

# FEMA Continues Supporting Ian Response

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FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell continues to tour areas of Florida affected by Hurricane Ian to survey response activities and assess unmet needs. On Friday, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. approved the Seminole Tribe of Florida Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola's request for an expedited major disaster declaration. This allows assistance to survivors as well as federal funds for debris removal and emergency protective measures. President Biden also approved North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper's request for an emergency declaration, allowing FEMA to provide federal assistance for emergency protective measures.

State and federal search and rescue operations continue in Florida. FEMA Urban Search and Rescue teams from the U.S. Coast Guard, the Department of Defense, Customs Border and Protection and the state of Florida are coordinating rescue efforts with local officials. Rescue operations are prioritizing hospitals and healthcare facilities in barrier island communities. As of Friday evening, nearly 1,600 people and 75 pets had been rescued by these teams.

The state of Florida began rapid damage assessments in Collier, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas and Sarasota counties to expedite available federal assistance for disaster recovery.

FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams are working in the hardest hit communities to help survivors register for assistance and identify immediate and emerging threats.

## Safety Considerations for Residents

- **Be alert.** People in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina should pay attention to continuing risks, closely monitor local media for forecast updates and follow directions provided by their local officials. Anyone returning home should use caution when cleaning up and using a generator.



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- **Stay out of floodwater.** Standing water may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines or contain hazards such as human and livestock waste, contaminants that can lead to illness, sharp debris or wild or stray animals. Do not walk, swim or drive through flood waters.
- **Be careful when cleaning up.** Wear protective clothing, including 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.
- **Be safe using generators.** Generators can help during a power outage but can present serious health and safety concerns. Only use a generator outdoors and far from open doors and windows. Visit [www.ready.gov/power-outages](http://www.ready.gov/power-outages) to learn how to use a generator safely.
- **Avoid downed power or utility lines.** They may be live with deadly voltage. Stay away and report them immediately to your power or utility company.
- **Stay off the roads.** Emergency workers may be assisting people in flooded areas, restoring electricity or cleaning up debris. You can help them by staying out of the way and off the roads. [If you evacuated do not return home until local officials tell you the area is safe.](#)
- **Place debris wisely.** Never place debris near trees, structures or downed powerlines. This makes removal difficult.

## State, Federal Response Actions

- In Florida, approximately 5,000 Florida National Guard members and 2,000 National Guard members from other states are activated to help with the response.
- DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas activated the DHS Surge Capacity Force. The Surge Capacity Force is composed of 7,500 members from other federal agencies who can help augment FEMA's disaster staffing. More than 3,400 federal responders working in Florida and the Southeast, including almost 2,000 FEMA employees. More than 850 emergency management personnel from other states have been deployed to Florida through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.
- Power restoration continues across Florida, with approximately 42,000 power crew personnel assessing damage and restoring power. Crews are also on



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standby for areas affected in Georgia and South Carolina. There are 1.3 million people without power.

- The state of Florida provided 4,000 gallons of diesel to Lee County to power water supply to nearby hospitals. The state is also delivering 1.2 million gallons of water from Lakeland to Fort Myers for hospitals without water.
- More than 550 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel are conducting safety inspections, installing generators and assessing power needs.
- Additional generators are en route to the Generator Staging Base established in Immokalee, Florida. There are 98 generators staged at Craig Field, Alabama, and the Defense Logistics Agency is delivering an additional 99 generators to the site in anticipation of state requests.
- FEMA and its feeding partners have capacity to serve tens of thousands of meals per day and are working with state partners to locate field kitchens. Large scale feeding operations will increase this week.
- FEMA activated a medical support contract for ambulances and paratransit seats. More than 300 ambulances, 15 bariatric paratransit ambulances and four rotary aircraft are being used.
- FEMA's Incident Management Teams, Mobile Communications Operations Vehicles and Mobile Response Support teams are deployed in Atlanta, Fort Myers, Miami, Orlando, Tampa and Tallahassee supporting response efforts.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared a Public Health Emergency for Florida and South Carolina. HHS deployed disaster medical assistance teams, medical task force teams, pharmacists and activated the Kidney Community Emergency Response program for people who need dialysis.
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Routine non-criminal immigration enforcement operations will not be conducted at evacuation sites, or assistance centers such as shelters or food banks. Additionally, officers will be vigilant against any effort by criminals to exploit disruptions caused by the storm.

