

Governor DeSantis (00:00):

Course inspect, uh, the day after the storm, some of the catastrophic impact in places like Fort Myers Beach. I was also able yesterday to get a closer look at places like Sanibel and see some of the destruction there. You know, you look when you're flying over on helicopters and some of these other communities, you look, you know, a lot of the homes seem fine, but you know, you don't know how much water that they had, uh, just when the storm was hitting. And I know some of those communities, you know, had a lot of flooding that happened. So there's gonna be a lot of work that needs to be able to do to be able to salvage people's homes. Um, but if you think about what's happened here, start starting this morning. I mean, obviously this stuff was pre-staged. Uh, there's seven pods like this opened in Lee County.

Governor DeSantis (00:43):

Uh, three pods opened in Charlotte County handing out food and water. And this is less than 48 hours from the, from the storm leaving our state, it left the state, uh, Thursday afternoon, Thursday evening. And so these were, um, and there's gonna be 20 open by the end of the day. Uh, usually this is a 96 hour evolution. Uh, but here because of the pre-planning and pre staging, getting it open much, much better in Inglewood, we've delivered one mega generator that was able to bring their water system back online. Uh, we are supporting operations, uh, for three different hospital systems to make sure they have the services they need. Uh, we're also supporting operations with three logistical staging areas and three base camps throughout the region. We have, um, called in the Army Corps of Engineers at the request of the counties, uh, to help with, uh, damage to the water system.

Governor DeSantis (01:36):

And I know that some of this is Lee County Water utility, some of it may be municipal. Bottom line is the corp is working with all of those groups. I know they're meeting again today, uh, to, to, to figure out what the best way is to go forward. Clearly by having those core services like the water and, and like the electrical are, are really top priorities, uh, after the life rescue mission. And so people understand that. Uh, if you look at what's happened with, uh, some of the power restoration efforts, we've had over 55% or 54% of the power that's gone out due to this storm has been restored. And this is a storm that left the state on Thursday afternoon, Thursday evening. So less than 40, 48 hours after the storm leaving, uh, over 54% of all people that lost power have power back. Uh, you're seeing those numbers rapidly improve in most parts of the state.

Governor DeSantis (02:30):

Obviously, when you're talking about here in southwest Florida, some of the areas that were most affected, like Sanibel, like Pine Island, uh, those are being serviced. Uh, I think by the electrical cooperative. I was got a brief from the county, I guess they started repairs, you know, this morning. And so hopefully there's not a lot of structural damage. But, you know, I've spoken with, uh, FPL and they obviously have a lot of infrastructure and I've asked them, Hey, if these cooperatives need some of the knowhow and need some infrastructure support, will you provide it? And, and they said that they would provide it, and I think it's not just FPL that'll do that, I think Duke and some of the other big utilities will as well. So, um, will you've seen progress be made in Charlotte and Lee? Uh, on the power? I think that's mostly been, uh, on FPL sites, and so hopefully they'll be able to get some, some progress on some of the county or some of the cooperative sites.

Governor DeSantis (03:25):

Uh, going forward, we we're happy to have non-profit partners like World Central Kitchen, Red Cross and Salvation Army. They've already done 70,000 hot meals and we'll be doing more. Uh, we are working with the telecom companies, you know, they have surge resources in here, these portable towers. Uh, some of the other things to be able to help, uh, with the connectivity and get everybody up online. Um, but, and we hope that that'll work very quickly and I think there probably will be progress. Uh, we also, we're working, uh, we're working with Elon Musk and starlink satellite, so they're positioning those star lights, uh, the, the starlink satellites to provide good coverage, uh, in southwest Florida and other affected areas. Uh, we have with me, where do I have the, um, do I have it? So here are the Starlinks that we're gonna provide for Lee County.

Governor DeSantis (04:15):

And so what this will do, so they have satellites that beam down, but you can't just get it on your device without having things like that, beaming it to the public or being it to whatever. So those are gonna be really for their use at the places that are offering the emergency response so that they can be fully hooked up and can get online if they need to go. At the same time, uh, we are working with SpaceX and we are expecting 120 additional large starlink units to deploy to Southwest Florida. And so they've donated the cost associated with all the coverage. So we want to thank SpaceX and thanks, thank Elon Musk for that. Uh, a large device. You can put it in different areas in the community that are having problems, and they can get a 13 mile radius and they can support over 1000 users at a given time.

