

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

Governor DeSantis ([00:20](#)):

Thank Y'all for joining me here in Volusia County. I have Secretary of the DEP, Sean Hamilton. Uh, I have, uh, uh, we have state reps, Senators is Walter here, who was on, he was on the list of the thing. He's not. Um, so, um, uh, then we have the sheriff. We have Jim Judge from the emergency management Department. You have people focused a lot on, uh, hurricane and landfall, Southwest Florida. Major impact there a lot. But we came today to get a brief from the, the folks here in Volusia County. You obviously see you have damage on the coast, and you have ongoing issues with some of the flooding that we see further inland. And these are issues where you had 20 inches of rain dropped down on different parts of Central Florida. And if you look at that map, it's like from Southern Sarasota all the way into Central Florida, into Volusia, even up the coast a little bit from here was really, really a historic event.

Governor DeSantis ([01:23](#)):

So we've seen flooding. I was just in Osceola County looking at some of the, the neighborhoods that are, you know, fortunately what I saw today, the homes, the water did not quite get up to the homes. And in many place of Florida, including here, you know, you had the homes that actually were flooded. Makes it a lot more difficult. Once it gets inside your home. Uh, sometimes you can repair it, but some of the flooding was so extensive, the homes are now destroyed in different parts of the state. But the issue is like you have all this water that's built up and the coastal areas drain a lot easier, but when you're further inland, it's gotta go. Depending on where you are in this part of state goes like north through the St. John's or it goes south, that ends up, down in Lake Okeechobee.

Governor DeSantis ([02:04](#)):

But all this stuff is very high right now, so you got a lot of water that's still standing there. So this is an ongoing thing and the, the impacts of this have been very, very broad. So we just wanna make sure that we've been up and down places in southwest Florida since the storm hit. We were there the next morning. You know, it's interesting how nice the weather is. Like when a hurricane comes through, you go the next day, the weather looks so good, but it was just unbelievably, uh, violent in terms of storm surge, massive amounts of rainfall. But what we said is, okay, you know, we're gonna be ready to go. So we had, uh, search and rescue station ready to go. Midnight Wednesday into Thursday, you had the USAR teams heading into Southwest Florida. You still had a tropical storm going on, and they were heading in there.

Governor DeSantis ([02:52](#)):

We had Coast Guard, Uh, we had local law enforcement, we had state agencies like Florida Fish and Wildlife, uh, our, our highway patrol, all hands on deck to be able to help, uh, this, this effort. And there've now been, there's been almost 2,500 rescues, uh, since the storm hit the state of Florida. There have been many rescues here in places like, uh, Volusia County where you had flooding, but also when they're going through these really, really hard hit areas and places like Sanibel Fort Myers Beach, you know, they're able to go and they've rescued people who probably would've ended up dying had they not had people there that early. So they've saved a lot of lives and it's been really good. They've also searched all the search and rescue, uh, total. They've searched now close to a hundred hundred

thousand structures, particularly in those really hard hit areas searching for survivors and searching for, for what may be behind there.

Governor DeSantis ([03:48](#)):

So it's really been a herculean effort in terms of the search and rescue. And I think it's probably been, uh, as good as I've seen since I've been involved in, in, in any of this even before I was governor. So we want to thank everybody that was involved in that effort. We actually had the rear admiral from the Coast Guard, McPherson, great guy. He was in our EOC in Tallahassee before and during the storm and literally dispatching his coasties to these different places. Uh, if you look at what we also did with the power restoration, had 42,000 linemen stationed in Florida. Many of these linemen coming from Texas, Alabama, all across the country. In fact, if you looked on I 10 going eastbound in the panhandle, the number one thing you saw starting Monday morning, uh, of the week of the storm was utility trucks just pouring into the state of Florida.

