

# As Federal Assistance for Hurricane Helene Exceeds \$210 Million, FEMA Prepares for Dual Response with Hurricane Milton Strengthening as it Moves Toward Gulf Coast of Florida

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Federal support for survivors of Hurricane Helene has now surpassed \$210 million, reflecting the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to helping impacted communities recover and rebuild. FEMA remains focused on coordinating comprehensive recovery efforts across the Southeast, mobilizing resources and personnel to provide immediate and long-term support to those affected.

Administrator Deanne Criswell continues to lead the Helene response and recovery efforts and will join Governor Roy Cooper, Department of Defense Assistant Secretary Rebecca Zimmerman Dual Status Commander Wes Morrison and NORTHCOM Commander Gen. Gregory Guillot for a press conference this morning to provide updates on the storm damage assessments and response efforts.

Administrator Criswell has directed FEMA’s Deputy Director Erik Hooks to travel to North Carolina today to support response and recovery efforts while she travels to Florida. There, she will meet with local and state officials as she directs the federal response on the ground and prepares for the impacts of Hurricane Milton, which is expected to make landfall on the Gulf Coast of Florida on Wednesday evening as a major hurricane. Administrator Criswell will return to North Carolina this evening.

As FEMA maintains its focus on Helene response and recovery, the agency is also pre-positioning resources to support local and state response efforts ahead of Hurricane Milton. FEMA is fully prepared to respond to the storm’s potential impacts and has already begun staging resources and personnel to support communities in its path. The agency’s capacity to manage multiple simultaneous disasters ensures that it can continue to prioritize response and recovery efforts for Helene, while also being ready to respond to Milton. Residents in the storm’s projected path are urged to stay informed and prepare now.

## Helene Response

The agency is actively working alongside state, local and tribal partners to assess damage and support those affected by Helene. Nearly **7,000** personnel from across the federal workforce are deployed, including FEMA



# FEMA

staff. To date, FEMA has shipped over **15.6** million meals, more than **13.9** million liters of water, **157** generators and more than **505,000** tarps to the region.

Disaster survivors in certain areas of [Georgia](#), [Florida](#), [North Carolina](#), [South Carolina](#), [Tennessee](#) and [Virginia](#) 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 areas should apply for assistance, which may include upfront funds to help with essential items like food, water, baby formula, breastfeeding supplies and other emergency supplies. Funds may also be available to repair storm-related damage to homes and personal property, as well as assistance to find a temporary place to stay. 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 Helene.

There are three ways to apply for FEMA assistance:

- Calling the FEMA Helpline at 1-800-621-3362.
- Online by visiting [disasterassistance.gov](https://disasterassistance.gov).
- Downloading and applying on the [FEMA App](#).

### **Support for North Carolina**

**Financial Support:** FEMA has approved **more than \$32 million in housing and other types of assistance** for over **27,000 households**.

**Staffing:** As response efforts continue in North Carolina, **more than 800 FEMA staff** are on the ground, with more arriving daily. Over **1,200 Urban Search and Rescue personnel** remain in the field helping people. These teams have **rescued or supported over 3,200 survivors to date**. In a move to strengthen recovery operations in Western North Carolina, President Biden has ordered an additional **500** active-duty troops equipped with advanced technological assets to the area. This brings the total number of active-duty military personnel supporting the response to **1,500**. Dozens of Disaster Survivor Assistance staff are on the ground in affected areas to help survivors apply for FEMA assistance and connect them with additional state, local, federal and voluntary agency resources. Experienced FEMA leaders from around the country are in the field to bolster response efforts.

**Sheltering:** Over **1,700** people who cannot return home are staying in safe and clean lodging through FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance program. [Transitional Sheltering Assistance](#) is available for North Carolinians displaced by Helene. Residents in declared counties who have applied for disaster assistance may be eligible to stay temporarily in a hotel or motel paid for by FEMA while they work on their long-term housing plan. People do not need to request this assistance. FEMA will notify them of their eligibility through an automated phone call, text message and/or email, depending upon the method of communication they selected at the time of application for disaster assistance.

Shelter numbers continue to decline, with **22 shelters** housing just **under 1,000 occupants**. Mobile feeding operations continue to help survivors in heavily impacted areas, including three mass feeding sites in Buncombe, McDowell and Watauga counties.