Governor DeSantis (05:06):

So you're talking about over a hundred of these. Not all will go to Lee, but many will go to Lee, Charlotte if there's places in Collier, some of our rural counties like DeSoto and Hardy, you know, they're offline too, to be able to do that. So that will help bridge some of the connectivity issues. And we think that that's something that's very, very far. So we're happy to be able to hand this out to Lee County. I delivered some to Charlotte, and I know we have some for the surrounding counties as well. Um, and we're also gonna give to, for search and rescue and this type of response. Uh, Unity Fiber has provided free broadband access, and Verizon has deployed drones to dish, uh, to assist with additional cell coverage. Uh, and that will also help assess damage and expedite recovery efforts. Uh, we mentioned the power situation.

Governor DeSantis (05:55):

Uh, if you look outside of Southwest Florida, you've had, um, you know, really strong comeback, and I, you know, Floridians like who've been around for a while. Remember some past hurricanes, people all over the state could be out for weeks at a time. And so you've had millions restored, um, I think you've had about 1.5 million restored just since Thursday evening when the storm left. And so that's, that's really good. And that's because there were 42,000 linemen staged and ready to go. They're also being serviced by like the waffle houses feeding the linemen, and we appreciate that. We appreciate the community reaching out and supporting these folks who are there. You take connectivity for granted. You, you take for granted, you flip a light switch and you get what you need. Well, it's not so simple. You need people that are tending to that infrastructure and the hurricanes reveal that.

Governor DeSantis (06:44):

So we are appreciative of the folks who've come from all over the country to assist, uh, with this, and we're gonna continue to do it. Uh, as of right now, uh, you got about 73% of Lee County without, uh, power and 77% of Charlotte County without power. The county that has the the most without power is

currently Hardee County. Uh, and that is 88, uh, percent without power. We have moved 1.6 million gallons of fuel into Southwest Florida to support the response. I'm looking at some of these gas stations. Some of them are very busy, some of them have generators to be able to run. Some of them may have electricity, others, the fuel is pouring in. It's just they may not have the electricity to operate their pumps. And so that's gonna be, you know, the issue. As more people come online, you're gonna have more of that.

Governor DeSantis ([07:33](#)):

But we've got a lot of fuel that are, that are here earmarked, uh, for whatever needs that people have. Um, we have over 1300 people on the ground for the Florida Department of Transportation. 1300 miles of roadway have been cleared. I think people heard that. Uh, yesterday you had a lot of river flooding in Charlotte County. Uh, FDOT had to close I 75 for a 12 mile stretch. And so they're constantly monitoring that. Obviously that will be open as soon as it can. Uh, but as of this morning, they were still doing the detours around the flood impact. Uh, there's also other areas where we may expect additional flooding. And it was interesting. I was touring Central Florida with some of the aerial tours. There was more standing water in central Florida than there was here in southwest Florida, even though they're a couple hundred miles away from the initial impact of the, of the storm and the storm surge just to had a lot of water that some of the rivers and inlets overflowing.

Governor DeSantis ([08:29](#)):

So it's creating a lot of problems really all across the state. If that impacts bridges, if that impacts roads, then obviously FDOT needs to maintain safe. All major ports are now open for fueling, and the fuel's gonna be coming in, and we're really happy about that. Uh, we now have a mobile command unit in Lee County and in Charlotte County and in Hardee County to help them with their emergency efforts. And so you'll see Kevin Guthrie is our EM director and he's just probably gonna be living down here, uh, for the time being, you know, starting very, very soon. Uh, FEMA of course, has activated individual assistance for those in need of help recovering. You can visit [disaster.assistance.gov](https://www.fema.gov/disaster/assistance) or call 1 806 2 1 3 3 6 2. So far, 87,000 people have registered for fema. Make sure you take evidence of the damage to your home if you had flood damage and you have a policy under the National Flood Insurance Program, take pictures of the waterline.

Governor DeSantis ([09:30](#)):

Hopefully you took pictures when the water was still in there. That will help grease the skids for you to be able to submit your claims and be made whole as soon as humanly possible. We're looking and we'll have an announcement very soon to have a Disaster Recovery Center set up, certainly in in Lee County and in Charlotte, and likely in many other counties. And as part of that effort, you can go, You don't need to go in for fema, you can do a lot of this online. Uh, but if you have questions, if you're not getting what you need, there'll be the people there to assist you. We'll also have folks from the state of Florida there. And then Jimmy Petronis, the CFO for the State of Florida is setting up insurance villages so people can come in and, uh, meet with the carriers and, and, uh, make their claims.