Governor DeSantis ([04:42](#)):

And so what ended up happening is the storm left the state probably, I guess probably still had significant stuff, Wed, or Thursday afternoon, Thursday evening of last week. And they went on and we're now in a situation where you have over 99% Florida has power, uh, a week after the storm. And if you look at what they've been able to do, they're a hundred percent and almost every part of the state, um, it's now a hundred percent restored, of course, in Volusia and other places. But you're now down to, there's a couple pockets that the, uh, electrical co-op and Lee County are still working on. I know they've made some progress in Cape Coral. We, we surged a bunch of extra linemen there to try to get that all going. But then you have places like Sanibel where the whole system was just destroyed. So what we've done there is we're chi, we've chin uped people in to Sanibel to work on the electrical restoration.

Governor DeSantis ([05:39](#)):

We're running barges across because they took out the, the storm took out the causeway. So you don't have a way to get vehicles over there right now. Now we're working on repairing that, and that's gonna be done very soon, but we're doing that. So those are, we're down to the, basically, except for some pockets of Lee County, you know, people are gonna have power unless their home was damaged and they can't receive power or unless you have a total restoration of the system. Unfortunately, like we have in a couple places that, particularly these barrier islands, there was a place in, uh, in, uh, Lee County called Pine Island. They had a bridge that was connecting Pine Island to the mainland. And the bridge got taken out. Uh, the road leading up to the bridge got taken out by the storm. And so people were saying, Well, you just have to evacuate the island.

Governor DeSantis ([06:27](#)):

It's gonna take too long to fix this. And they asked me for help and I said, Okay, we'll do it. I mean, I have a, you know, big budget surplus. I've got a \$500 million disaster fund. This is why you do these things to be able to help. So we're able to go in and in three days we restored the bridge. So they're now going to Pine Island back onto the mainland. We've got massive publics, trucks pouring in there. You've got utility crews now swarming all over there. You try to get everything back up and running in terms of the power. And now of course, the civilians are able, uh, to come and go because people don't want to leave their homes. They want to be on their homes. They want to be able to access the, the island or access the mainland. And so we've been able to do that and we're really, uh, we're really happy about that.

Governor DeSantis (07:11):

We now have as of 12 o'clock, um, uh, there's not a single county over 20% and it's really, Charlotte is 17, but that's, I think it's now 14 after that. That's gonna go down, probably be done today or tomorrow. And then it's just the pockets of Lee that need to be done. So I, people have lived in Florida while sometimes this power was out for weeks in the past in the storm, even in situations where you weren't even in the eye of the storm, you may end up not having anything. And that's because if a storm comes and everyone's dilly dallying, well that's time off the clock if you don't start for three or four days. And so we had people in there right away. I think it's made a big difference. And you already see in, in Lee County Friday after the storm, I remember Publix was already back open and places like Cape Coral and other parts, Walmart came online soon after that.

Governor DeSantis (08:03):

That's made a big, big difference. We've had these points of distribution all around the state, and we did those immediately. Water, food, blue tarps for roofs, all these other things. And that's, that's great. We'll do it. But what happened was, because all the stores came open, there was less a need in a lot of the counties that we anticipated. So some of the counties told us, Thanks, we used it, but we really don't need the pods anymore. So that those resources have been shifted to places, uh, where you won. But all told already, we've done 45 million bottles of water and overall about 2.5 million pounds of ice. That's a massive amount, uh, of, of resources to be able to do. Especially if you think about a storm. It hits one part of Florida and then it goes, cuts across the entire state that actually until probably 24 hours, that was not the forecast.

Governor DeSantis (08:53):

The forecast was for it to ride up the west coast of Florida was not supposed to be significant impacts over here as it end up being and it bent and then it went that way. And so that's just what happens. But you gotta, you gotta respond appropriately. Um, we've had, uh, fuel in southwest Florida, it's been phenomenal. People were able to get their fuel. We're using Elon Musk's, starlink internet devices. We've deployed 375 of those devices. You put the device down, it gets it from the satellite, and then you can just log on with your phone and you get crystal clear internet. It's honestly better internet than I think a lot of us are normally used to using. So we appreciate that we're gonna continue to be able, uh, to use that. We've now cleared 5,200 miles of roadway and there have been 2,507 bridges that have been inspected and reopened, and many of those were done very quickly after the storm.

