

# FEMA Urges Residents and Visitors in Debby's Path to Complete Preparation Immediately, Heed Warnings of Local Officials

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WASHINGTON -- Today, President Joseph R. Biden Jr. approved an emergency declaration for the state of Florida as FEMA officials urge those living in Debby's path to complete preparedness actions. FEMA is ready to respond and to meet any needs states in the storm's path may have.

This slow-moving storm is expected to intensify rapidly before making landfall in the Florida Big Bend and will then move northeast across portions of southeast Georgia and South Carolina dropping 10 to 20 inches of rainfall, with local amounts to 30 inches, are expected through Friday morning. This potentially historic rainfall will likely result in areas of severe and widespread flash and urban flooding, with significant river flooding expected.

"We are actively monitoring the potential impacts of Tropical Storm Debby, and our FEMA regional team is on the ground and integrated with our state colleagues at the Florida emergency operation center. This slow-moving storm could bring historic flooding, and I urge residents and visitors in the storm's path across Florida, Georgia and South Carolina to listen to their local officials and finalize preparation plans today. The time spent today making a plan can help protect you and your family from the impacts the storm may bring in the coming days," FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell said.

A FEMA distribution center located in Atlanta is fully stocked and ready to mobilize commodities if requested to support state's response efforts. A FEMA Incident Management Assistance Team is at the Florida emergency operations center in Tallahassee, and FEMA Liaisons are expected to arrive at 11 county emergency management offices today. Additionally, FEMA is pre-staging Urban Search and Rescue teams to assist the affected states.



People in Debby's path should rush to complete preparedness actions, as this slow-moving storm is expected to intensify rapidly before landfall in the Florida Big Bend region on Monday. In addition to hurricane or tropical storm force winds, the National Hurricane Center expects this storm to produce maximum rainfall totals of 18 inches across portions of northern Florida through Friday morning. This rainfall will likely result in areas of considerable flash and urban flooding, with significant river flooding expected. There is also a danger of life-threatening storm surge along areas of the Big Bend and portions of the Florida Gulf Coast.

Many counties in Florida have issued [evacuation orders](#) ahead of Debby. Anyone in the forecast path of the storm should monitor their local news for updates, follow directions provided by their local officials and heed evacuation orders. Florida Division of Emergency Management maintains a [list of open shelters](#) including those for people with special needs and those that accept pets. You can also [download the free FEMA App](#) to locate open shelters and receive alerts for up to five areas.

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A hurricane warning is in effect along portions of the Florida Big Bend regions and tropical storm force winds could extend outward up to 140 miles from the storm's predicted center. Tropical storm and storm surge warning were extended northward along the Georgia and South Carolina coast to the South Santee River.

FEMA encourages individuals in potentially affected areas to pay close attention to weather forecasts, heed the advice of local officials and follow these tips to stay safe during possible flooding:

- **Be prepared for the hazards the storm may bring.** Do not focus on the exact track of this storm, as tropical storm conditions and historic rainfall may affect areas far outside the storm.
- **Be in the know to evacuate safely.** Visitors and residents in the affected areas should [plan for evacuation](#) and learn evacuations routes. Closely follow the advice of local officials and evacuate immediately if told to do so. [Build a](#)



[go-bag](#) with all the essentials you, your family and pets might need. If needed, identify a place to stay that will [accept pets](#), as most public shelters allow only service animals. If you do not have reliable transportation, plan how you will leave if needed. Decide with family, friends or contact your local emergency management office to see what resources may be available.

- **Have a plan.** Know how you will keep yourself, your family and your pets safe if flooding is forecast for your area. Make sure you consider your family's unique needs, including anyone who needs medicine or medical equipment. Know how you'll contact one another and reconnect if you aren't together when flooding starts. Visit [Ready.gov](#) or [Listo.gov](#) in Spanish language for more information on how to stay safe before, during and after floods.
- **Stay safe during flooding.** Do not walk, swim or drive through flood waters. Turn Around, Don't Drown! Remember, just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away. Stay off bridges over fast-moving water and never drive around barricades. Local responders use them to safely direct traffic out of flooded areas.
- **Secure items around your home.** Securely store any items around your home that could become airborne in high winds. This includes lawn furniture, plants, toys and lawn equipment.
- **If you do not evacuate, find a safe location to ride out the storm. Avoid enclosed areas, such as an attic, where you may become trapped by storm surge and flooding.**
- **Be aware of other risks.** Tropical storms have the potential to form a tornado. If you are under a tornado warning, seek shelter immediately in the center of a small interior room, such as a closet or interior hallway, on the lowest level of a sturdy building. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside.
- **Keep important documents safe.** Having your financial and medical records and important contact information will be crucial to help you start the recovery process quickly. Keep important documents in a waterproof container on a high shelf or upper level of your home. Create password-protected digital copies and move valuables to higher levels.
- Your National Flood Insurance Program policy will [cover and reimburse certain actions](#) you take to minimize damage to your home and belongings before a flood.

### Other Important Tips:



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- Flooding can affect power systems, as utility companies may shut down portions of the electrical grid. If the power goes out, use only flashlights or battery-powered lanterns for emergency lighting. NEVER use candles during a blackout or power outage due to extreme risk of fire.
- Use generators safely – always use them outdoors and at least 20 feet from windows, doors and attached garages. Make sure to keep the generator dry and protected from rain or flooding.

Learn more ways to stay safe before, during and after flooding at [Ready.gov/floods](https://www.ready.gov/floods) and [Inundaciones | Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov/inundaciones) in Spanish language.

