

FROM THE OFFICE OF  
GOVERNOR  
RON DESANTIS

@GOVRONDESANTIS | WWW.FLGOV.COM | 850-717-9282 | MEDIA@EOG.MYFLORIDA.COM

**For Immediate Release:** September 30, 2024

**Contact:** Governor's Press Office, (850) 717-9282, [media@eog.myflorida.com](mailto:media@eog.myflorida.com)

## **Governor Ron DeSantis Issues Updates on Response and Recovery Efforts to Hurricane Helene**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.**—Today, Governor Ron DeSantis was joined by Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) Executive Director Kevin Guthrie, Adjutant General of Florida Major General John D. Haas, and Florida Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Jason Weida at Manatee Memorial Hospital in Bradenton to provide updates on recovery efforts after Hurricane Helene impacted Florida's Big Bend region and Gulf Coast.

As of this afternoon, approximately 79,965 Floridians are without power. The State of Florida has restored 2,322,920 accounts.

The Florida Disaster Fund is the state's private fund overseen by Volunteer Florida established to provide financial assistance to our communities as they respond to and recover from times of emergency or disaster. In partnership with public, private, and other non-governmental organizations, the Florida Disaster Fund supports response and recovery activities. To contribute, please visit [FloridaDisasterFund.org](https://FloridaDisasterFund.org).

Governor DeSantis issued [Executive Order 24-209](#) on September 24, amending [EO 24-208](#) and declaring a state of emergency for 61 counties.

To learn more, residents can visit [FloridaDisaster.org/Guide](https://FloridaDisaster.org/Guide). For updates on county

resources available visit [FloridaDisaster.org/Counties](https://www.floridadisaster.org/Counties) for a list of all 67 county emergency management contacts.

### **Federal Disaster Relief**

Governor DeSantis announced that Florida secured approval of a major disaster declaration for Hurricane Helene from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The declaration includes Individual Assistance and Public Assistance (Categories A and B). Individual Assistance, which is assistance to residents and households, is available for Charlotte, Citrus, Dixie, Franklin, Hernando, Hillsborough, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lee, Levy, Madison, Manatee, Pasco, Sarasota Taylor and Wakulla counties. Public Assistance, which is available for emergency work and the repair or replacement of disaster-damaged facilities, is available for Charlotte, Citrus, Dixie, Franklin, Hernando, Hillsborough, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lee, Levy, Madison, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Sarasota, Taylor and Wakulla counties for debris removal and emergency protective measures, including direct federal assistance.

### **State Response and Recovery Efforts**

- The **Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM)** activated the State Emergency Operations Center to Level 1 on Tuesday, September 24, and is leading coordination efforts for the State Emergency Response Team.
- The State Emergency Response Team is engaged in over 2,300 missions to assist counties in their preparation efforts. These missions accomplish vital tasks like staging response resources, protecting critical infrastructure facilities like hospitals and utility stations, and coordinating personnel statewide.
- Seven Urban search and rescue task forces are deployed.
- A Point of Distribution Site (POD) will open today at Noon in Leon County and 34 others are planned:
  - 1492 J Lewis Hall Sr Ln, Tallahassee, FL 32305Urban Search and Rescue Teams (USAR) have interacted with 560 survivors to ensure they are okay after Helene left the areas.
- USAR teams have rescued 13 survivors.
  
- The **Florida National Guard (FLNG)** has activated approximately 3,500 service members for Hurricane Helene response operations. The Florida National Guard is authorized to mobilize up to 5,500 Guardsmen, if needed.
- FLNG has rescued 155 people and 56 animals, 84 of which were ground rescues and 63 via air.
- FLNG has 11 rotary wing aircraft prepared to provide SAR and/or damage assessment support. Mississippi is providing an additional 3 rotary wing aircraft.