Governor DeSantis (09:48):

And so that just keeps traffic flowing. It keeps everything going. We know that there's gonna be a lot of needs and not every need is gonna be filled by what the state programs are. We've got a lot of programs we now have operating. We have, uh, disaster re-employment assistance, We have business interruption loans, no interest loans. We've got stuff FEMA has now approved a number of counties including here for individual assistance. So you're able to go in that and do it. And, and hopefully all that's enough, but we also know sometimes the needs are a little different. So we are enlisting the private sector and charitable groups into helping out and we're putting our money where our mouth is. And the first Lady of Florida has really led my wife Casey on Florida disaster fund.org.

Governor DeSantis (10:42):

So this is a fund where you contribute through Volunteer Florida. She got Visa, MasterCard, PayPal to waive processing fees. So if you give a certain amount of money, it's all going to the fund, even if you do

it via credit card. So we appreciate that. So you're now up to almost 40 million that the fund is raised. And if you think about there have been people that have been displaced that, uh, that lost their homes or that are gonna need to be out of their homes for, for a while. Sometimes you get the flooding, you can gut it and you can fix it. Sometimes that's easier said. Sometimes that takes time. There's other repairs to homes that take time. And then of course, if it's a total loss, people are displaced, they need help getting back on their feet, uh, I think this money will help, uh, with those efforts.

Governor DeSantis ([11:34](#)):

I was just in Sarasota, or actually I was in Charlotte with a group called, uh, Team Rubicon. And what they do is they come in after these disasters and they help with a variety of ways. One of the things, they help people fix their homes. And so there's debris if there's problems with the carpet, all that, they come in, they got all these military veterans that go and they do all this. And I know they're coming to Volusia County to help with some of the folks here. So that's gonna be really helpful for a lot of people. I was talking with the sheriff. We have, um, you know, some of the deputies homes out of commission, some maybe total losses, maybe some they'll be able to get back in, but they're out of their homes right now. Uh, and so that's a big, big, uh, issue.

Governor DeSantis ([12:14](#)):

So you think about the damage is, is big, but then how that impacts a lot of people that are involved in our communities in so many different ways. We're looking at Lee County. They have four schools that are likely gonna be total losses, and so that's gonna be a lot of kids. But then you have teachers that have lost homes. So there's a whole ho, big, big need, I think. And I think that that fund is gonna make a really big difference. So I'm proud of her for doing it and I'm thankful for everybody that's contributed. A lot of people have contributed. It's made a real difference. I'm also glad that on Saturday we were able to enact our gas tax holiday in the state of Florida. So that's 25 cents off every gallon because of that. We now have the fifth lowest gas prices in the United States.

Governor DeSantis ([13:01](#)):

I think our, uh, our average as of yesterday, I think was like \$3 and 11 cents. You know, the average in California is like \$6 and 25 cents. Can you imagine having to pay that much for fuel? Uh, but nevertheless, that's just a, so it's coming at a good time. It'll let people save some money. I'm, uh, I'm fearful of seeing some spikes in, in in energy because of OPEC and some of the other things that are going on some of our policies in the United States. I think it's making it really, really difficult. And we know how these costs of fuel can really impact people's families commuting also with, uh, your bills that you're getting for utility and the energy goes up, those costs get passed on, uh, to every single one of you. And that's just the nature of it. So we're doing the, the fuel tax.