**Power and Cellular Restoration:** As of today, more than **86%** of originally reported power outages have been restored. Cellular restoration continues to improve, with **less than 20% of cellular sites down**. FEMA is boosting response coordination by providing **Starlink units to ensure first responders** can communicate with each other.

**Commodities:** Commodity distribution, mass feeding and hydration operations are underway in areas of western North Carolina. FEMA commodity shipments are enroute to support operations. The agency is on track to meet requested delivery timelines for meals and water. Voluntary organizations are supporting feeding operations with bulk food and water deliveries coming via truck and aircraft. The Salvation Army has **nine mobile feeding units** supporting the massive operation and has provided emotional and spiritual care to more than 900 people. To date, The Salvation Army has served over **12,600 meals, 9,600 drinks and 5,600 snacks**. The American Red Cross is engaging in targeted distribution of emergency supplies in low-income communities with high levels of minor or affected residential damage.

Resources:

- Residents can visit: [ncdps.gov/helene](https://ncdps.gov/helene) to get information and additional assistance.
- Residents can get in touch with loved ones by **calling 2-1-1** or **visiting [unitedwaync.org](https://unitedwaync.org)** to add them to search and rescue efforts.

### **Support for Florida**

As recovery efforts continue in Florida, FEMA has approved more than **\$87 million** for over **13,000 households**. FEMA specialists are canvassing Florida communities affected by Helene to help survivors apply for assistance. Additionally, FEMA inspectors are visiting applicants' homes to verify disaster-caused damage.

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.

### **Support for South Carolina**

As recovery efforts continue in South Carolina, FEMA has approved over **\$57 million for more than 73,500 households**. FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams are on the ground in neighborhoods across the affected counties continuing to help survivors apply for FEMA assistance and connect them with additional state, local, federal and voluntary agency resources.

Residents with questions on 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.

### **Support for Georgia**

FEMA has approved over **\$31 million for more than 39,000 households**. FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams are on the ground in neighborhoods across the affected counties helping survivors apply for FEMA assistance and connecting them with additional state, local, federal and voluntary agency resources.

**Resources:** Residents can find resources like shelters and feeding sites at [gema.georgia.gov/hurricane-helene](https://gema.georgia.gov/hurricane-helene).

### **Support for Virginia**

To date, FEMA has approved **nearly \$500,000 for over 89 households**. FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams are on the ground in neighborhoods across the affected counties helping survivors apply for FEMA assistance and connecting them with additional state, local, federal and voluntary agency resources.

Residents can find resources like shelters and feeding sites at: [Recover – Hurricane Helene | VDEM \(vaemergency.gov\)](https://www.vaemergency.gov/recover-hurricane-helene/)

### **Support for Tennessee**

FEMA has approved more than **\$632,000 for disaster assistance for over 33 households**. FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance Teams are on the ground in neighborhoods across the affected counties helping survivors apply for FEMA assistance and connecting them with additional state, local, federal and voluntary agency resources.

Residents can call **1-800-824-3463 to report a missing person**. Callers should be prepared to provide as much information as possible including names, phone numbers, vehicle identification and last known whereabouts.

Counties continue to establish donation centers. For the evolving list, visit [TEMA's website](#).

### **Voluntary Organizations**

Voluntary organizations are also providing personnel and resources to the hardest hit areas. The American Red Cross has hundreds of **trained disaster workers providing comfort and operating shelters**. Additionally, they are helping find loved ones through their helpline **1-800-RED-CROSS** (1-800-733-2767) or by the [Red Cross Hurricane Helene Reunification page](#) where people can enter pertinent information about the person they'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.

## Contact Us

If you have any questions, please contact FEMA Office of External Affairs:

- Congressional Affairs at (202) 646-4500 or at [FEMA-Congressional-Affairs@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Congressional-Affairs@fema.dhs.gov)
- Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at [FEMA-IGA@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-IGA@fema.dhs.gov)
- Tribal Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at [FEMA-Tribal@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Tribal@fema.dhs.gov)
- Private Sector Engagement at (202) 646-3444 or at [FEMA-Private-Sector@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Private-Sector@fema.dhs.gov)

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Also, follow Administrator Deanne Criswell on X [@FEMA\\_Deanne](https://twitter.com/FEMA_Deanne).

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Helping people before, during, and after disasters.