

FEMA, Federal Family Helene Response Update

Together with state, Tribal, and federal partners, FEMA is actively supporting Hurricane Helene response and recovery efforts.

People should be aware of ongoing post-storm hazards that can be life-threatening. Everyone in affected areas should continue to follow instructions from local officials to stay safe.

Yesterday, President Joseph R. Biden approved Major Disaster declarations for Florida and North Carolina. These designations help individuals so they can start their recovery. The declarations also provide federal assistance to help communities clean up and start the rebuilding process.

Emergency declarations are still in effect for Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. Under an emergency declaration, FEMA can provide support for urgent disaster response activities. FEMA and state partners continue to assess affects from Hurricane in these states to determine if further federal assistance is needed. Visit [FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov) to learn [how a disaster gets declared](#).

At the direction of President Biden, FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell is on the ground in Georgia today surveying damage and assessing the need for federal resources.

FEMA has more than 800 deployed staff supporting states affected by the hurricane. Our distribution centers are fully stocked and ready to provide commodities and equipment to any impacted state as requested.

FEMA is coordinating a federal force of more than 3,200 personnel each contributing their expertise and manpower to this mission.

- **Department of Homeland Security:** Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas activated the Surge Capacity Force (SCF). The SCF makes rostered federal employees available to support FEMA's response and recovery missions.
- **Urban Search and Rescue (US&R):** Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) deployed a total of 24 teams with more than 1,302 personnel to affected states. All teams are equipped with Swift Water Rescue Capabilities. In Florida, eight US&R teams are actively responding. Four team are in North Carolina, two are in Tennessee. Additional teams and four Swift Water Mission Ready Packages are in route to the impacted areas.
- **U.S. Coast Guard (USCG):** Crews saved or assisted 11 lives and four pets in the Hurricane Helene response to date. USCG units in the affected areas are ready to support search and rescue, conducting post-storm assessments and providing interagency support. More than 8,000 personnel are assisting in response efforts.



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- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE):** USACE has teams positioned to provide temporary emergency power, with others prepared to deploy if needed. In addition to temporary emergency power, personnel assist the states with assessments of critical infrastructure including water/wastewater treatment facilities, debris management, and road and bridge inspections as needed. USACE is also providing technical expertise for flood responses. They have activated eight emergency operation centers in the affected regions to coordinate operations.
- **Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS):** HHS declared Public Health Emergencies for Florida and Georgia to address the health impacts of Hurricane Helene. The declarations give the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services health care providers and suppliers greater flexibility in meeting emergency health needs of their beneficiaries. HHS staff are assessing public health and health care infrastructure. The Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response medical responders are in Alabama, Florida and North Carolina to help secure health care services. These personnel include Health Care Situational Assessment teams and National Disaster Medical System Disaster Medical Assistance Teams along with several tons of medical equipment and supplies to provide medical surge support. A Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team Subject Matter Expert activated for North Carolina.

HHS is offering free crisis counseling through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Distress Helpline.

- **Department of Energy (DOE):** DOE activated the Energy Response Organization (ERO) and is closely monitoring impacts and restoration efforts related to Helene, including power, fuel, and supply chain interruptions. The ERO and field responders are in contact with industry partners and local officials. DOE responders deployed to the Florida Emergency Operations Center, Georgia Emergency Operations Center, and the North Carolina Emergency Operations Center.
- **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):** EPA is working closely with federal, state, local and Tribal partners to help water systems, prepare for debris management and ensure facilities, including Superfund sites, maintain critical public health and environmental protections. The agency has personnel on the ground in regional and national operations centers who are offering technical assistance and guidance to those affected by Helene.
- **American Red Cross (ARC):** ARC has more than 745 Red Cross responders deployed to affected areas with another 320 responders in route. As of Sunday morning, systems reporting indicates 2,033 people are still in 73 shelters. As anticipated, ARC is seeing this count rise as they continue to gain connectivity and more clarity about the evolving need in the Carolinas. More than 45 Emergency Response Vehicles are supporting this event and two dozen additional vehicles are moving into position throughout affected areas. Anyone who needs a safe place to go can find information on [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org) or by texting GETEMERGENCY to 90999 to download the free Red Cross Emergency app.
- **Salvation Army:** Salvation Army is increasing its services in response to community needs. In Florida, they are providing meals through 17 mobile feeding units: five in Live Oak and 12 in Perry, where they are serving hot meals. Teams are also assisting survivors and responders along Florida's west coast, delivering cleanup kits, blankets, and meals. In Georgia, The Salvation Army is serving meals at six shelters and will begin operations in Douglas/Alma and Vidalia on Sunday through mobile feeding units. In South Carolina, they are supporting meal service at the Greenwood County shelter and have activated a mobile unit. In Tennessee, Salvation Army is

working alongside Baptist Kitchen, serving meals at two state shelters. Two mobile units are in Johnson City and Newport will start meal service beginning Monday. Full details and service locations are available at disaster.salvationarmyusa.org.

- **USA.gov:** USA.gov published a [one-stop-shop](#) for hurricane information.

Contact Us

If you have any questions, please contact FEMA Region 4 External Affairs at fema-r4-stakeholder-relations@fema.dhs.gov.

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Also, follow Administrator Deanne Criswell on X [@FEMA_Deanne](#).

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Helping people before, during and after disasters.