

FEMA, Federal Partners Continue Supporting Hurricane Ian Response

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WASHINGTON -- FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell is in Florida today meeting with Gov. Ron DeSantis and surveying damages from Hurricane Ian. She visits the state the day after President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. approved a major disaster declaration allowing survivors in the hardest hit areas to begin applying for federal disaster assistance to help jumpstart their recovery. Federal interagency response efforts remain focused on Ian's second landfall today, which is expected to cause flooding throughout areas of Georgia, South Carolina and Northwest Florida.

President Biden approved South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster's request for an emergency declaration Wednesday. The declaration authorizes FEMA to provide emergency protective measures including direct federal assistance at 75% federal funding.

State and federal search and rescue operations are underway in Florida in response to Hurricane Ian, conducted by state and federal Urban Search and Rescue team members and the U.S. Coast Guard. Additionally, approximately 5,000 Florida National Guard members and 2,000 National Guard members from other states are activated to help with the response.

DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas activated the DHS Surge Capacity Force Wednesday. The Surge Capacity Force is comprised of 7,500 members from other federal agencies who can help augment FEMA's disaster staffing. Nearly 3,000 federal responders are working in Florida and the Southeast, including more than 1,600 FEMA staff are deployed to support. More than 850 emergency management personnel from other states have been deployed to Florida through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

Now is the time for residents in Georgia and South Carolina to have hurricane plans in place and closely monitor local media for forecast updates and follow



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directions provided by their local officials. People in Florida should continue to heed local warnings and listen to local officials for updated safety information.

Safety Considerations for Residents

- **Stay off the roads.** Emergency workers may be assisting people in flooded areas or cleaning up debris. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way. If you evacuated do not return home until local officials tell you the area is safe.
- **Avoid downed power or utility lines.** They may be live with deadly voltage. Stay away and report them immediately to your power or utility company.
- **Be safe using generators.** Generators can be helpful during a power outage, but they present serious health and safety concerns. Only use a generator outdoors and far from open doors and windows. Visit [Power Outages | Ready.gov](#) to learn how to use a generator safely.
- **Stay out of floodwater.** Standing water may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines or contain hazards such as human and livestock waste, contaminants that can lead to illness, sharp debris or wild or stray animals. Do not walk, swim or drive through flood waters.
- **Be careful when cleaning up.** Wear protective clothing, including work gloves and sturdy thick-soled shoes. Do not try to remove heavy debris by yourself. Use an appropriate mask if cleaning [mold or other debris](#). People with [asthma and other lung conditions and/or immune suppression](#) should not enter buildings with indoor water leaks or mold growth that can be seen or smelled.

State, Federal Response Actions

- The federal government deployed a Search and Rescue Coordination Group comprised of FEMA Urban Search and Rescue teams, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Department of Defense, Customs Border and Protection and the state of Florida to help coordinate rescue efforts with local officials. Gov. DeSantis said more than 700 rescues occurred following landfall thanks to these resources.
- The U.S. Coast Guard is using helicopters and fixed wing aircraft for immediate search and rescue response. The Department of Defense has more than 1,200 highwater vehicles and 25 watercrafts supporting search and rescue operations.



- More than 44,000 mutual assistance power crew personnel are assessing damage and making repairs, with additional teams ready to start restoration, weather permitting. Crews are on standby in areas preparing for Ian's landfall in Georgia and South Carolina.
- More than 160 generators are available at Craig Field in Alabama, with more arriving today. The first Generator Staging Base in Immokalee is open with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 249th Engineer Battalion on site. An additional 60 generators are being shipped to a second generator staging base in Avon Park, Florida.
- More than 250 congregate shelters are open in Florida serving more than 33,300 people. Florida Department of Emergency Management deployed several hundred shelter support staff to assist open special need shelters.
- Volunteer agencies including the American Red Cross, Florida Baptist, Salvation Army, Feeding Florida, Farm Share, Midwest Food Bank, Operation BBQ Relief, Mercy Chefs and World Central Kitchen are preparing to perform feeding operations. FEMA and its partners have capacity to serve tens of thousands of meals per day,
- FEMA teams delivered 1.1 million meals and 1.6 million liters of water to the state of Florida. Other water and food supplies will be delivered pending safe conditions post-storm impact. FEMA is securing an additional 6.6 million liters of water and 5.5 million meals.
- FEMA activated a medical support contract for ambulances and paratransit seats. All 300 requested National Disaster Medical System assets arrived in Florida, including 400 ambulances, 15 bariatric paratransit ambulances and four rotary aircraft to evacuate medically vulnerable individuals in nursing homes and other medical facilities as needed.
- FEMA's Incident Management Teams, Mobile Communications Operations Vehicles and Mobile Response Support teams are deployed in Atlanta, Miami, Tallahassee and Orlando supporting response efforts.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a Public Health Emergency and deployed a 38-person disaster medical assistance team to Miami, and two other teams to Robins Air Force Base in Georgia. HHS also deployed health and medical task force teams and pharmacists.
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Routine non-criminal immigration enforcement operations will not be conducted at evacuation sites, or assistance centers such as shelters or food banks. Additionally, officers will be vigilant



