

FEMA, the Federal Interagency, Private and Nonprofit Partners Continue to Support Hurricane Helene Response Efforts

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President Biden approved South Carolina's request for an emergency declaration yesterday, enabling FEMA to provide federal resources to the state for emergency protective measures like reimbursement to keep people safe and aid initial response and recovery efforts.

WASHINGTON -- FEMA is coordinating a whole of community response to the aftermath of Hurricane Helene while preparing for additional impacts as the storm travels North. Hurricane Helene made landfall in Florida overnight as a powerful Category 4 hurricane, causing major damage and leaving more than 4 million homes without power. Tropical Storm Helene is now posing a significant flood threat in several states with heavy rain continuing. FEMA continues supporting immediate response efforts in the area as Administrator Deanne Criswell travels to Florida to survey damage alongside Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and other government officials.

As the storm continues inland, FEMA urges people in its path to heed the warnings of local officials, evacuate immediately if told to do so and check on neighbors if conditions allow. People further inland should also take immediate action to protect themselves as the storm approaches, bringing damaging winds over portions of Georgia and the Carolinas today. People in these areas should be prepared for the possibility of long-duration power outages.

Additionally, potentially life-threatening flash flooding is expected across portions of Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. Numerous significant landslides are expected in steep terrain across the southern Appalachians. The threat of tornadoes continues in the region.



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Storm Safety Tips

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).

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. Never drive through flood water. **Turn Around. Don't Drown™.**

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.

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.

Responding to Hurricane Helene is a Whole-of-Government and Community Effort

The federal interagency response efforts remain focused on providing lifesaving and life-sustaining measures. More than a dozen federal agencies and departments have been mobilized to assist state, local, tribal, nonprofit and private sector partners to help people of the Southeast from the effects of Hurricane Helene.

- **FEMA** is coordinating a federal force of more than 1,500 personnel including more than 300 deployed FEMA staff to support states affected by the hurricane.



- **Department of Homeland Security** Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas activated the Surge Capacity Force (SCF). The SCF makes rostered federal employees available to support FEMA's response and recovery missions.
- **Urban Search and Rescue (US&R)** has deployed a total of **14** teams (**940** personnel) to affected states. In Florida, **eight** US&R teams with two Mission Ready Packages are positioned to respond, all are equipped with Swift Water Rescue Capabilities. In Georgia, **two** Type 3 teams with water capability have been deployed to support rescue operations. In North Carolina, **four** teams all equipped with Swift Water Rescue Capabilities are in place.
- **U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)** crews will continue to respond with vessels and aircraft to assist search and rescue activities. Approximately **8,000** personnel are working Coast Guard response. They will continue to respond to urgent distress calls to save lives and assist those impacted by the storm. They have begun to conduct post-storm assessments to support rapid reopening of the impacted ports and provide support to interagency, state and local partners.
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)** has two teams prepositioned to provide temporary emergency power, with additional personnel deployed and other are prepared to deploy if needed. In addition to temporary emergency power, personnel will assist the states with infrastructure assessments, debris management and temporary roofing assistance as needed. They have activated six emergency operation centers in the region to coordinate operations.
- **Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS)** Secretary Xavier Becerra declared a Public Health Emergency for Florida and Georgia to address the health impacts of Hurricane Helene. The declaration gives the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) health care providers and suppliers greater flexibility in meeting emergency health needs of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. Their staff on the ground have begun initial assessments of the public health and health care infrastructure, working with federal and state partners to meet the needs on the ground. Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) prepositioned approximately 200 medical responders who can move to impacted communities in the region. These personnel include Health Care Situational Assessment teams and National Disaster Medical System' (NDMS) Disaster Medical Assistance Teams along with several tons of medical equipment and supplies to provide medical surge support.
- **Department of Energy (DOE)** has activated the Energy Response Organization (ERO) and is closely monitoring for power, fuel and supply chain



interruptions. The ERO and field responders are in contact with industry partners and local officials. DOE has responders deployed to the Florida Emergency Operations Center, Georgia Emergency Operations Center.

- **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** is working closely with federal, state, local and Tribal partners to help water systems, prepare for debris management and ensure facilities, including Superfund sites, maintain critical public health and environmental protections. The agency has personnel on the ground in regional and national operations centers who are offering technical assistance and guidance to those affected by Helene.
- **American Red Cross (ARC)** has more than 450 Red Cross responders deployed to affected areas, another 306 responders are traveling today. As of Friday morning, reporting indicates that at least 9,400 people are in approximately 130 evacuation shelters. These numbers expected to increase as the full impact of the storm is realized. There are more than 30 Emergency Response Vehicles active and ready to support this event. Red Cross focus today on the ground across Florida is impact assessment, sheltering and life-sustaining feeding. ARC is prepared to support mass fatality and reunification efforts as well as emergency feeding. Anyone who needs a safe place to go can find information on [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org), the free Red Cross Emergency app or by calling 1-800-RED CROSS (800-733-2767).
- **Salvation Army** has their Emergency Disaster Services Director/State Liaison deployed to the Florida Emergency Operations Center and a liaison at the Georgia Emergency Operations Center. An Incident Management Team (IMT) has been staged in Lakeland, Florida along with seven mobile feeding units and crews, with additional mobile feeding units ready to deploy. Florida IMT in Live Oak has ready-to-serve meal boxes for immediate service delivery. In Georgia, The Salvation Army is supplying food services to a Valdosta, Georgia Emergency Shelter in Lowndes County. Additionally, the Bainbridge Salvation Army will provide feeding for Decatur County Critical Workforce.
- **USA.gov** published a [one-stop-shop](#) for hurricane information.



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