- The FLNG is providing logistics support, law enforcement support, route clearance, search and rescue, commodity distribution, flood mitigation, aviation and other support as needed by the state.
- FLNG has distributed 821,772 water boxes, 630,222 Meals Ready-to-Eat (MREs), 15,798 ice bags, and 27,800 tarps.
- The **Florida State Guard (FSG)** has mobilized 217 guards in response to Hurricane Helene.
- The Special Missions Unit (SMU) has provided support with:
- Route Clearance (cut and toss) Taylor, Dixie, Wakulla
  - Damage Assessments – Dixie, Taylor, Wakulla
  - During search and rescue operations and wellness checks in impacted areas, the SMU successfully rescued and transported an 80-year-old, wheelchair-bound, woman from a flooded building.
- The FSG continues to provide transportation support for FDLE to move mission-essential equipment to impacted areas.
- The Maritime Response Squadron (MRS) continues to support FWC in flooded areas with boats and chainsaws.
- The Crisis Response Battalion (CRB) continues facilitating 3 points of distribution (POD) providing supplies to 686 vehicles in Steinhatchee/Taylor County.
- The Crisis Response Battalion (CRB) and Maritime Response Squadron (MRS) assisted local and state officials in clearing boat ramps in Taylor County to support access for additional vessels providing support.
- The Maritime Response Squadron (MRS) assisted FWC with search/rescue, and welfare checks – confirming the location of 15 individuals - also conducting derelict vessel identification.
- The Aviation Response Squadron (ARS) facilitated emergency management and public safety leaders' reconnaissance flights for Taylor County and Dixie County over their impacted areas, allowing the respective leadership to appropriately direct their response resources.
- The Crisis Response Battalion (CRB) continues route clearance with FWC and FHP in Taylor County and conducting reconnaissance for search and rescue with FEMA at Keaton Beach.
- The Special Missions Unit (SMU) assembled a team, joining FWC and FDLE, to assist with search and rescue operations in areas of North Carolina impacted by Hurricane Helene.
- The Maritime Response Squadron (MRS) rescued one individual from the Suwannee River while on patrol in support of FWC. The rescued individual had been adrift on the river for approximately 36hrs and travelled over 25 river miles due to high currents.
- The Maritime Response Unit (MRS) continues wellness checks along the Withlacoochee River and Cedar Key area with FWC.
- The **Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)** Mutual Aid team is coordinating more than 50 active law enforcement missions including security, law enforcement support and traffic control. More than 50 missions have been completed.

- Over 600 law enforcement officers are deployed to the impacted areas.
- FDLE's Aviation Unit is conducting security missions in impacted areas.
- The **Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)** has more than 100 officers and support staff responding to areas of Florida impacted by Hurricane Helene are transitioning to humanitarian and security missions.
- FWC officers in Taylor County continue to conduct welfare checks and assist with debris removal. One individual on a kayak was rescued from the Suwannee River. Humanitarian efforts will continue, and teams will continue investigating vessels damaged or displaced from the storm, and patrolling Keaton Beach.
- FWC officers deployed to Cedar Key, Yankeetown, Suwannee Town, Horseshoe Beach, Steinhatchee, Keaton Beach, Old Town, Gulf Hammock, Fowler's Bluff and Rocky Creek to perform welfare checks on residents who did not evacuate. They utilized specialized equipment to push their way in, locate and account for all residents assigned to their team. Once the welfare checks were completed, teams assisted with clearing roads and worked with local partners to fulfill any other missions.
- FWC officers in Citrus County conducted 21 rescues and responded to 40 local calls for assistance.
- FWC officers in Manatee County responded to Anna Marina for rescue assistance with the Manatee County Sheriff's Office. They checked 23 vessels damaged or displaced by the storm and conducted welfare checks and assisted six citizens in need.
- After the water receded from the barrier islands in Pinellas County, area FWC officers worked to move equipment back in places at offices and boat lifts.
- A team of FWC officers assisted Treasure Island Fire Rescue respond to calls for assistance in storm affected areas, including evacuating 45 residents from the barrier island and responding to 12 medical calls.
- FWC Captive Wildlife Investigators continued to contact permittees including facilities that were not in the direct path of the storm. Homosassa State Park reported that due to flooding they were unable to get to their animals. Investigators assisted with a drone to verify the animals were secure.
- FWC officers are conducting vessel assessments and water and signage surveys for missing or damaged navigational aids and manatee zone postings in Dixie, Levy and Citrus counties
- FWC Captive Wildlife Investigators are contacting game farms and hunting preserves in impacted counties, some damage is being repaired and some facilities have requested assistance.
- Captive wildlife investigators have reported that no Class I, II or venomous reptile facilities experienced escapes or damage to primary enclosures.
- FWC Skid Skeer Team assisted Taylor County with clearing the roads to the hardest areas of the Taylor County coastline.
- The **Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)** has over 2,100 FDOT team members working directly on storm response.
- Damage assessment teams immediately deployed in the field and surveyed impacts.

