

Biden-Harris Administration Supports Continued FEMA, Federal Family Helene Response

Release Date: September 29, 2024

WASHINGTON -- Together with state, tribal and federal partners, the Biden-Harris Administration and FEMA are actively supporting Hurricane Helene response and recovery efforts. People should be aware of ongoing post-storm hazards that can be life-threatening. Everyone in affected areas should continue to follow instructions from local officials to stay safe.

Yesterday, President Joseph R. Biden approved Major Disaster declarations for Florida and North Carolina. These designations help individuals so they can start their recovery. These declarations also provide federal assistance to help communities clean up and start the rebuilding process.

At the direction of President Biden, FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell is on the ground in Georgia today and will be in North Carolina tomorrow to survey damage and assessing the need for federal resources.

FEMA has more than 800 deployed staff supporting states affected by the hurricane. Our distribution centers are fully stocked and ready to provide commodities and equipment to any impacted state as requested. FEMA is coordinating a federal force of more than 3,200 personnel each contributing their expertise and manpower to this mission.

Emergency declarations are still in effect for Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. Under an emergency declaration, FEMA can provide support for urgent disaster response activities. FEMA and state partners continue to assess affects from the hurricane in these states to determine if further federal assistance is needed. Visit [FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov) to learn [how a disaster gets declared](#).

- **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.



FEMA

Page 1 of 3

- **Urban Search and Rescue (US&R)** Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) deployed a total of 24 teams with more than 1,302 personnel to affected states. All teams are equipped with Swift Water Rescue Capabilities. In Florida, eight US&R teams are actively responding. Four team are in North Carolina, two are in Tennessee. Additional teams and four Swift Water Mission Ready Packages are in route to the impacted areas.
- **U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)** Crews saved or assisted 11 lives and four pets in the Hurricane Helene response to date. USCG units in the affected areas are ready to support search and rescue, conducting post-storm assessments and providing interagency support. More than 8,000 personnel are assisting in response efforts.
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)** has teams positioned to provide temporary emergency power, with others prepared to deploy if needed. In addition to temporary emergency power, personnel assist the states with assessments of critical infrastructure including water/wastewater treatment facilities, debris management, and road and bridge inspections as needed. USACE is also providing technical expertise for flood responses. They have activated eight emergency operation centers in the affected regions to coordinate operations.
- **Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS)** declared Public Health Emergencies for Florida and Georgia to address the health impacts of Hurricane Helene. The declarations give the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services health care providers and suppliers greater flexibility in meeting emergency health needs of their beneficiaries. HHS staff are assessing public health and health care infrastructure. The Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response medical responders are in Alabama, Florida and North Carolina to help secure heal care services. These personnel include Health Care Situational Assessment teams and National Disaster Medical System Disaster Medical Assistance Teams along with several tons of medical equipment and supplies to provide medical surge support. A Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team Subject Matter Expert activated for North Carolina. HHS is offering free crisis counseling through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Distress Helpline. Call or text 1-800-985-5990. Español: Llama o envía un mensaje de texto 1-800-985-5990 presiona "2." For Deaf and Hard of Hearing ASL Callers: To connect directly to an agent in American Sign Language, click the "ASL Now" button below or call 1-800-985-5990 from your videophone. ASL Support is available 24/7. FAQs for ASL NOW users.



FEMA

Page 2 of 3

- **Department of Energy (DOE)** activated the Energy Response Organization (ERO) and is closely monitoring impacts and restoration efforts related to Helene, including power, fuel, and supply chain interruptions. The ERO and field responders are in contact with industry partners and local officials. DOE responders deployed to the Florida Emergency Operations Center, Georgia Emergency Operations Center, and the North Carolina 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 745 Red Cross responders deployed to affected areas with another 320 responders in route. As of Sunday morning, systems reporting indicates 2,033 people are still in 73 shelters. As anticipated, ARC is seeing this count rise as they continue to gain connectivity and more clarity about the evolving need in the Carolinas. More than 45 Emergency Response Vehicles are supporting this event and two dozen additional vehicles are moving into position throughout affected areas. Anyone who needs a safe place to go can find information on [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org) or by texting GETEMERGENCY to 90999 to download the free Red Cross Emergency app.
- **Salvation Army** is increasing its services in response to community needs. In Florida, they are providing meals through 17 mobile feeding units: five in Live Oak and 12 in Perry, where they are serving hot meals. Teams are also assisting survivors and responders along Florida's west coast, delivering cleanup kits, blankets, and meals. In Georgia, The Salvation Army is serving meals at six shelters and will begin operations in Douglas/Alma and Vidalia on Sunday through mobile feeding units. In South Carolina, they are supporting meal service at the Greenwood County shelter and have activated a mobile unit. In Tennessee, Salvation Army is working alongside Baptist Kitchen, serving meals at two state shelters. Two mobile units are in Johnson City and Newport will start meal service beginning Monday. Full details and service locations are available at disaster.salvationarmyusa.org.
- **USA.gov** published a [one-stop-shop](https://www.usa.gov/one-stop-shop) for hurricane information.



FEMA

Page 3 of 3