

Biden-Harris Administration Approves \$825 Million to Helene Survivors and Communities, President Biden and Administrator Criswell Travel to Florida

Release Date: October 13, 2024

FEMA received over 250,000 applications for assistance in one day, making it the busiest day in the agency's history for registrations

WASHINGTON – FEMA remains fully committed to assisting survivors affected by Helene and Milton as response teams work tirelessly to address immediate needs.

Today, President Biden and FEMA Administrator Criswell traveled to St. Petersburg, Florida to visit areas impacted by Hurricane Milton and Hurricane Helene. On Friday, in response to Milton, President Biden approved a Major Disaster Declaration for Florida, unlocking federal funds for survivors in 34 counties for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster. Survivors also have access to Serious Needs Assistance, for essential items like food, water, baby formula, breastfeeding supplies, medication and other emergency supplies.

Yesterday, FEMA experienced a record-breaking day with over **250,000 applications**, making it the busiest day in FEMA history for registrations inclusive of all storms. Applying online at disasterassistance.gov is the best way to apply for assistance.

Throughout the Southeast, over 9,600 total federal personnel are deployed, including 4,100 FEMA personnel on the ground, working closely with state officials to ensure survivors receive the support they need. As of today, FEMA has approved **\$474 million** in assistance for individuals and communities affected and



FEMA

Page 1 of 7

over **\$351 million** for debris removal and activities to save lives, protect public health and safety and prevent damage to public and private property.

Hurricane Milton Recovery Update

While Hurricane Milton has passed, people in Milton-affected areas should continue following safety guidance from local officials – stay clear of downed power lines and continue to practice power outage and generator safety.

Power Restoration: Power restoration efforts have significantly improved across the region following Hurricane Milton. Crews have continued to work around the clock and have restored over 71% of the power outages.

Debris: FEMA is currently working with state and local officials on debris removal plans for areas affected by the storms. Residents should pay attention to local guidance related to debris removal in their area.

Staffing: More than 800 FEMA staff are on the ground providing support to affected communities. FEMA mobilized search and rescue teams, disaster response units and vital resources across Florida. Urban Search and Rescue continues to support state search and rescue teams, the National Guard, and local authorities. Federal teams supplemented the state's critical operations such as water rescues, Emergency Operations Center support, volunteer and donations management and fire/HAZMAT response.

Sheltering: Over 40 shelters are currently housing over 2,700 people impacted by Milton, a significant decrease from nearly 13,000 earlier in the week.

Commodities: FEMA has delivered more than 1.2 million meals and 392,000 liters of water to augment the state's supplies. FEMA has an additional 7.2 million meals and 4 million liters of water available to support survivors of Hurricane Milton, ensuring critical supplies are ready for immediate distribution.

Hurricane Helene Recovery Updates

FEMA has approved **\$474 million** in federal disaster assistance for Hurricane Helene survivors and over **\$351 million** in public assistance funding to help



FEMA

Page 2 of 7

communities rebuild.

Hurricane Helene recovery efforts continue, with federal responders working throughout the region to provide immediate and long-term support. FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers are open across the region to provide support.

The agency is actively working alongside state, local and tribal partners to assess damage and support those affected by Helene. Over **9,600 personnel** from across the federal workforce, including FEMA staff, are deployed to affected communities. To date, FEMA has delivered over **12.6 million** meals and more than **12.8 million** liters of water to the region.

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

There are three ways to apply for FEMA assistance:

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

Support for North Carolina

Financial Support: FEMA has approved **more than \$86 million in housing and other types of assistance** for over **66,800 households**.

Power and Cellular Restoration: More than **96%** of originally reported power outages have been restored. Cellular restoration continues to improve, with more than **93%** of cellular sites in service as of today.



