

FEMA Administrator Surveys Damage in Florida as Hurricane Helene Response Efforts Continue

Release Date: ?? 28, 2024

WASHINGTON -- Today, FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell is in Florida surveying damage and assessing the need for federal resources to support Hurricane Helene response activities.

This whole-of-government effort includes the support of more than 2,300 federal personnel and voluntary agencies across six states. More than 800 FEMA personnel are deployed to assist with response efforts and are working to determine the scope of the storm's impact and coordinate resource support and assistance.

The Biden-Harris Administration approved emergency declarations in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. This type of declaration allows federal resources to begin flowing immediately as damage assessments are conducted to determine what additional resources may be available if a major disaster is declared.

FEMA's priority remains providing life-saving and life sustaining support to affected areas. FEMA deployed Urban Search and Rescue teams with more than 1,270 personnel and Swift Water Rescue Capabilities to affected states. Our non-profit partners including the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Convoy of Hope, Heart to Heart International and others are actively supporting survivors by providing emergency sheltering, food, water, clean up kits, healthcare supplies and other disaster relief items. Team Rubicon teams are helping to clear roads while the Salvation Army deployed seven mobile feeding units and crews.

As people begin to assess damage, it is important to continue listening to local officials for instructions and be aware of the possibility of life-threatening post-storm hazards. People can download the [free FEMA App](#) available in English and Spanish languages to receive real-time weather alerts and find local emergency



FEMA

Page 1 of 4

shelters in their area.

People who need [help reconnecting with loved ones](#) missing after the hurricane can call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) and provide as much detail available to assist operators in potentially locating missing loved ones. More than 540 American Red Cross volunteers are in the affected areas supporting communities with sheltering needs, reunification efforts and post-storm care.

What People Can Do Now

- If you evacuated, do not return home until local officials say it is safe to do so.
- **Stay out of floodwaters.** People experiencing heavy rain and flooding should not wade through flood waters, which can contain debris, chemicals, waste and wildlife, as well as downed powerlines that can electrically charge the water. Turn Around, Don't Drown!
- **Be safe during an outage.** If you are without power, use only flashlights or battery-powered lanterns for emergency lighting.
- **Text instead of calling.** While cellular service is limited in several areas, it's easier to get in touch with loved ones by texting instead of calling.
- **Use generators safely.** If there is a power outage, 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.
- For people who are beginning to clean up, make sure to document any property damage with photos and video contact your insurance company for assistance and next steps.
- People with a National Flood Insurance Program insurance policy who suffered flood damage can begin filing a claim with a phone call to their flood insurance agent or company.



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

Non-profit and charitable organizations are on the frontlines of the response to Hurricane Helene, providing critical support to people and communities. Here are just a few examples of the important work some of these organizations are doing on the ground.

- **American Red Cross (ARC)** has more than 540 Red Cross responders deployed to affected areas with another 350 responders in route. As of Saturday morning, at least 1,900 people are in more than 80 shelters. More than 30 ARC Emergency Response Vehicles are supporting and 24 additional vehicles are in route. Anyone who needs a safe place to go can find information on [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org) or by downloading the free Red Cross Emergency app by texting GETEMERGENCY to 90999.
- **Salvation Army** is in Georgia providing meals at six emergency shelters. In Florida, a total of five mobile feeding units are in Tallahassee and 12 are in Perry. The Salvation Army is also responding to requests for cleanup kits and blankets. In North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky, the Salvation Army is responding to requests for meal service to communities affected by the storm. More response information is available at helpsalvationarmy.org.
- **Capacity Path Relief** deployed two teams for community support in Florida's Big Bend and southwest coastal areas and is expanding support to fill requests from numerous counties. Additional teams are collaborating with local EOCs and coordinating with agency and feeding partners. They are also offering mental health support to teams supporting the response.
- **Convoy of Hope** is stationed in Perry, Florida and is distributing disaster supplies to survivors and is communicating with the Taylor County Sheriff's Office to provide support as needed.
- **Heart to Heart International (HHI)** is in Florida with hygiene kits and pharmaceuticals/healthcare supplies for survivors if needed.
- **Crisis Cleanup** is currently working to help survivors clean up damage from Hurricane Helene. Organizations that would like to help can register at www.crisiscleanup.org/register.
- **Food for the Poor** will deliver five pallets of hygiene kits to Catholic Charities in Saint Petersburg and Tampa, Florida and are deploying disaster kits which include tarps and hygiene kits, women's care kits and children's activity kits.



FEMA

- **Operation Hope** is prepared to support survivors with assistance applications, insurance claims, disaster recovery plans and document recovery. Survivors can find information by visiting www.operationhope.org.