Governor DeSantis ([13:47](#)):

We also have a lot of other tax holidays in effect from our last legislative session, including no tax on a lot of baby items like diapers and wipes and all those things. Try to help families with that. And next year we're gonna make that permanent. In Florida, we're no longer gonna allow sales tax on baby items, including cribs and strollers. You know, these cribs are just unbelievably expensive in the strollers. And I remember when, uh, when we had Madison, uh, 2016, some of you remember Casey being pregnant back then when she would come to a lot of different things. In fact, she was down here in Volusia with me after Hurricane Matthew, and she was almost nine months pregnant at the time. But you remember like how expensive it is to get these cribs and these strollers and everything. And it's only gotten more

expensive now with the inflation and everything. So to have just no tax on all those family friendly items, that's gonna be a big, big reform for us to make permanent. So we're looking forward to do that. We're also looking forward to do 20, any household item \$25 or less. We're looking to suspend sales tax on that for a year. And that's gonna make a big difference for a lot of people as well.

Governor DeSantis ([15:00](#)):

Finally, just want to thank everybody for pitching in and working hard. There's some folks that it's their job to be, to be involved in this, uh, but they're still working very hard. Our National Guard has done, done fantastic. Our local law enforcement, our first responders in the counties, our folks in the state who've done it. But then you've had people pour in from all different parts of this country to be able to help out our Florida communities that are in need. I was in Hardy County, rural county and the Florida heartland, and I had firefighters from Oregon in Hardy County who would've thought you would've ever seen that all the way from the Pacific Northwest. It's unbelievable. You also have people, I mean, I've seen people from N Y P D, I've seen people from other parts of the country coming in to assist both in terms of a law enforcement first responder, but then also volunteers.

Governor DeSantis ([15:53](#)):

A lot of these groups, this Rubicon, a lot of them are outta state. We were doing Operation Barbecue for hot meals for people. These are folks are coming in outta state. So it's been a really impressive mobilization to see that and to see so many people wanting to pitch in and help. So when I would just say to folks who are in difficult circumstances now because of the, of the storm, uh, just hang in there. There's a lot of resources, there's a lot of help. We understand at the state level that this is something that is gonna require a lot of support for a long time, you know, maybe not as much in in Volusia, which, you know, had damage but didn't have whole areas wiped out. Um, but clearly when you talk about some of those places in southwest Florida, you know, that's not a response that could be measured in days, weeks, or even months.

Governor DeSantis ([16:41](#)):

That's really something that's gonna take years to be able to get that back where it needs to go. But we did it after Hurricane Michael and the panhandle, and we'll do it again after this one. But people's spirits have been strong, The resiliency has been impressive. And at the end of the day, there are times in life when you get knocked down, there are times when you have to face difficult circumstances. Uh, you just gotta get back up, uh, you gotta fight on. And that's what people in Florida are doing. And so I thank them for really providing great spirit, great determination,

Governor DeSantis ([17:14](#)):

And we'll end up getting through this much stronger. Okay, we're gonna have Jim Judge come up.

Jim Judge ([17:21](#)):

Thank you so much governor, and it was a pleasure to vote meet both you and, uh, Mrs. Desantis back and hurricane Matthew, uh, and pay us a at the Emergency Operations Center. So as we moved into recovery, you know, we still have issues all along the St. John's River that we're monitoring and watching very closely from Stone Island all the way through to Astor, to Lake Harney. So, uh, we've been delivering thousands of sandbags almost every day after those areas to help those folks. So for damage for Volusia County so far, and it, and it jumps up about every time I get a report, not by thousands, but by millions damage so far, \$263 million. And that's not only from the coast, it's all the way to the, to St.

Jim Judge ([18:03](#)):

John's River. We estimated about 6,000 homes have been inundated. The thousand businesses, hotels, and motels damaged. We have about a thousand homes along in St. John's that are in danger of flooding. Half the county was without power right after this storm. Within a few days, Duke fp and I Clay Electric and Middle Northwest Newsom Utilities had that power back on to those residents that were able to receive it. So we are working hard in a recovery mode. The governor mentioned Team Rubicon, they're here, they're gonna have big boots onto town starting Monday. Uh, we've also got the Baptist Disaster Relief folks have been in touch and coming in the Red Cross Salvation Army. So we have so many organizations that, uh, are helping us out. We do have 25,000 individuals that are registered for individual assistance. We are waiting any moment to be able to get that Disaster Recovery Center opened up.

