

# FEMA Urges Gulf Coast Residents and Visitors to Prepare Now Ahead of Potential Major Storm

---

FEMA stands ready to support local and state efforts ahead of Tropical Storm Helene, which is forecast to become a major hurricane before landfall in Florida, bringing life-threatening storm surge and hurricane conditions later this week. Now is the time for people to have their hurricane plans in place and prepare for the storm.

The [National Hurricane Center](#) forecasts this system will strengthen significantly while moving northward over the Gulf of Mexico. Hurricane and storm surge watches have been issued for the Gulf Coast of Florida, including the Florida Panhandle and portions of Florida's west coast. While it is too soon to know the exact location and how strong the storm will be, it is likely to bring heavy rain, life-threatening storm surge, hurricane force winds and flash and urban flooding to affected areas.

FEMA is leaning forward with the activation of the National and Regional Response Coordination Centers and Incident Management Assistance Teams. These actions focus on pre-positioning personnel and commodities in Florida and other strategic locations for swift deployment upon a state's request. FEMA is working closely with its state partners and has deployed resources to the region including Incident Response teams, Urban Search and Rescue teams, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers power teams, emergency communications teams, and is preparing to deploy Health and Medical Assessment teams along with ambulances and other personnel.

**NOW is the time to prepare:** You can find more hurricane preparedness information on [Ready.gov](#) and [Listo.gov \(in Spanish language\)](#).

**Stay informed.** People in areas along Florida's Panhandle and west Gulf Coast should follow the forecast carefully and instructions of state and local officials by monitoring local radio or television stations for updated emergency information. You can also download the [free FEMA App](#) available in English and Spanish languages to receive real-time weather alerts and find local emergency shelters in your area.

**Be in the know about your evacuation route.** Be prepared to evacuate quickly, if told to do so. Act now by learning your evacuation routes and identify where you will stay. Learn more about how to [evacuate safely on Ready.gov and Listo.gov \(in Spanish language\)](#).

**Know how to stay safe during high winds, storm surge and flooding.** Determine how best to protect yourself from high winds and flooding. Evacuate immediately if you are told to do so. If you cannot evacuate, take refuge in a designated storm shelter or interior room for high winds. Go to the highest level of the building if you are trapped by flooding. Do not climb into a closed attic. You may become trapped by rising flood water.



# FEMA

**Have a plan.** 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 a severe storm hits. Visit [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) or [Listo.gov \(in Spanish language\)](https://www.listo.gov) for more information on how to stay safe before, during and after severe weather.

Use only flashlights or battery-powered lanterns for emergency lighting. If using a generator, remember to always use them outdoors and keep it at least 20 feet from doors and windows. Additionally, make sure to keep the generator dry and protected from rain or flooding.

Save copies of birth certificates, passports, medical records and insurance papers in a safe, dry place. Keep important documents in a waterproof container and create password-protected digital copies. Take photos or videos of your belongings and property on your phone or upload them to the internet. Move valuables like photo albums, heirlooms and other treasured items to higher levels.

## Contact Us

If you have any questions, please contact FEMA Office of External Affairs:

- Congressional Affairs at (202) 646-4500 or at [FEMA-Congressional-Affairs@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Congressional-Affairs@fema.dhs.gov)
- Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at [FEMA-IGA@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-IGA@fema.dhs.gov)
- Tribal Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at [FEMA-Tribal@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Tribal@fema.dhs.gov)
- Private Sector Engagement at (202) 646-3444 or at [FEMA-Private-Sector@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Private-Sector@fema.dhs.gov)

## Follow Us

Follow FEMA on social media at: [FEMA Blog](https://www.fema.gov/blog) on fema.gov, [@FEMA](https://twitter.com/FEMA) or [@FEMAEspanol](https://twitter.com/FEMAEspanol) on X, [FEMA](https://www.facebook.com/FEMA) or [FEMA Espanol](https://www.facebook.com/FEMAEspanol) on Facebook, [@FEMA](https://www.instagram.com/FEMA) on Instagram, and via [FEMA YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8).

Also, follow Administrator Deanne Criswell on X [@FEMA\\_Deanne](https://twitter.com/FEMA_Deanne).

## FEMA Mission

Helping people before, during and after disasters.