

# Biden-Harris Administration Prepared for Multi-State Event as Hurricane Helene Approaches, FEMA Encourages People in Storm's Path to Listen to Local Officials

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*At the Direction of President Biden, FEMA Administrator to Travel to Florida to Survey Impacts*

WASHINGTON -- Hurricane Helene is a massive, dangerous storm and FEMA is prepared for anticipated multi-state impacts. In advance of Hurricane Helene's landfall in Florida, the Biden-Harris Administration approved pre-landfall emergency declarations for Florida, Georgia and North Carolina. These declarations enable FEMA to provide federal resources to the states for emergency protective measures like reimbursement for evacuations and sheltering and aid initial response and recovery efforts.

FEMA urges people in the path of Hurricane Helene to take immediate action to protect themselves as the storm approaches. Hurricane Helene is expected to continue strengthening and bring life-threatening storm surge and hurricane conditions to Florida starting today. There is also the risk for dangerous flash and flooding in Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

"The Biden-Harris Administration is ready for this event. We are prepared and postured for response," said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell. "People in Hurricane Helene's path need to take this seriously. Listen to your state and local elected officials. If they tell you to evacuate, evacuate. If they tell you to shelter in place, stay where you are. These decisions can save lives."

FEMA, the entire federal family and partner organizations are actively coordinating response efforts across Florida, Georgia and North Carolina. There are over 1,100 personnel actively supporting from across the federal government, which include



Urban Search and Rescue Teams, Coast Guard, the Department of Defense and power restoration teams from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. An additional 700 FEMA team members already deployed across the region from previous events. To help people who may need to evacuate, the American Red Cross is actively standing up shelters in the areas likely to feel the impacts from Helene.

## Safety Tips During the Storm

Residents in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina can find a list of state, tribal and local resources such as evacuation, shelter and important storm updates on [FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov).

- **Pay attention to local officials.** Weather conditions can change quickly. Make sure to heed their warnings and evacuate immediately if told to do so.
- **NOW is the time to finish preparations. Today** is the day to prepare for this storm. Take action immediately to protect yourself, your family, your pets and your home. Finish gathering any supplies like food, water, medication, flashlights and food for your pets **now**. If possible, include cash in your emergency kit, as ATMs may not work after the storm.
- **If you did not evacuate, stay safe at home.** Gather your supplies including flashlights, battery operated radio and food and water and keep them on a high shelf or upper level. Find a safe location to ride out the storm, such as a designated storm shelter or interior room for high winds.
- **Be in the know about your evacuation route.** Several counties in Florida issued mandatory and voluntary evacuation orders. Visit [Evacuation Orders | Florida Disaster](#) to see the full list. Florida residents can call 800-729-3413 for shelter locations. People in Florida, Alabama and Georgia should be prepared to evacuate quickly if they are in the path of this storm and are told to do so.
- **Have several ways to receive alerts.** People in areas along Florida's Panhandle, west coast and into Alabama and Georgia should follow the forecast carefully and instructions of state and local officials by monitoring local radio or television stations for updated emergency information. [Sign up for community alerts in your area](#) and be aware of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA), which require no sign up. You can also download the [free FEMA App](#) available in English and Spanish languages to receive real-time weather alerts and find local emergency shelters in your area.



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- **Your neighbors are your lifeline.** Check on your neighbors, especially older adults or those who may need additional assistance, to make sure they have what they need to ride out the storm. Have a plan to remain in contact during and after the storm.
- **Power outage and generator safety.** If you lose power, use only flashlights or battery-powered lanterns for emergency lighting. If using a generator, remember to always use them outdoors and keep it at least 20 feet from doors and windows. Additionally, make sure to keep the generator dry and protected from rain or flooding. De-clutter drains and gutters, bring in outside furniture and put up hurricane shutters if you have them.
- **Stay out of floodwater.** Walking, swimming or driving through flood waters is extremely dangerous. Standing water may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines or contain hazards such as wild or stray animals, human and livestock waste and chemicals that can lead to illness.
- **Turn Around. Don't Drown™.** Driving through a flooded area can be extremely hazardous. Almost half of all flash flood deaths happen in vehicles. When in your car, look out for flooding in low lying areas at bridges and at highway dips. As little as 6 inches of water may cause you to lose control of your vehicle or fall if you are walking through it. Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and pick-ups.
- **Keep important documents safe.** Save copies of birth certificates, passports, medical records and insurance papers in a safe, dry place. Keep important documents in a waterproof container and create password-protected digital copies. Take photos or videos of your belongings and property on your phone or upload them to the internet. Move valuables like photo albums, heirlooms and other treasured items to higher levels.



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