Jim Judge ([18:53](#)):

And that's gonna be a wholesome back drive. Our main health department that we've used in the past, that's worked very well. We had a lot of rain. We had a lot of wind. Uh, New Smyrna alone had over 21 inches of rain. They had winds up to category two strength, 96 miles an hour. We had 55 to 60 sustained winds over just about the whole county. But again, those hurricane force gusts moving in. So Volusia got hit, we got hit pretty good, but we've been through it before. We're a wonderful community. We'll get through it again. So we're encouraging all those volunteers to come in and assist our citizens. And we have a website, volusia.org/pin a wealth of information in there about individual assistance. The, um, temporary, uh, sheltering assistance. There's a wealth of information for our citizens to go to, to be able to get that information. Our citizen information center is still open, will be open through the weekend and, and the coming days as we continue to take those requests from our citizens to be able to help with questions on whatever they need. So with that, I would like to, uh, invite our sheriff Mike Chittwood.

Shawn Hamilton ([20:08](#)):

I learned as the sheriff wants to speak you let a sheriff. Um, anyway, thank you guys for, for, for all you're doing. And, um, it's hard to believe it's, it's been just a little over a week, um, since that Hurricane Ian came ashore. And, um, to those who have been impacted, I'm sure it seems like a lot longer. Um, you've heard about it and you've seen it about the parallel coordination. Um, this is was a historic storm with historic impacts, but I argue that the response has been equally historic. And I would like to say that that happens for no other reason, because the leadership of our governor, um, setting the expectation.

Shawn Hamilton ([20:52](#)):

So I, I've been, I've been down south for the last week plus or whatever. Um, and I didn't, I wasn't told ago I knew what I was expected to do, right? Because this is a part of our community. This is a part of our family, and I wanted to be here on the ground doing whatever I can to support that recovery. And, you know, the governor talked about the long term recovery, but he also talked about the expectations that happened immediately after storm. You need that power back, right? You need that water back, right? You need, you need that wastewater bag. You need these coastal erosion areas address long term protection of our resources in. So it was clear the expectations were set that we would find those minutes, we would find those hours, we would find those days any way we can. I was in a conversation with the governor and I argue probably the best state coordinating officer in the nation, Kevin Guthrie,

um, leading this response when they started talking about amphibious landing craft to move stuff around.

Shawn Hamilton ([21:48](#)):

I knew I, we were on a different level and the expectations and just went to a whole new level. So again, governor, thank you for your leadership. And then lastly, um, just one, one more thing. Um, we talk about bridges a lot, um, but I just, I'm in pure admiration of the work our First Lady's doing to build a different kind of bridge. Um, when you think about the impact of c when you think about being there at that point of need, when it's the greatest, I am just truly in awe at the work she's doing and the leadership she's exhibiting. So, um, I am just thankful for her efforts. So right here, um, in the, you know, Volusia County along with other impact areas, we've got staff on the ground helping with the recovery, find ways we can support the amazing work of the county.

Shawn Hamilton ([22:28](#)):

The utility workers folks are doing everything you can to get back to a normal, um, substance of life in these areas. But one of the things I do want to talk about here, um, I, we talked about the, the county, we talked about erosion. Our interest to support them, um, is to, and this is something we've rarely have ever done. We're extending them the authorization and the allowance to do the immediate emergency permitting that's needed to make sure that these are protected and not exacerbated. And we can protect those. And then obviously we've had staff on the ground probably, um, as soon as that first rain drop, stop making assessments so we can fund and make sure we provide the legislature with the information they need to understand what those impacts look like financially and the restoration. Again, those efforts continue. I also wanna highlight a, a group that'll, that'll, you know, you won't see them raising their hands for any type of, um, a claim or anything like that.