- 61 Cut and Toss crews completely cleared I-10 in under 6 hours of the storm making landfall.
- Cut and Toss Operations on state-owned facilities are complete, except for inaccessible areas or roadways with hazards. Over 800 crew members cleared over 12,300 miles of roadway.
- FDOT has shifted efforts towards debris pickup on local and state roads.
  - 334 FDOT and contractor personnel.
  - 372 pieces of heavy equipment.
- FDOT completed bridge inspections on all accessible state-owned and locally-owned bridges. 129 Bridge Inspectors reviewed and cleared 1,400 bridges across the impacted areas.
- A 16-mile stretch of State Road 789 in Sarasota County and Manatee County has experienced extreme damage and the roadway is inaccessible. Within 24 hours after landfall, FDOT has implemented an emergency repair contract to quickly perform temporary repairs.
- FDOT crews have restored access to the southern portion of S.R. 789 in Longboat Key within 24 hours of initiating emergency repair contracts. After clearing the roadway from sand and debris, this portion of the roadway opened to residents on Sunday at 1 p.m. FDOT emergency road repairs are ongoing in Bradenton Beach, and Longboat Pass Bridge is still closed.
- All 3 causeways in the Greater Tampa Bay region experienced either damage or debris that caused FDOT to close these bridges following the storm. All 3 causeways were repaired and cleared within 24 hours of Helene's landfall.
- Crews are working to clear approximately 60,000 dump trucks worth of sand and debris from the roadway on Gulf Blvd in Pinellas County and S.R. 789 in Manatee and Sarasota Counties.
  - The roadway on Gulf Blvd in Pinellas County has now been cleared for vehicular traffic.
- Crews have reviewed over 9,000 traffic signals statewide. 49 signals across the impacted areas are not operational, however, crews are actively working to restore power to these locations.
- FDOT crews will perform Cut & Toss operations to support Madison County on their local roadways.
- FDOT has committed to perform debris pick up within fiscally constrained counties.
- FDOT crews are supporting Dixie, Madison, and Taylor Counties in clearing storm debris at 16 different schools across all three counties to ensure students can return back to the classroom following Hurricane Helene.
- FDOT is assisting the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in the repair of a damaged truck sensor at an agricultural inspection station in Suwannee County.
- FDOT assisted rail industry partners and utility companies in removing downed power lines and fiberoptic cables across rail lines in impacted areas to ensure efficient mobility of goods and supplies throughout Florida's rail network.
- FDOT Secretary issued FDOT Emergency Order on September 23, 2024.
- FDOT has lifted weight restrictions and is allowing bypass of weigh stations for emergency response vehicles, including utility vehicles staging for rapid response.

- Work on construction projects have resumed normal operations on Monday, September 30 except for in Columbia, Dixie, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Pinellas, Suwannee, and Taylor counties.
- FDOT encourages drivers to download the FL511 app or visit FL511.com for road/bridge closures and potential detours that may be activated.
- Remember to never drive through flooded areas. The area of the roadway beneath the water may be washed out or may conceal debris or even power lines. Turn Around; Don't Drown.

### **Transportation Modes**

#### **Seaports, Airports, Rail, and Transit Agencies have all resumed operations**

Please check with service providers directly about potential service impacts.

#### **State-Owned Roads Closures (As of 2:00 p.m., 9/30/24)**

State Road closures listed below. For real-time updates, Check FL511.com.