Governor DeSantis ([10:15](#)):

It's interesting. I, you know, just looking at around the state, uh, we probably suffered more flood damage than wind damage. Uh, you look at like a Charlotte County, they didn't get the storm surge. They anticipated they did get wind damage. You did obviously get wind damage in Lee, but I think if you look at some of the communities, you just had a rising water and that was really the, the thing that was

most, uh, devastating because you can have a home that can be, that can withstand hurricane winds, maybe there'll be some damage, patch it up when you got a torrent of water coming in. You know, there's really nothing that, that you can do about that. So that's gonna require a lot of flood claims being filed. Uh, people are gonna have to rehab that, uh, and hopefully get their, their proceeds from the, from the flood program very, very quickly.

Governor DeSantis ([10:59](#)):

Really proud of the first lady for her efforts, spearheading www.floridadisasterfund.org. Uh, they launched this, uh, basically the day after the storm, and they've already raised more than \$20 million to help relief efforts for people. And obviously a lot of that is gonna be done right here in the state of Florida. And so we're really excited about being able to help folks in a variety of ways. You know, I was talking to some of the motorists coming in. You had questions for me about fema, like, FEMA told me I couldn't get this last time, or whatever. FEMA is, you know, it's a bureaucracy and they're gonna go by whatever those regulations are. So you may have needs that don't fit into one of their wickets. So Florida disaster fund.org, working with these private groups can help meet needs of people that would not be covered by fema.

Governor DeSantis ([11:46](#)):

So it's an important compliment to what the state and, and every and these communities are doing overall. Also, people have wanted to come in and pitch in help. Uh, and there's ways to do that. If you go to www.volunteerflorida.org, you can sign up for different volunteer opportunities. And I know people would love to have it, there's been a great outpouring of support community and I've seen a lot of resilience, uh, in this community of people that, um, that want to pick themselves up and, and they want to get their communities back on their feet. And we really appreciate that spirit. And as I've said throughout the whole thing of this, you know, there comes a time when this is not interest to the TV cameras anymore, but we understand the needs will persist long after the cameras are gone and we'll be here and we'll be helping every step of the way. Okay, Jim Eifert is gonna talk about some of the efforts that the Guard is doing.

Gen Eifert ([12:40](#)):

I'm bringing with me, uh, Brier General Sean Boyette, who is the, uh, Joint Task Force Florida Commander. He's been the command and control, um, center node up in, uh, Camp Landing North Florida, controlling all of the resources throughout the state. Um, as obviously Lee County, Collier and, uh, Charlotte have become a center of, uh, significant concern. We are continuing to migrate more forces down here. We currently have about 1200. Florida National Guardsmen will probably be increasing that in the coming days to more than 2000. Again, just to get that presence in the streets, make sure that, uh, the, uh, there are no looting or crime waves that could, uh, uh, be part of the natural disaster. And then, um, also assisting with the additional creation and expansion of the pods that we currently, these points of distribution, like you see behind us. So I'm immensely proud of the Guardsman who has stepped up at a moment's notice to be a part of this, uh, of this effort. And, uh, I'll pass it over to Sean if he has any other words

Sean ([13:40](#)):

As a general mention in the go mentioned, uh, augment some of their outstanding comments. Uh, we look forward to continuing to provide service, uh, to, to our community. Uh, these are your community

soldiers, each and everyone comes from a community within Florida and they're proud to serve their, their fellow, uh, Flo Floridian. So, but with that, I'll, I'll turn it back over to the

Governor DeSantis (13:57):

Governor. Okay. All right. Cecil o

Chair County Commission- Cecil (13:58):

Thank you, sir. Good afternoon. Cecil Pengra, the chairman of the Lee County Commission. First of all, I'd like to thank the governor and the state and the federal agencies working with us, uh, this is the plan that's been in place for a year. You're seeing it all come together. We're one team here. We're all working together. Again. Also like to thank, my colleagues, Commissioner Hammond, Commissioner Sendell Cash for Mike Greenwell and Commissioner, um, Kevin Wayne, we've been working together. The county's put this plan together for last year preparing for this worst case scenario. And we've seen that happen here. Today is a perfect example of that plan to come together. We're gonna have eight pods open today throughout Lee County to provide water, ice, and food to our residents here in Lee County. So make sure you please follow us on our social media. Call 2 1 1 for any more information. Again, my most important concern right now is everybody stay patient right now, like the governor says, going on day three after the hurricane. Most important thing right now is stay patient and work with their agencies here locally. Thank you,

Governor DeSantis (14:51):

Governor and all your staff. Yeah, thank you. Okay, Dan Eagle.