Shawn Hamilton ([23:24](#)):

But are utility workers, those who are working on your infrastructure, your water, your wastewater, they deserve a, a big round of replies. You know, they're, they're working in, they're working, there's no plot for them. When it looks to restoration again, they also share the support of your entire state. I mean, we've had 15 counties within the impacted areas providing support, sending their utility workers to make sure they can make a difference because they also know they're part of this community. And it could be the next day that you're there supporting them. Um, I just wanna acknowledge all of their great work and those supporting agencies that provide that. Um, and the governor mentioned the amazing flooding that's just happening here, um, in the basin. Again, I wanna acknowledge the work of our water management districts doing everything they can in their power to, you know, whatever.

Shawn Hamilton ([24:11](#)):

Like I said, if it saves inches, the governor both just saw what a few inches mean to a neighborhood, to a home. If you can save those inches, you just save thousands and thousands of repair and all of the pain that goes with that. So again, thank you governor for your leadership and the challenge that we provide to all of the folks who are supporting that story. And then lastly in, we will be here, um, a governor. Set the expectation. You've seen it first hand. We will be here to aid in that recovery long and short term. And we will be a part of this until the very end, until everybody's made hold. So again, thank you for your support.

Governor DeSantis ([24:48](#)):

We've also been able to, since I've been governor, we've expanded the state support for beach re nourishment. Yeah, we've done more money for that and we're happy to do that. Uh, we have a, a coastline program and we're gonna continue doing it, but we also started something called resilient Florida program. So we've done over 1.1 billion local government local communities can, can seek that. They usually match it. And then so you end up with over 2 billion in impact just in the last two years. Some of those awards are still going out. But I think one of the things I've seen just touring so many different places, it's a storm, is the areas that have been built in more recent years. The last 2025, by and large, those structures did very well. You don't see as many roofs blown off of a house that was built 10, 15 years ago than you do the ones built in like the fifties or sixties.

Governor DeSantis ([25:42](#)):

That's just the nature, the nature of it. And so, and then as you've seen more efforts to make the electric grid and the electric infrastructure more resilient and hardening that, that's part of the reason we are able to get the power on so quickly compared to other storms. Yes, you stage the workers of course, but of all the infrastructures getting totally wiped out, then that's much more difficult to rent for restoration. But what we found is a lot of that really, really held, Yeah, you have power lines down or whatever, but the core, uh, infrastructure did, did very, very well by and large. And I'd say the same thing with some of the, some of the roads, some of the brick, the stuff that was new. So same with some of the homes. You do see the impact of that. And so I think we were right to, to do things like we have with the resilient coastline like we were able to do with Resilient Florida.

Governor DeSantis ([26:33](#)):

We'll keep doing that. du I think the damage would've been a lot worse, particularly in in southwest Florida from the wind than it was because you had these buildings that really could withstand 150 mile, 155 mile per hour. And I remember Hurricane Michael in Panama City, you could go and if you saw a new building, you wouldn't have even known a hurricane happen. You go two, two, uh, uh, units, next old place, it's like a bomb went off, it was totally destroyed right next to each other, uh, with that. And you see that over and over again. So I think that as you do this stuff, we have an opportunity to to continue to make this very, very strong going forward. So, um, okay. Well thank, oh actually we have um, we have Senator Wright, uh, Senator Brodner, uh, here with us. Webster Barnabee, the state rep. Um, you guys wanna say anything? You good? Okay. And you have um, you have Seminole Volusia flooding right now, and you have in your district, did you have flooding? Oh yeah,

Speaker 3 ([27:39](#)):

We have erosion. Erosion, erosion today. Need

Governor DeSantis ([27:44](#)):

Help. Well, we know. Yeah, that's why we're here to be able to, to be able to get that, uh, get that backdrop. So, okay everybody, thanks so much. We appreciate it. God, my dad.