Staffing: As response efforts continue in North Carolina, **more than 1,250 FEMA staff** are on the ground providing support to affected communities. Over **350 Urban Search and Rescue personnel** remain in the field helping people. These teams have **rescued or supported over 3,100 survivors to date.**

Sheltering: More than 2,225 families who cannot return home are staying in safe and clean lodging through FEMA's [Transitional Sheltering Assistance](#) program. Under FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance program, 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. FEMA will notify applicants of their eligibility for this assistance 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. Shelter numbers continue to decline, with **14 shelters** housing just **over 500 occupants.**

Commodities: Commodity distribution, mass feeding, and hydration operations remain in areas of western North Carolina. Voluntary organizations are supporting feeding operations with bulk food and water deliveries coming via truck and aircraft. Mobile feeding operations are helping survivors in heavily affected areas, including mass feeding sites in Buncombe and Watauga counties serving locations across the impacted areas.

Resources

- There are more than **300 Disaster Survivor Assistance** members supporting neighborhoods in four counties to connect survivors with the assistance they need.
- There are **four Disaster Recovery Centers** now open, where survivors can speak directly with FEMA and state personnel for assistance with their recovery. To find the nearest center, visit [FEMA.gov/DRC](https://www.fema.gov/DRC).
- Residents can visit: ncdps.gov/helene to get information and additional assistance.
- Residents can get in touch with loved ones by **calling 2-1-1** or **visiting [unitedwaync.org](https://www.unitedwaync.org)** to add them to search and rescue efforts.

Support for Florida



FEMA

Page 4 of 7

As Helene recovery efforts continue in Florida, FEMA has approved more than \$164 million for over 53,700 households. FEMA specialists are canvassing Florida communities affected by Helene to help survivors apply for assistance. Additionally, FEMA inspectors are visiting applicants' homes to verify disaster-caused damage.

There are **82 FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance** members going into neighborhoods, and **three Disaster Recovery Centers** are open where survivors can speak to state and federal personnel to help with their recovery. Additional centers will reopen following assessments to the facilities impacted by Milton. Survivors may find their closest center by visiting [FEMA.gov/DRC](https://www.fema.gov/DRC).

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 South Carolina

As recovery efforts continue in South Carolina, FEMA has approved over **\$114 million for more than 129,500** households. 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.

There are **76 Disaster Survivor Assistance members** going into neighborhoods, and **one Disaster Recovery Center** is open where survivors can speak to state and federal personnel to help with their recovery. Survivors may find their closest center by visiting [FEMA.gov/DRC](https://www.fema.gov/DRC).

Residents with questions on 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.



FEMA

Page 5 of 7

Support for Georgia

FEMA has approved over **\$94 million for more than 99,800 households**. 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.

There are **129 Disaster Survivor Assistance members** going into neighborhoods, and **two Disaster Recovery Centers** are open with another opening today where survivors can speak to state and federal personnel to help with their recovery. Survivors may find their closest center by visiting [FEMA.gov/DRC](https://www.fema.gov/DRC).

Resources: Residents can find resources like shelters and feeding sites at gema.georgia.gov/hurricane-helene.

Support for Virginia

To date, FEMA has approved **over \$3.9 million for over 1,220 households**. 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.

There are about **40 Disaster Survivor Assistance members** going into neighborhoods, and **three Disaster Recovery Centers** open where survivors can speak to state and federal personnel to help with their recovery. Survivors may find their closest center by visiting [FEMA.gov/DRC](https://www.fema.gov/DRC).

Residents can find resources like shelters and feeding sites at: [Recover – Hurricane Helene | VDEM \(vaemergency.gov\)](#)

Support for Tennessee

FEMA has approved more than **\$10 million for disaster assistance for over 2,036 households**. FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams are on the ground in neighborhoods across the affected counties, helping survivors apply for FEMA



FEMA

Page 6 of 7

assistance and connecting them with additional state, local, federal and voluntary agency resources.

There are more than **40 Disaster Survivor Assistance members** going into neighborhoods to connect with survivors without cell coverage or power.

Counties continue to establish 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 hundreds of **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 people can enter pertinent information about the person they'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.

FEMA remains steadfast in its mission to support survivors as they begin their recovery from these historic storms. The agency will continue to work with federal, state, and local partners to ensure the safety and well-being of those impacted by Milton and Helene.



FEMA

Page 7 of 7