- **Jackson County**
  - Flooding on Caverns Rd Both Directions at Russell Rd. All lanes closed.
- **Manatee County**
  - Flooding in Manatee County on SR-684 / Cortez Rd W East, at Gulf Dr. N (SR-789). All lanes closed.
  - Flooding in Manatee County on SR-684 / Cortez Rd W West, at Gulf Dr N (SR-789). All lanes closed.
- **Pinellas County**
  - Gulf Blvd has reopened.
  - Emergency vehicles on I-275 South, ramp to Mile Marker 13, Skyway North Rest Area. Off-ramp closed.
  - Emergency vehicles on I-275 North, ramp to Mile Marker 13, Skyway North Rest Area. Ramp closed.
  - Emergency Vehicles on Gulf Blvd Southbound near S Gulfview Blvd. All lanes closed.
  - Emergency Vehicles on Gulf Blvd Northbound near Marina del Rey Ct. All lanes closed.
  - Emergency Vehicles on Memorial Cswy Southbound at Island Way.
  - Emergency Vehicles on Pinellas Bayway Westbound at Sun Blvd.
  - Emergency Vehicles on Park Blvd Westbound at 141st St N.
- **Sarasota County**
  - Access Restricted on SR-72 Eastbound at Midnight Pass Rd.
  - Access Restricted on SR-72 Westbound at Beechwood Ave.
- The **Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA)** The VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center is operational 24/7/365 for virtual care and tele-emergency care and support to Veterans enrolled for VA Health Care in Florida. 1-877-741-3400. Visit <https://department.va.gov/integrated-service-networks/visn-08> for more information.

- Power was restored Monday morning at the Robert H. Jenkins Jr. Veterans' Domiciliary Home in Lake City (Columbia County).
- All State Veterans' Homes have resumed normal operations.
- All U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs clinics in Florida will be open on Tuesday, October 1.
- **Volunteer Florida** partner resources:
  - Disaster Legal Hotline is open to assist and refer callers: 833-514-2940
  - Samaritan's Purse hotline: 1-833-747-1234 free assistance for homeowners affected by the disaster. Volunteers may be able to assist with removal of personal property and furniture, flood cleanup, sanitizing with shockwave treatment, chainsaw work and Debris Clean-up, temporary roof tarping.
  - Red Cross Hotline is open to assist: 1-800-Red Cross
  - Florida Baptists Disaster Relief Public Assistance: 904-253-0502 or text Helene to 27123. Free Assistance for homeowners affected by the disaster. Volunteers may be able to assist with Storm Debris Cleanup, Temporary Roof Tarping, Chainsaw work, and muckouts.
  - Crisis Cleanup number: 844-965-1386

## Health and Human Services

- The **Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)** continues its recovery efforts with post storm wellness checks to clients, and families in affected areas verifying status and resolving immediate need requests.
- Within the 17 FEMA declared counties for Individual Assistance there are 9,948 clients in the Family Home, and 638 Group Homes with 2,875 residents. APD is targeting these areas and clients for priority follow up and wellness checks by APD teams and provider staff.
- APD is working with partners and the State Emergency Response Team to ensure the functional and access needs of disaster survivors are met.
- APD Hope Florida Navigators, APD emergency recovery teams, and leadership have deployed to multiple Hope Florida distribution locations today.
- APD is working diligently to resolve mission requests, cases, and incidents as they come in within APD regional teams, leadership, and appropriate partners.
- The **Florida Department of Health's (DOH)** deployed over 130 emergency response vehicles.
  - Staged emergency response vehicles are in Jefferson, Leon, and Osceola counties.
  - Tasked emergency response vehicles are in Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Osceola, Suwannee, and Taylor counties.
- At this time, two Boil Water Notices have been rescinded.
  - Marion (1), Charlotte (1)
- DOH has Special Needs Shelters available in areas impacted by Hurricane Helene. A [press release](#) has been sent statewide for additional information on special needs shelters. To find a shelter near you, please visit the county emergency management page [here](#).

