

Biden-Harris Administration Urges Public to Stay on Alert, Stands Ready to Respond to Hurricane Idalia

Release Date: 8? 30, 2023

WASHINGTON -- Under President Biden's leadership, the Biden-Harris Administration has mobilized 1,500 federal personnel, more than 540 Urban Search and Rescue personnel and three Disaster Survivor Assistance Strike Teams to support states in the path of Hurricane Idalia. FEMA and the federal government continue to encourage residents affected by the storm to stay on alert, listen to their local officials and be aware of continuing risks. Residents in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina should prepare for hurricane conditions into Thursday.

FEMA is prepared with pre-positioned response personnel and assets and is staying in close contact with the states' leadership to quickly meet needs as they are identified. Prior to the hurricane's landfall, FEMA staged commodities and critical supplies, including more than 1.3 million meals and 1.6 million liters of water that are available, pending requests from states.

The American Red Cross has pre-positioned resources to support sheltering up to 20,000 survivors. USDA Food and Nutrition Services approved early issuance of September SNAP benefits to all households that receive benefits, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers pre-positioned teams to support any power restoration needs.

FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell has also connected with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper and South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster to affirm the agency's commitment to providing any help they need to respond to or recover from the effects of Hurricane Idalia.

Many counties in Florida remain under [evacuation orders](#). Florida evacuation shelters, including those for individuals with access or functional needs can be found on the [state's shelter status page](#). Additionally, anyone who needs a safe



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place to go can find information on the [Red Cross shelter locator](#), the free Red Cross Emergency app or by calling 800-733-2767.

Regardless of whether residents are in a shelter or not, assistance from voluntary organizations, state programs and federal assistance is available. There is no need to ride out the storm at home if it is not safe to do so.

The Florida National Guard is fully activated with 5,500 members available. The Florida State Assistance Information Line, 800-342-3557, is active and provides resources to help Floridians receive accurate information about the storm.

Everyone 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. High winds and flooding remain a threat to all states in Hurricane Idalia's path.

For those who are currently experiencing wind and flooding, remember to check on your neighbors, plan for power outages and stay safe. It will be challenging for emergency responders to help during the brunt of the storm and rescue operations take time in flooding and high winds.

While the full extent of Idalia's damage will not be known for days, what we do know is that the danger is not over once the storm passes. The aftermath of Idalia can be just as deadly -- please stay aware of debris, floodwaters and hazards related to power outages.

Federal response to Hurricane Idalia

FEMA has fully stocked distribution warehouses with response commodities and teams ready to move assets at the request of the states. FEMA deployed personnel, including four Incident Management Assistance Teams and three Disaster Survivor Assistance Strike Teams. Mobile Emergency Response Support vehicles are in Florida to ensure communications capabilities. Additionally, a FEMA Disability Integration Advisor deployed to Region 4 in Atlanta is providing technical assistance, training and resources to ensure FEMA's programs and services are accessible to, and available for, people with disabilities impacted by the disaster.



Nine Urban Search and Rescue teams and the U.S. Coast Guard are on standby with boats and aircraft to assist search and rescue activities.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers deployed teams and resources to assist the state with infrastructure, power assessment and temporary roofing requirements as needed.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response deployed medical and disaster management professionals to Florida to address the potential health impacts of Hurricane Idalia. These personnel include National Disaster Medical System health and medical task force members and pharmacists.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service approved the Florida Department of Children and Families request for early issuance of September 2023 benefits to SNAP households that receive their benefits between Sept. 1-14 for 46 Florida counties.

As with all disasters, there will be those who are disproportionately affected by Idalia. FEMA remains committed to making sure all people have the information and assistance they need to recover.

Non-profit partner support for Hurricane Idalia survivors

- Our non-profit partners are critical to meeting the immediate needs of survivors after disasters.
- The Salvation Army has mobile feeding units staged in Lakeland, Florida, with additional teams on standby.
- Team Rubicon has two route-clearance teams, pre-staged to clear roads for responders and survivors. Local Greyshirt volunteers are on the ground and in communication with community leaders to determine unmet needs when the storm makes landfall.
- The American Red Cross has 400 disaster responders and supplies in place and ready to respond immediately.

Stay safe during Hurricane Idalia



If you are in an area that has been or is still being affected by the storm, be aware of continued risks. Residents and visitors in potentially affected areas should have a family emergency communications plan, keep their devices charged, ensure they are receiving emergency alerts and check on neighbors, especially those who are older adults or may need additional assistance.

If you are experiencing an emergency, call 9-1-1. For non-emergencies, Florida activated its State Assistance Information Line (SAIL). This toll-free hotline provides additional resources to help Floridians receive accurate and up-to-date information regarding Hurricane Idalia. Florida residents can call 800-342-3557.

Stay off the roads. Emergency workers may be assisting people in flooded areas or cleaning up debris. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way. If you evacuated and are returning home, make sure local officials have deemed your area safe to return.

Don't drive through flood waters. Almost half of all flash flood deaths happen in vehicles. When in your car, look out for flooding in low-lying areas at bridges and at highway dips. As little as 6 inches of water may cause you to lose control of your vehicle.

Do not walk or wade in flood waters. The water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline or raw sewage. It may also include dangerous wildlife.

If you have a flooded basement in your home, never attempt to turn off power or operate circuit breakers while standing in water.

Be careful when cleaning up. Wear protective clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, work gloves and sturdy thick-soled shoes. Do not try to remove heavy debris by yourself. Use an appropriate mask if cleaning [mold or other debris](#). People with [asthma and other lung conditions and/or immune suppression](#) should not enter buildings with indoor water leaks or mold growth that can be seen or smelled. Children should not take part in disaster cleanup work.

Avoid downed power or utility lines. Consider all downed lines live with deadly voltage. Stay away and report them immediately to your power or utility company.

Listen to officials and 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. Avoid enclosed



areas, such as an attic, where you may become trapped by storm surge and flooding.

Evacuating -- listen to local officials and evacuate if you are told to do so and conditions are safe for travel. If you are evacuating, check on neighbors who may need assistance.

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.

For additional information on staying safe during and after disasters, visit [Ready.gov](#) or [Listo.gov](#).