Sec Eagle (14:55):

Well, I wanna thank the governor for his leadership. Being from southwest Florida, of course, this has been incredibly hard to watch from afar. Obviously not as hard to deal with it and, and go through with it, but, uh, I've got a mother in Matlacha Isles and, uh, family in Cape Coral and Fort Myers. And we were telling them early on, evacuate. And they're thinking, We've been through Charlie, we've been through Irma, this is gonna be fine. And obviously this was different. This was a water event, and sure enough, they got flooding, they're safe, Thank God I know their are families, they're dealing with worse. Uh, but the rest we can rebuild. And that's where DEA comes in and thanks. So the governor's leadership, we've been activated, uh, since we knew this storm is gonna be coming upon us. We've been in the EOC daily working with our business partners across the state, uh, and they've been activated with us Publix, uh, uh, lows, uh, Walmart att uh, U-Haul, Uber, you name it.

Sec Eagle (15:40):

They've all been putting, uh, their best foot forward to help people. And we're helping them in real time, looking at supplies, looking at closures, making sure people can open and, uh, do what they need to do. And we're gonna continue doing that so that people have what they need. Two things I want to leave behind today, uh, thanks to the governor's leadership one, um, businesses. They're gonna be looking what's next? I know right now it's recovery and now it's gonna be, how do we get back up on our feet? I need every business out there and spread the word. Please go to, uh, Florida disaster dot biz Florida disaster.biz. We are doing a simple survey. We need to collect information so we can decide what to do next. That the details of that survey are gonna help us dig in and work with our federal partners and of course, our resources at the state, thanks to the governor to make sure we can help people get back on their feet.

Sec Eagle ([16:25](#)):

So please do that today or in the coming days as soon as you can. Florida disaster dot biz. I can't stress that enough. Uh, number two, uh, just moments ago, uh, the governor, uh, announced that disaster unemployment assistance is available to all who need it. If you are in a FEMA declared, uh, zone, Lee County, Charlotte, Collier, and other inland counties, uh, you can find those on Florida jobs, uh, dot org. Uh, and you're affected by the storm. You may be eligible for unemployment assistance. So Florida jobs.org, you can go on there today and start applying to see if you're eligible for unemployment assistance. Obviously, a lot of people, if there's no businesses operating, uh, a lot of people are in real estate construction, Uber gig economy, you name it, go on there. We want to be able to help. We've been working hard to make sure people get back on their feet. This is, uh, an event of no fault of their own. And we're gonna step into help and make sure that people are as whole as can be. So Florida disaster.biz for businesses, Florida jobs.org for unemployment assistance. And we'll be in the communities in the coming days to assist as well. I wanna thank all the locals for their work and thank the governor for his leadership.

Governor DeSantis ([17:26](#)):

Okay. And, um, I, I, we have the president of Florida Power and Light Eric Silagy. I'm gonna ask him to come say, give an update on their efforts. And you know, I told them before you came, you and I had talked, you've offered support for the electrical co-ops, uh, as well. You know, if you look at what, what happened in Lee, the places that were the hardest hit, I think are by and large service, not by fpl, but, but by the, by the co cooperative. And so there may be a need for infrastructure and some things like that. This is something that we were concerned about because of supply chain and Eric and some of his other, um, peer companies said, you know, we've got, we've got infrastructure, we have the ability, uh, to, to provide support if it came to that. And so, so that we may be in that situation. So you wanna come up? Yeah.

Eric Silagy ([18:15](#)):

Uh, thank you governor. Uh, yeah, so as the governor said, this is a team effort and, uh, getting the power back on for all of Florida is a team effort and we're gonna be working with everybody to do so. I'm pleased to report governor that right now at FPL we are two thirds restored. We have one and a half a million customers restored and about 650,000 customers that have yet to be restored. Uh, with that in mind, we are continuing around the clock operations to get everybody up. We have over 21,000 people in the field working around the clock staging out of 30 different sites, we are cleaning up and getting power on at counties across the state. And as soon as the county is, is up and restored, we're collapsing those resources into Southwest Florida and supplementing the thousands we already have right here in southwest Florida.

Eric Silagy ([19:00](#)):

Uh, with even more, we will work with all of the electric providers, uh, whether they're cooperatives, municipal electrics, other industrial own utilities. It's a hallmark of what this industry does is to come together to get the power back on for people as quickly and as safely as possible. Uh, part of this is the being able to get so many people up so quickly as a testament to the investment and the support we've had, uh, from our legislature, from the governor, from other leaders in the state about being able to invest in the resiliency of the infrastructure. At fpl, we have 8,000 miles of transmission in our system and we did not lose one single transmission structure to this monster storm. Uh, nor did we lose any generation that was not able to provide power. That makes a huge difference of being able to get

people up quickly. That's not to say that the distribution system, which many of you have seen pictures along the coast, was not devastated by the storm. We will be rebuilding parts of that, but in most parts we are restoring the power rather than rebuilding the power. And that's because of the support we've had over years to invest in hardening our system with concrete and steel and undergrounding. And Governor, I thank you for that. It's made a huge difference for all Floridians today, uh, to have that kind of investment.