- In addition, as of this morning, five (5) Special Needs Shelters are open in five (5) counties: Columbia (1), Madison (1), Pasco (1), Pinellas (1), and Taylor (1) counties.
- DOH and the Agency for Health Care Administration initiated Patient Movement Mission to support medical transport and evacuations of health care facilities.
- The State Surgeon General signed Emergency Order 24-002, which:
  - Waives competitive procurement requirements in order to procure commodities, goods, and services expeditiously in response to the emergency.
  - Permits emergency medical transportation services to operate across county lines.
  - Permits Paramedics, Emergency Medical Technicians, and Medical Directors, as defined by Chapter 401, Florida Statutes, licensed in other U.S. states, territories, or districts to practice in Florida in response to the emergency without penalty.
  - Authorizes a reporting extension for the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.
  - Authorizes an extension of the upcoming licensure renewal deadlines for Nursing Home Administrators, Radiological Personnel, and Athletic Trainers until October 31, 2024.
- DOH and the Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR) sent information regarding early prescription refills permitted under Executive Order 24-209. This information was sent to the public, health insurers, managed care organizations, pharmacy benefit managers, pharmacy chains, and health care providers.
- There are 46 active Boil Water Notices. A comprehensive statewide list of notices for residents to access online can be found here:
- Alachua (1), Charlotte (2), Citrus (6), Clay (1), Columbia (4), Dixie (1), Duval (1), Hillsborough (11), Lake (2), Lee (1), Leon (2), Levy (1), Madison (1), Manatee (1), Marion (3), Nassau (1), Pasco (1), Pinellas (1), Putnam (3), and Sumter (2) counties.
- The **Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)** has activated reporting in the Health Facility Reporting System (HFRS) and has requested that all health care providers report their census, available beds, evacuation status, and generator status information. This information allows AHCA to assist health care providers in transferring patients if needed and ensure that health care providers in impacted areas have the necessary resources and adequate power.
- AHCA has made 1754 phone calls to health care facilities in the impacted area, to check their status.
- As of this afternoon, 26 health care facilities have reported evacuations. This includes:
  - 13 assisted living facilities
  - 8 nursing homes
  - 3 hospitals



- 1 adult family care home, and 1 intermediate care facility for developmentally disabled
- 100% of operating long-term care facilities have a generator on-site. The Generator Status Map for long-term care facilities is available [here](#).
- As of this afternoon, there are 29 health care facilities on generator power across the state. This includes:
  - 19 assisted living facilities
  - 5 nursing homes
  - 1 adult family care home
  - 2 intermediate care facility for the developmentally disabled
  - 1 residential treatment facilities
  - 1 residential treatment centers for children and adolescents
- The Agency has waived all prior authorization requirements for critical Medicaid services until further notice.
- AHCA has conducted 336 onsite post-incident assessment visits.

### **Infrastructure, Roads and State Closures**

- The **Florida Highway Patrol (FHP)** cut teams and FDOT road clearing teams provided aid to areas impacted by the storm.
- FHP Troopers are assisting with escorting critical restoration and recovery vehicles from around the state to areas impacted by the storm.
- FHP has 33 Quick Response Force team members deployed to affected areas of Florida to assist with rescue and recovery efforts.
- FHP and FDOT cut teams cleared all trees and debris from Interstate 10, Interstate 75 and other state and local roadways, restoring traffic flow.
- 8 FHP drone teams and a fixed-wing aircraft are actively assisting with search and rescue efforts and storm damage assessment in Steinhatchee and Keaton Beach in Taylor County, Cedar Key in Levy County, and Horseshoe Beach in Dixie County.
- FHP high-water vehicles assisted with search and rescue efforts.
- FHP is providing security at storm response fuel sites.
- FHP Troopers are assisting the Florida Department of Children and Families with providing security at supply distribution centers in Madison, Taylor, Pasco, Lafayette, and Manatee Counties.
- FHP Troopers are assisting with escorting utility crews across affected areas.
- FHP Troopers are supporting with traffic control in Taylor, Levy, Dixie, and Hernando Counties.
- FLHSMV will deploy Florida Licensing on Wheels (FLOW) mobiles to Keaton Beach (9.30.24-10.1.24), Perry (9.30.24 - until no longer needed), and Steinhatchee (10.2.24-10.4.24) to provide mobile driver license and vehicle registration services to those impacted by the storm.
- **Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FLHSMV)** issued Emergency Order 24-05, in support of Executive Order 24-209 which: waives specific requirements for commercial motor vehicles providing emergency relief; and waives the replacement fees for driver's license and

identification credentials, vehicle registrations and titles, vessel registrations and titles and temporary parking permits for impacted individuals.

