

Over 4,500 Federal Personnel Supporting States Impacted by Hurricane Helene, Biden-Harris Administration Continues Response Efforts

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WASHINGTON – As crews continue working to restore power, communications and infrastructure across the Southeast, FEMA and federal partners are sending additional teams and resources to bolster state-led response efforts. More than 4,500 personnel from across the federal workforce are deployed and more than 1,000 are from FEMA. To date, FEMA has shipped over 7.1 million meals, more than 6.5 million liters of water, 150 generators and more than 200,000 tarps to the region.

Today, the White House announced that President Biden will travel to North Carolina to meet with community leaders and first responders. FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell will remain in North Carolina to oversee response efforts and ensure the federal government provides urgent and extensive support to Asheville and surrounding areas.

Administrator Criswell today announced that FEMA Region 10 Regional Administrator Willie Nunn will deploy to South Carolina to oversee response and recovery operations in the state.

President Biden has approved Major Disaster declarations for areas of [Florida](#), [North Carolina](#) and [South Carolina](#), including 41 counties in Georgia [announced](#) today. Disaster survivors in these areas can begin their recovery process by applying for federal assistance through FEMA.

People with damage to their homes or personal property who live in the designated counties should apply for assistance, which may include upfront funds to help with essential items like food, water, baby formula and other emergency supplies. Funds may also be available to repair storm-related damage to homes



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and personal property, as well as assistance to find a temporary place to stay.

There are three ways apply for FEMA assistance:

- Online by visiting disasterassistance.gov.
- Calling 1-800-621-3362.
- Download and apply on the [FEMA App](#).

Homeowners and renters with damage to their home or personal property from previous disasters, whether they received FEMA funds or not, are still eligible to apply for and receive assistance for Hurricane Helene.

Additionally, yesterday, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra [declared](#) a Public Health Emergency (PHE) for South Carolina and Tennessee to address the health impacts of Hurricane Helene. This follows recent announcements of PHE declarations for Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina. PHE declarations give the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) health care providers and suppliers greater flexibility in meeting emergency health needs of Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries.

Voluntary organizations are also providing personnel and resources to the hardest hit areas. The American Red Cross has more than 850 trained disaster workers providing comfort and operating shelters. They are also helping find loved ones through their helpline **1-800-RED-CROSS** (1-800-733-2767) or by visiting the [Red Cross Hurricane Helene Reunification page](#), where you can enter pertinent information about the person you're looking for. If someone is missing a child related to this disaster or any other incident, they need to call **9-1-1** and then **1-800-THE-LOST** to receive assistance from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

People can receive free services like cutting fallen trees, tarping roofs and mold mitigation with the help of Crisis Cleanup by calling **844-965-1386**. The hotline is open through October 11 and can connect people with volunteers from local relief organizations, community groups and the faith-based community who may be able to assist.

While the impacts of Hurricane Helene are widespread and affecting many states simultaneously, each disaster is unique. Below is a list of tips and resources that



people can use to help address the needs they are facing in their community as well as key operational updates.

North Carolina

- Residents should not travel to western North Carolina to keep the roadways clear for search and rescue teams and utility crews.
- Residents can get in touch with loved ones by **calling 2-1-1** or **visit unitedwaync.org** to add them to search and rescue efforts.
- **10 federal search and rescue teams** are working on the ground. **Over 900 personnel** have searched **675 areas** and rescued **127 survivors**.
- **Four FEMA Incident Management Assessment Teams are in North Carolina**, coordinating directly with the state to facilitate requests for assistance.
- **25 trailer-loads of meals** and **60 trailers-loads of water** have been delivered to North Carolina. Going forward, more trailer loads of meals and 40 trailer-loads of water will be delivered daily.
- A bulk water distribution site opened in downtown Asheville yesterday; additional sites will open in the coming days.
- There are **28 shelters** open with more than **1,030 occupants**.
- FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance teams will assist survivors in applying for assistance.
- FEMA, the FCC, and private telecommunications providers are working together to help restore temporary communications as quickly as possible by establishing temporary cell sites and allowing for roaming where possible. This will enable residents to connect to any network available, even if they aren't subscribed to that network.
- **60 Starlink satellite systems** are available to help with responder communications and an additional **140 satellites** are being shipped to assist with communications infrastructure restoration; **64 satellite phones** expected to arrive today. One Starlink will be deployed to each county to assist with communications and continuity of government.
- Generators are moving into Asheville, with another **30 generators** enroute to the staging base in the Charlotte metro area.
- FEMA Disaster Medical Assistance Teams are in Asheville providing emergency room medical support at hospitals.
- **200 federal ambulances** have been provided to the state.



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- **A C-17 cargo plane full of food, water and other commodities arrived at the forward operating base in Asheville, with a daily flow of commodities established via air bridge.**

Florida

- Residents in need of information or resources should call the State Assistance Information Line (SAIL) at **1-800-342-3557**. English, Spanish and Creole speakers are available to answer questions.
- More than **120 FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance personnel** deployed to help survivors apply for assistance and jumpstart their recovery.
- **Two FEMA Incident Management Assistance Teams** are onsite at the state Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee to coordinate with the state and facilitate any requests for federal assistance.
- **30 FEMA Division Supervisors are embedded in 21 Florida county Emergency Operations Centers.**

Georgia

- Residents can find resources like shelters and feeding sites at gema.georgia.gov/hurricane-helene.
- **Two FEMA Incident Management Assistance Teams** are onsite at the state Emergency Operations Center in Tallahassee to coordinate with the state and facilitate any requests for federal assistance.
- **A FEMA Incident Management Assistance Team** is onsite at the state Emergency Operations Center in TOWN to coordinate with the state and facilitate any requests for assistance

South Carolina

- Residents with questions on Hurricane Helene can call the state's toll-free hotline, open 24 hours a day, at **1-866-246-0133**
- Residents who are dependent on medical equipment at home and who are without power due to Helene may be eligible for a medical needs shelter. Call the state's **Department of Public Health Care Line** at **1-855-472-3432** for more information.
- **A FEMA Incident Management Assistance Team** is onsite at the state Emergency Operations Center in West Columbia to coordinate with the state



and facilitate any requests for assistance.

Tennessee

- Residents can call **1-800-824-3463 to report a missing person**. Callers should be prepared to relay as much information as possible including names, phone numbers, vehicle identification and last known whereabouts.
- Counties have started establishing donation centers. For the evolving list, visit [TEMA's website](#).
- **A FEMA Incident Management Assistance Team** is onsite at the state Emergency Operations Center in Nashville to coordinate with the state and facilitate any requests for assistance.
- **Federal Urban Search & Rescue personnel** are on the ground in Knoxville.



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