Governor DeSantis (20:08):

So there there's never been this many people restored so quickly cuz we're not even 48 hours after the storm leaving the state of Florida. Um, and you've been through a lot of these storms. I mean this, I think this has gotta be far and away the quickest, right?

Eric Silagy (20:20):

That's correct. I mean, at least for fpl, I can, uh, I can speak to that. Um, hurricane, uh, Irma, which was also a monster storm that hit not too far from here as you recall, was, uh, was at the time the fastest restoration in the history of the United States at fpl. And we are actually beating that at this point. So this will be the fastest restoration of number of customers, uh, that I'm aware of in the country. Yep. And that's again, a testament to the investments have been made as well as the, you know, tens of thousands of workers who have come from 30 states, uh, to help. And we do appreciate all their help and support as well.

Governor DeSantis (20:53):

Great. Well thank you. Yes, sir. Okay. Have any questions? Yeah,

Reporter (20:58):

The storm this way and Hardee County officials made the call to folks to evacuate. How do you feel that was done? Do you feel it was done appropriately in

Governor DeSantis (21:07):

Timing? Absolutely. They were following the data and you remember, uh, people were looking initially at the panhandle on Sunday. Uh, then Monday came and people were thinking maybe north of Tampa Bay. Uh, when we went to bed Monday night, people were saying this is a direct hit on Tampa Bay, worst case scenario for the state. Um, as that track started to shift south and the computer models the next morning they called for the evacuation. They opened their shelters and they responded very quickly to the data. Um, but at the end of the day, you know, Fort Myers and Naples on Sunday, I think of the 11:00 AM advisory, 72 hours out, they weren't even in the cone. I mean, so that's just the reality. So they followed it very closely. I know Kevin Guthrie is in touch with all the EM directors locally, uh, working on kind of what we're seeing with different modeling.

Governor DeSantis (21:55):

And at the end of the day, a storm that's gonna hit 150 miles north of you is something that, and I said there be, there be impacts all across the Gulf Coast. And I said Sunday, even if it goes to North Florida, it's a big star. You could see impacts in Naples and some of those areas, but that's a different type of impact than what we ended up seeing. And so I think that they worked very quickly provide people, shelter, uh, provide people the opportunity to do that. And I know many of them, uh, did take them up,

but I would also just point out you had people evacuating from Tampa to Southwest Florida. I mean that happened because of how they were following the track of the storm. Yep.

Reporter ([22:33](#)):

How are two major concerns for people obviously running water and then gas? Do you have any information on, you know, whether the state is gonna help restore running water and then when we could be expecting gas deliveries

Governor DeSantis ([22:43](#)):

Here? So what we've done on the water, the, the we, they identified the break, I think the day after the storm. Uh, they requested, uh, the state enlist federal support. So we got the Army Corps of Engineers. I think that they made the request at like three in the morning on Thursday. Army Corps was here from Jacksonville, uh, Thursday afternoon. That's a six hour drive under good conditions as you guys know. So, so they're there, they're working, uh, with not just the county water utility, but some of the other municipal utilities to be able to do that. And what I, and we have National Guard engineers available to help the core if they need it. Uh, and I know General Eifert has a lot of folks there, so at the end of the day, troubleshooting that is really significant. Cuz once you get that going, you know, everything else can really come to life.

Governor DeSantis ([23:29](#)):

Even some of the power, you can do the generators, but you need that running water just for basic sanitation. Uh, so we're happy that the Army Corps responded very quickly that they're on it. Uh, I diagnosing it, hopefully offering a solution, um, as soon as possible. You know, the fuel, as I mentioned in my comments, you know, there's fuel available. It's coming in from the ports. The, the gas stations that have power or generators typically are offering gas. I think there's just a lot of gas stations that are offline from that. And so the pumps aren't gonna work if you don't have the electricity. So I think it's probably more of a power issue than it is a fuel supply issue. And now that all our ports are open, you're gonna see more fuel coming in. In addition to all the fuel we have staged, we've got more fuel staged here than we've probably ever had for a storm before. Okay. We'll be back tomorrow. We'll see you guys. Thanks. All right, great. Let us know what else we can do.

Speaker 8 ([24:25](#)):

Thank you.