- The **Department of Children and Families (DCF)** is supporting 17 shelters serving over 760 individuals across 14 counties and has delivered and served over 206,000 meals, 385,800 bottles of water and other drinks, and 45,700 snacks to 22 counties.
- The HOPE LINE is available to assist those in need of resources or other assistance after the storm. It is now available 24/7 for the next two-plus weeks at 833-GET-HOPE.
- The Hope Bus has been stationed in Lafayette, Madison, Manatee, Pasco, and Taylor counties and distributed baby items, snacks, water, nonperishable items, and other essential resources to over 9,000 individuals.
- Floridians impacted by the storm who need help and resources like food, supplies, home repairs, and more can request help through Activate Hope by [completing the form here.](#)
- The **Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA)** continues to contact all Area Agencies on Aging partners to receive updates. Post storm call downs to clients are ongoing and there are currently no unmet needs.
- The **Florida Department of Education (FDOE)** has been contacting school districts and state colleges following Hurricane Helene and is working with the Florida Division of Emergency Management to expedite assistance. Out of the total 68 school districts that announced closures due to Hurricane Helene, 63 of those school districts will be open, Tuesday, October 1, 2024, and the Department expects additional districts to open in the coming days. For more information on school closures, visit [fldoe.org/storminfo](http://fldoe.org/storminfo).
- Commissioner Manny Diaz, Jr. and Department staff will be passing out free, hot meals at Jefferson County School on Monday, September 30, 2024. Lunch will be served at 12 p.m. and dinner will be served at 4 p.m. with snacks available throughout the day.
- Address: 50 David Road, Monticello, FL, 32344
- The **Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)** is actively working to provide assistance to drinking water, wastewater, and hazardous waste facilities. Outreach to these facilities to determine operational status is ongoing.
- DEP's online portal, WaterTracker, is live for drinking and wastewater facilities to report their operational status.
- DEP is working with Florida's Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (FlaWARN), the Florida Rural Water Association, and other response agencies to dispatch generators, fuel and pump trucks, and other resources to assist drinking and wastewater facilities.
- DEP and response agencies are working 1-on-1 with partially- and non-Operational drinking and wastewater facilities to get them back to operational status as quickly as possible to meet the immediate service needs of the communities they serve. Areas under boil water advisories can be found at

<https://www.floridahealth.gov/environmental-health/drinking-water/boil-water-notice/index.html>.

- DEP is working in conjunction with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the U.S. Coast Guard to identify oil spills and hazardous material releases in coastal and inland waterways.
- 116 Disaster Debris Management Sites have been authorized to operate for Hurricane Helene. These sites are a critical component of expediting clean-up and reducing environmental and public health impacts post-storm and meeting federal reimbursement requirements.
- Seven Florida State Parks strike teams have deployed to assist with assessment and recovery efforts at impacted parks.
- 122 state parks have reopened following Hurricane Helene. DEP published a storm updates webpage to keep state park visitors updated of closures: [FloridaStateParks.org/StormUpdates](https://FloridaStateParks.org/StormUpdates). Visitors with existing camping and cabin reservations at closed parks have been notified of their reservation status.
- DEP requested a mobile testing lab from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to help process drinking water samples for the protection of public health. DEP is gathering supplies and testing kits for utilization by the lab, as well as identifying a staging area.

### **Resources for Employees, Businesses and Consumers**

- The **Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR)** Division of Hotels and Restaurants inspection teams have conducted more than 1,100 disaster inspections and 1,000 outreach calls to impacted licensees in the affected counties
- The Florida Disaster Contractors Network has been activated to connect homeowners with licensed contractors and suppliers to perform emergency repairs.
- DBPR encourages Florida's licensed contractors who provide post-storm construction-related services to register with its Florida Disaster Contractors Network at [DCNOnline.org](https://DCNOnline.org). Since Hurricane Helene's landfall, more than 5,200 licensed contractors have registered with Florida's DCN.
- DBPR has distributed FloridaCommerce's Business Damage Assessment Survey to nearly 1,000,000 licensees in impacted counties and continues to encourage licensees to report damages using the survey.
- DBPR's Division of Regulation teams have conducted unlicensed activity sweeps across 11 impacted communities.
- At the direction of Governor DeSantis, today, DBPR issued Emergency Order 2024-08 to streamline Hurricane Helene recovery efforts and remove barriers for impacted businesses.
- **FloridaCommerce** activated the private sector hotline at (850) 815-4925, open daily 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Inquiries may also be emailed to [ESF18@em.myflorida.com](mailto:ESF18@em.myflorida.com).
- Governor Ron DeSantis has activated the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program, making \$15 million available for businesses impacted by Hurricane Helene. Florida small business owners in need of assistance,

including sole proprietors, are encouraged to visit [www.FloridaJobs.org/EBL](http://www.FloridaJobs.org/EBL) to apply for the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program. The program provides short-term, zero-interest loans to small businesses that experienced economic injury or physical damage due to Hurricane Helene. Interested applicants can apply now through November 25, 2024, or until all available funds are expended.

