

Biden–Harris Administration Makes Emergency Federal Assistance Available to Florida, FEMA Urges Gulf Coast Residents and Visitors to Rush to Complete Preparation

WASHINGTON – In advance of Hurricane Helene’s landfall in Florida, the Biden-Harris Administration approved a pre-landfall [emergency declaration for Florida](#). This declaration enables FEMA to provide federal resources to the state for emergency protective measures and aid initial response and recovery efforts. FEMA urges people to take this storm seriously as it is expected to bring life-threatening storm surge and hurricane conditions to Florida and the risk for dangerous flash and urban flooding to Alabama and Georgia. Now is the time for people to activate their hurricane plans and prepare for the storm’s effects.

The [National Hurricane Center](#) forecasts Helene is likely to bring heavy rain, life-threatening storm surge, hurricane force winds, and flash and urban flooding to affected areas starting Thursday. Due to the large size of this system, storm surge, wind, and rainfall impacts will extend well away from the storm’s center. The storm will move quickly once it makes landfall and will likely result in strong winds and heavy rain over parts of the southeastern United States. Tornadoes may occur over parts of the western Florida peninsula and southern Alabama. The risk of tornadoes will increase on Thursday, expanding across Florida and into parts of Georgia and South Carolina.

FEMA, its federal partners, and partner organizations are actively coordinating response efforts across Florida. FEMA’s National and Regional Response Coordination Centers are activated to support state requests for assistance. Urban Search and Rescue teams, Health and Medical teams including medical support for patient evacuation, and communication assets are prepared to respond as needed. FEMA has pre-positioned Incident Management Assistance Teams, and commodities including water, meals, generators, and other critical items in regional distribution centers.

FEMA is also closely coordinating with Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina and stands ready to provide support as needed.

NOW is the time to finish preparations: Today is the day to prepare for this storm. Take action immediately to protect yourself, your family, your pets and your home. Finish gathering any supplies like food, water, medication, flashlights, and food for your pets **now**. Include cash in your emergency kit, as ATMs may not work after the storm. You can find hurricane preparedness information on [Ready.gov](#) and [Listo.gov](#) in Spanish language.



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Be in the know about your evacuation route. Several counties in Florida issued mandatory and voluntary evacuation orders. Visit [Evacuation Orders | Florida Disaster](#) to see the full list. People in Florida, Alabama and Georgia should be prepared to evacuate quickly if they are in the path of this storm and are told to do so. Act now by learning your evacuation routes and identify where you will stay. Make sure everyone in your household knows what to do in case you need to evacuate and that they are familiar with your family’s emergency plan. Learn more about how to evacuate safely on [Ready.gov/evacuation](#) and [Evacuación | Listo.gov](#) in Spanish language.

Have several ways to receive alerts. People in areas along Florida’s Panhandle, west coast, and into Alabama and Georgia should follow the forecast carefully and instructions of state and local officials by monitoring local radio or television stations for updated emergency information. [Sign up for community alerts in your area](#) and be aware of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA), which require no sign up. You can also download the [free FEMA App](#) available in English and Spanish to receive real-time weather alerts and find local emergency shelters in your area.

Listen to officials. Stay off the roads if told to do so. Evacuate if told to do so. If you did not evacuate, find a safe location to ride out the storm, such as a designated storm shelter or interior room for high winds. Go to the highest level of the building if you are trapped by flooding. Avoid enclosed areas, such as an attic. You may become trapped by rising flood water. This storm may produce tornadoes. If you are under a tornado warning, go to a safe shelter immediately, such as a safe room, basement, storm cellar or a small interior room on the lowest level of a sturdy building.

Your neighbors are your lifeline. Check on your neighbors, especially older adults or those who may need additional assistance, to make sure they have what they need to ride out the storm. Have a plan to remain in contact during and after the storm.

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](#) or [Listo.gov in Spanish](#) language for more information on how to stay safe before, during and after severe weather.

Power outage and generator safety. If you lose power, 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. De-clutter drains and gutters, bring in outside furniture and put up hurricane shutters if you have them.

Do not focus on the exact track of the hurricane. Hurricanes are immense systems, and changes in size, intensity, speed and direction can change quickly. Additionally, areas far from the storm’s center can experience effects such as flooding, storm surge and heavy winds.

Keep important documents safe. 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
- Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at FEMA-IGA@fema.dhs.gov
- Tribal Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at FEMA-Tribal@fema.dhs.gov
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Also, follow Administrator Deanne Criswell on X [@FEMA_Deanne](https://twitter.com/FEMA_Deanne).

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Helping people before, during and after disasters.