the city of Galax, are eligible to apply for assistance from FEMA to help with costs from damage and losses due to Tropical Storm Helene.

**Staffing:** On Thursday, the first Disaster Survivor Assistance staff started and will continue working on the ground in neighborhoods across the affected counties. These teams help survivors apply for FEMA assistance and connect them with additional state, local, federal and voluntary agency resources. Damage assessments are continuing through the impacted area to determine additional unmet and long-term recovery needs.



**Sheltering:** One shelter is open with close to **20 occupants**.

## Support for Tennessee

On Wednesday, President Biden approved a major disaster declaration for the state. This includes

**Financial Support:** FEMA has received more than **1,800 applications for disaster assistance**. People in Carter, Cocke, Greene, Hamblen, Hawkins, Johnson, Unicoi and Washington counties should apply for assistance. Individual Assistance provides money to survivors for serious needs, including food, gas and medication. It also provides money for the repair and/or replacement of personal property and repairs to a disaster-damaged home.

**Commodities:** Mass feeding operations have expanded with support from National Guard, delivering food to Unicoi, Washington and Carter counties via aircraft.

**Sheltering: Six shelters** remain open with decreasing populations, as people are able to safely return home.

**Power and Cellular Restoration:** Power and cellular restoration continues to improve. Power has been restored to nearly all customers and **less than 13% of cellular sites are down** across the affected area.

### Information for Residents

- Residents can call **1-800-824-3463 to report a missing person**. Callers should be prepared to provide as much information as possible including names, phone numbers, vehicle identification and last known whereabouts.
- Counties have started establishing donation centers. For the evolving list, visit [TEMA's website](#).

## Voluntary Organizations

Voluntary organizations are also providing personnel and resources to the hardest hit areas. The American Red Cross has more than **850 trained disaster workers**



**providing comfort and operating shelters.** Additionally, they are helping find loved ones through their helpline **1-800-RED-CROSS** (1-800-733-2767) or by the [Red Cross Hurricane Helene Reunification page](#), where you can enter pertinent information about the person you're looking for. If someone is missing a child related to this disaster or any other incident, they need to call **9-1-1** and then **1-800-THE-LOST** to receive assistance from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

People can receive free services like cutting fallen trees, tarping roofs and mold mitigation with the help of Crisis Cleanup by calling **844-965-1386**. The hotline is open through October 11 and can connect people with volunteers from local relief organizations, community groups and the faith-based community who may be able to assist.