- FloridaCommerce and the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) activated the Business Damage Assessment Survey in response to Hurricane Helene. Business owners can self-report physical and economic damage caused by Hurricane Helene. Survey responses will allow the state to expedite Hurricane Helene recovery efforts by gathering data and assessing the needs of impacted businesses. Businesses can complete the survey online by visiting [FloridaDisaster.biz](http://FloridaDisaster.biz) and selecting "Hurricane Helene" from the dropdown menu.
- FloridaCommerce is hosting daily private sector recovery coordination calls. Briefings will be provided by Emergency Support Functions and private sector partners. For call information email [esf18@em.myflorida.com](mailto:esf18@em.myflorida.com).
- FloridaCommerce continues to work with the Florida Chamber, the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association and other private sector partners to consistently update business open/close status on [FloridaDisaster.biz](http://FloridaDisaster.biz). FloridaCommerce staff have made more than 1800 calls to rural and small businesses to help with this effort.
- FloridaCommerce and CareerSource Florida continues to host calls with the 21 Local Workforce Development Boards and 38 Community Action Agencies across the state to assess damage and deploy resources to help the hardest-hit areas. To find your local career center, visit [careersourceflorida.com](http://careersourceflorida.com).
- CareerSource Florida Career Center openings are being updated on [FloridaDisaster.biz](http://FloridaDisaster.biz).
- FloridaCommerce has deployed 35 agency employees into communities in Dixie, Madison, Manatee, Pasco and Taylor counties including Bradenton, Dekle Beach, Holiday, Horseshoe Beach, Jasper, Keaton Beach, Lee, Live Oak, Madison, Perry and Steinhatchee providing outreach and support to individuals and businesses.
- The Florida Small Business Development Center Network has deployed its Mobile Assistance Center to support outreach to impacted businesses.
- Florida SBDC Network regional offices are working with local stakeholders and clients to understand impacts and support technical assistance for applications to available disaster resources.
- Wawa stores in Florida are providing free coffee and fountain beverages to all first responders, including National Guard in Florida in appreciation for all they are doing to support and serve our communities during Hurricane response and recovery efforts.
- The Wawa Community Care Coffee Truck has been deployed to Taylor and Lafayette Counties, providing free coffee and water to residents impacted by the storm.
- Spectrum announced it will help residents stay connected after Hurricane Helene by offering free, unlimited access to Spectrum WiFi access points in Florida, Georgia and Alabama. For locations: <https://lnkd.in/g/hjN6wAD>

- Walmart has donated \$500 gift cards to shelters in Hamilton, Madison and Suwannee Counties for the purchase of pet food.
- Lowes has deployed their Tool Rental Truck to assist in recovery efforts providing a rental option for power tools from chainsaws and pressure washers, to fence post augers and compressors. The truck is also staffed with small engine mechanics to support local communities with power.
- **VISIT FLORIDA** Emergency Accommodation Modules on Expedia, Priceline and Booking.com will remain available to provide real-time hotel availability and lodging resources for impacted Floridians and visitors.
- Comcast has opened more than 52,000 public Xfinity WiFi hotspots in Florida. The free and public hotspots are open for all, including non-Xfinity customers. For more information, [click here](#).
- CVS Health created pop-up pharmacies in impacted areas.
- The **Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, has contacted the United States Postal Service (USPS)** about election information and vote-by-mail ballots. The Division of Elections recommended that the Supervisors of Elections contact their local district USPS to discuss a mitigation plan for ballot
- The **Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS)** worked with Florida's ports and fuel industry partners to ensure adequate fuel supplies are available, and with Florida's agricultural partners so producers have adequate resources. The Florida Forest Service staged equipment, like high-water vehicles.
- The Commissioner of Agriculture, Wilton Simpson, has approved an [Emergency Order](#) temporarily suspending the intrastate movement requirements for animal transportation. In addition, the following states have waived their interstate import requirements for Florida pets, horses, and livestock leaving the state: Alabama, Georgia (does not include livestock), Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina.
- Commissioner Wilton Simpson has approved an [emergency rule](#) authorizing out-of-state licensed security guards to protect people and property in Florida and has approved an [emergency rule](#) to aid the distribution of liquefied petroleum gas to disaster response and recovery operations.
- Fuel inspectors are responding to impacted areas to ensure retail fuel dispensers are working properly and testing the quality of fuel.
- As of 3 p.m. on Sept. 30, inspectors had completed preliminary inspections of 2,124 of an estimated 2,126 potentially impacted retail fuel stations. Of the 2,124 facilities, 1,829 are open and operating.
- Floridians are encouraged to visit [complaints.fdacs.gov](http://complaints.fdacs.gov) or call 1-800-HELP-FLA to report water-contaminated fuel issues to the department.
- Food safety inspectors are responding to impacted areas to conduct damage assessments and ensure the safe operation of over 15,000 potentially impacted food establishments.
- As of 3 p.m. on Sept. 30, inspectors have completed 5,712 assessments of food establishments in impacted regions. 4,906 facilities are open for business.