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against any effort by criminals to exploit disruptions caused by the storm.

Resources to Jumpstart Recovery

- Florida survivors who live in Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Hardee, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Orange, Osceola, Pinellas, Polk, Sarasota and Seminole counties can apply for federal assistance at www.disasterassistance.gov, by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362) or by using the FEMA App. Survivors using a relay service, such as a video relay service, captioned telephone service or others, can give the FEMA operator the number for that service.
- Small Business Administration disaster loans are available to businesses, homeowners, renters and nonprofit organizations in Florida counties approved for individual assistance. Applicants may apply at disasterloanassistance.sba.gov under declaration #17644. For help, call 800-659-2955 or send an email to DisasterCustomerService@sba.gov.
- If you are one of the 1.6 million Floridians with flood insurance, report your loss immediately to your insurance agent or carrier. Be sure to ask them about advance payments. Need help finding your insurance agent or carrier? Call 877-336-2627. To learn more about how to start your flood insurance claim, visit Floodsmart.gov.
- Mental health resources are available. Survivors experiencing emotional distress can call or text the [Disaster Distress Helpline](http://DisasterDistressHelpline) at 1-800-985-5990. The national hotline provides free 24/7, crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. Deaf and Hard of Hearing ASL callers can use a videophone or [ASL Now](http://ASLNow).
- Florida residents who did not evacuate but now need to leave their home can visit www.floridadisaster.org/shelter-status for open general and special needs shelters in Florida. If you do leave your home, do not leave pets or animals behind. You can also register other members of your household and your pets on [Shelter in Place Survey \(arcgis.com\)](http://ShelterinPlaceSurvey(arcgis.com)) to help local first responders locate you.
- Florida residents can call the Florida State Assistance Information Line at 800-342-3557 to receive up-to-date information regarding Hurricane Ian.
- Medically dependent residents of Florida who need electricity to operate medical equipment, transport services to evacuated due to a medical condition



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or need help getting medication during a disaster can register for assistance at FloridaDisaster.org/SNR.

- [The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](https://www.nccmehc.org/) has free reunification assistance for children and families impacted by disasters. If you or someone you know is missing a child related to a disaster or any other incident, please immediately call 911 and then 800-THE-LOST for assistance.
- Visit [Hurricane Ian | FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov/hurricane-ian) for information and resources available for Florida residents affected by the storm. The page will be available in Creole, Simplified Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish and Vietnamese.

How to Help

- **Please do not self-deploy.** If you want to volunteer as part of the Hurricane Ian recovery, visit Florida's official volunteer portal at [VolunteerFlorida.org](https://www.volunteerflorida.org) to find volunteer opportunities.
- **Volunteer to help.** There will be volunteer opportunities for months, often years, after the disaster. A list of agencies with volunteer opportunities can be found on the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster website at www.nvoad.org.
- **Cash is the best donation.** After a disaster, people always want to help, but It's important to donate responsibly. When people support voluntary organizations with financial contributions, it helps ensure a steady flow of important services to the people in need after a disaster. You can make a donation at www.volunteerflorida.org/donatefdf or text **DISASTER to 20222**.
- **Before donating supplies** connect with organizations working in the affected area to identify what is needed, how much is needed and when it is needed. Used clothing is **never** needed in a disaster area. Unwanted donations can overwhelm charities on the ground because they need to be received sorted.
- **If you need assistance locating a missing friend or relative** call the Red Cross at 800-733-2767 and provide as much detail as you can to assist us in potentially locating your missing loved one.



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