## Resources to Jumpstart Recovery

- Florida survivors who live in Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Hardee, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Orange, Osceola, Pinellas, Polk, Sarasota and Seminole counties can apply for federal assistance at [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov), by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362) or by using the FEMA App. Survivors using a



relay service, such as a video relay service, captioned telephone service or others, can give the FEMA operator the number for that service. More than 83,000 survivors have applied for assistance to help begin their recovery.

- Small Business Administration disaster loans are available to businesses, homeowners, renters and nonprofit organizations in some Florida counties. Applicants may apply at [disasterloanassistance.sba.gov](https://disasterloanassistance.sba.gov) under declaration #17644. For help, call 800-659-2955 or send an email to [DisasterCustomerService@sba.gov](mailto:DisasterCustomerService@sba.gov).
- If you are one of the 1.6 million Floridians, 76,000 Georgians or 201,000 South Carolinians with flood insurance, contact your insurance agent or carrier to file your claim immediately even if you're evacuated and suspect flood damage. Be sure to ask them about advance payments. The National Flood Insurance Program has ample adjuster resources available to process claims quickly and fairly. To learn more about how to start your flood insurance claim, visit [Floodsmart.gov](https://Floodsmart.gov).
- Mental health resources are available. Survivors experiencing emotional distress can call or text the [Disaster Distress Helpline](https://DisasterDistressHelpline.org) at 800-985-5990. The national hotline provides free 24/7, crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. Deaf and hard of hearing ASL callers can use a videophone or [ASL Now](https://ASLNow.org).
- Florida residents who did not evacuate but now need to leave their home can visit [www.floridadisaster.org/shelter-status](https://www.floridadisaster.org/shelter-status) for open general and special needs shelters in Florida. If you do leave your home, do not leave pets or animals behind.
- Take photos to document damage and keep receipts from all cleanup- and repair related purchases. These steps may help maximize federal disaster assistance and insurance payments.
- Florida residents can call the Florida State Assistance Information Line at 800-342-3557 to receive up-to-date information regarding Hurricane Ian.
- Medically dependent residents of Florida who need electricity to operate medical equipment, transport services to evacuated due to a medical condition or need help getting medication during a disaster can register for assistance at [FloridaDisaster.org/SNR](https://FloridaDisaster.org/SNR).
- If you need assistance locating a missing friend or relative call the Red Cross at 800-733-2767 and provide as much detail as you can to assist us in potentially locating your missing loved one. You can also complete a form at [missing.fl.gov](https://missing.fl.gov)



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for yourself or with the last known location of your loved one(s). This information will help rescue workers locate you and your loved ones as quickly as possible

- [The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children](#) has free reunification assistance for children and families impacted by disasters. If you or someone you know is missing a child related to a disaster or any other incident, please immediately call 911 and then 800-THE-LOST for assistance.
- The Internal Revenue Service announced tax relief for individuals and households affected by Hurricane Ian that reside or have a business anywhere in the state of Florida. If you are in one of the eligible counties in Florida, you now have until Feb. 15, 2023, to file various individual and business tax returns and make tax payments.
- Floridians who use Veterans Affairs medical centers and clinics and need urgent care services should call 877-741-3400. Find a list of open VA centers at [Find VA Locations | Veterans Affairs](#). Additionally, the Heritage Health Emergency Pharmaceutical Refill Program is activated in Florida, call at 866-265-0124, option 1 with questions. The hotline is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. ET, and weekends from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. ET. Veterans needing emergency refill locations can visit [va.hhspharmacy.com/locations/index.html](http://va.hhspharmacy.com/locations/index.html).
- Visit [Hurricane Ian | FEMA.gov](#) for information and resources available for Florida residents affected by the storm. The page will be available in Creole, Simplified Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish and Vietnamese.

## How to Help

After a disaster, people come together to help. To make the most of your contributions, it's important to follow guidelines for donating and volunteering responsibly.

- **Please do not self-deploy.** If you want to volunteer as part of the Hurricane Ian recovery, visit Florida's official volunteer portal at [VolunteerFlorida.org](http://VolunteerFlorida.org) to find volunteer opportunities.
- **Think long term.** There will be volunteer opportunities for months, often years, after the disaster. A list of agencies with volunteer opportunities can be found on the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster website at [www.nvoad.org](http://www.nvoad.org).



- **Cash is the best donation.** After a disaster, people always want to help, but it's important to donate responsibly. When people support voluntary organizations with financial contributions, it helps ensure a steady flow of important services to the people in need after a disaster. Find local charities at [www.nvoad.org](http://www.nvoad.org).



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