- FDACS has delivered or is in the process of delivering a total of 118 truckloads of ice to support local communities.  
Agricultural partners can request critical assistance for livestock and
- animals in critical need, please complete this form and then send it to [DAIOPSAssessment@FDACS.gov](mailto:DAIOPSAssessment@FDACS.gov), or call 863-993-5460.
- UF/IFAS is studying the agricultural losses and damages resulting from Hurricane Helene. Producers can share information about impacts experienced at your farm, ranch, or aquaculture operation [here](#).  
Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson and the Florida Department
- of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) launched the Agriculture and Aquaculture Producers Natural Disaster Recovery Loan Program for Florida farmers, ranchers, and growers impacted by Hurricane Helene to apply for low-interest and interest-free loans. Loans can be used by eligible agriculture and aquaculture producers to restore, repair, or replace essential physical property – including fences, equipment, greenhouses, and other buildings – or to remove vegetative debris.
- FDACS is securing and providing critical resources to our agricultural producers, such as generators, fencing, feed/water, and veterinary supplies.
- Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson has requested a USDA Disaster Declaration to support Florida farmers, ranchers and growers impacted by Hurricane Helene.
- The **Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR)** issued [Emergency Order 400385-24](#) to protect policyholders impacted by Hurricane Helene. The order applies to all insurers in the state and policyholders in Alachua, Charlotte, Citrus, Columbia, Dixie, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Gulf, Franklin, Hamilton, Hernando, Hillsborough, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lee, Leon, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Sarasota, Suwannee, Taylor, and Wakulla counties.  
The order:
  - Extends grace periods for any policy, provision, notice, correspondence, or law that imposes a time limit upon an insured to perform any act until November 26, 2024.
  - Prohibits the cancellation or nonrenewal of a policy in an impacted area, except at the written request of the policyholder, until November 26, 2024.
  - Prohibits the cancellation or nonrenewal of a personal residential or commercial residential property insurance policy covering a property repaired as a result of damage from Hurricane Idalia for a period of 90 days after it has been repaired.
  - Directs insurers, surplus lines and other regulated entities to implement processes and procedures to facilitate the efficient payment of claims.
- The **Department of Revenue (FDOR)** has issued Emergency Order 24-001: Taxing Authority Millage and Budget Hearings to assist local taxing authorities with altering their plans for annual budget hearings because of Helene. Department of Revenue bulletin PTO 20-07 provides further instructions for local taxing authorities during declared emergencies.

- The **Florida Department of Corrections (FDC)** is posting updates publicly at [FDC.myflorida.com/weather-updates](https://www.fdc.myflorida.com/weather-updates).
- The **Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)** has deployed DJJ Hope Navigators, leadership, and team members have deployed to Taylor, Madison, Lafayette, Pasco, Pinellas, Sarasota, and Manatee counties to assist at Hope

For previous updates see below:

[9/24/2024](#)

[9/25/2024](#)

[9/26/2024](#)

[9/27/2024 \(1\)](#)

[9/27/2024 \(2\)](#)

[9/28/2024](#)

[9/29/2024](#)

Follow FDEM on [X](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#) for updates and visit [FloridaDisaster.org/Updates](https://FloridaDisaster.org/Updates) for information relating to Hurricane Helene.

###

---