

Gov. DeSantis (00:01):

Good afternoon, I was able to go and inspect a really significant flooding that we still see. I mean, I saw, you know, homes that had almost up to the rooftop, still different buildings, RVs that were almost totally submerged. Uh, so this is a, this is a big deal. I know a lot of folks have focused on some of the really catastrophic impacts that we saw along our southwest coast, and those are obviously very, uh, very severe impacts. Uh, but this is such a big storm, brought so much water, uh, that you're having basically what's been a 500 year flood event here in DeSoto County and in some of the neighboring counties. So they've done a really good job of scrambling, uh, to help their residents. Uh, we have not only pods here, points of distribution for, for food and water and other type of essentials like toiletries.

Gov. DeSantis (00:52):

Uh, they also have basically pods that they can take, uh, and set up that are more mobile because some of the roads are still flooded, so people don't necessarily have the same connectivity. So I think that they're doing a really good job. Obviously our National Guard is heavily involved in, in running those pods, and we're happy to do that. Uh, a lot of food and water, uh, in this area. Uh, grit large. And uh, we we're happy that these pods got set up so quickly. Normally takes about 96 hours, uh, to get, to get pods set up post storm. Uh, we had pods, uh, set up, uh, starting yesterday in, uh, in, in many places around the state. And so, so we're gonna keep, continue to keep working the counties, uh, who have, who have debris and other and other problems, get that going now on the removal.

Gov. DeSantis (01:38):

Hire contractors do what you gotta do. You have 30 days from the time this was approved to get a hundred percent reimbursement for all your debris removal. And I know that this, there's the debris is, uh, is significant in some places, maybe surprisingly a little lighter in others, at least compared to like Hurricane Michael. Nevertheless, you have an opportunity to get that paid for. Uh, 100%. And when you're talking about more rural communities in particular, uh, those costs can be significant. So please take advantage of that. Uh, Florida has been approved across the major affected counties for 100% reimbursement for debris removal. Uh, but you gotta go out and hire the people, pay 'em to be able to do it. If, if you don't do that, uh, and you wait till after the 30 days and you're not gonna get a hundred percent reimbursement and that will absolutely, uh, pinch your local budgets. Fuel, uh, or excuse me, power.

Gov. DeSantis (02:35):

Uh, we've got about, uh, 93% that are, that are online throughout the state. There have been continuous progress being made. Um, even in, even in places like Lee, I think, uh, FPL's got 50% of theirs. Now the electric co-op only has 3% and we've asked to make sure there's mutual aid there, so we can get that moving as quickly as possible. Uh, but if you think about the 42,000 thousand linemen that were stationed when the storm hit, uh, and at that time, I mean, they were stationed everywhere, but uh, when they first got here, I mean, you figure the last trucks probably started arriving first thing Tuesday morning cuz the storm was coming in at least southwestern Florida. Uh, so maybe a little later in the day Tuesday, not knowing where the storm would necessarily go, you know, they were able to feet all across the state immediately.

Gov. DeSantis (03:23):

And we had people, uh, first thing Thursday morning and a lot of the places where the storm had passed. So we appreciate that. I've been able to meet with linemen from all across the country who are

here in Florida helping out and to have, I think today they'll pass over 2 million restorations for a storm that really, they started full, uh, statewide power restoration efforts on Friday morning. So Friday, Saturday, Sunday, three full days and you have done over 2 million. Uh, so, so that's very much appreciative. Obviously being without power for a little bit of time is still an inconvenience. Being without power for longer than that is a, is a real drag. And we understand that and I'm just glad that there's a lot of resources working to get that done. Um, as quickly as possible. Fuel, uh, there's fuel. We got massive fuel in in southwest Florida.

Gov. DeSantis ([04:14](#)):

The ports are open. Not all the facilities that have, they don't all have power generators, so the gas pumps aren't gonna work. We've actually, uh, have, uh, uh, a generator or two coming down, uh, to this county so that if some of the gas stations don't have power by then they can use in generator to get that fuel pumping more. Cuz there's been an issue with fuel in this area. I think it's more tied to the power than the actual fuel supply. Uh, but nevertheless, we stand ready to help with both of those cuz we understand how important it is, you know, to get the fuel moving, uh, moving forward. We also brought to DeSoto County, uh, some of the Elon Musk starlink satellite devices. Uh, so that will be able to be at pods. It'll be able to be with first responders wherever they think it works.

Gov. DeSantis ([04:58](#)):

Uh, one of the reasons we're putting these things at pods is cuz you have people come get food and water. If they're cut off and their cell phone's not working, they can get online and they can contact their loved ones. And so that's something that's very important and we wanna make sure that we're able to do that across the state of Florida. I was also in Northport, uh, in Sarasota County prior to this, and I saw very similar levels of flooding. I mean really, really significant, uh, far more than what you saw, uh, the day after in Lee and in Charlotte counties. And so I know that a lot of the media attention is on those, uh, the destructive scenes on the coast and rightfully so, was a really, really significant impact. Uh, but you have all throughout this part of Florida into central Florida, uh, you know, you've had a lot of standing water.

Gov. DeSantis ([05:42](#)):

Uh, they think it's crested here and it was higher yesterday. So hopefully we continue to see that going down because, you know, it's not just that it's interrupted people's homes, which it has, it's interrupting transport, it's interrupting commerce, uh, because some of these roads still aren't passable. So we're, uh, we're sensitive to, uh, any help we can provide from a DOT perspective. But I think at the end of the day, you know, the, the waters just need to recede more. Uh, but they're really, really significant. It's making it, making it difficult for folks. We understand that. Um, the First Lady has been instrumental and doing our FloridaDisasterfund.org, if you wanna go and donate, you can do it. They've raised over \$22 million in just a few days. Uh, so that's gonna be money that'll be able to be accessed by, uh, reputable charitable organizations that can be put on the ground to help people in need.

Gov. DeSantis ([06:32](#)):

FEMA has approved individual assistance for, for all the affected counties, basically that we've asked for. Uh, and that offers support, but that's a bureaucracy and there's regulations and certain things. So you may have needs that FEMA just can't meet. And so while we encourage people to sign up for individual assistance with FEMA and over a hundred thousand Floridians have done so, we also understand that there's gonna be needs beyond that. And so enlisting private charity and the private sector is something

that we're really looking forward to do. Also, we've seen people from all across the country come to help. Uh, I was just over, uh, across, I guess it's not really supposed to be a river, but we had to take a boat to get cuz of all the flooding, uh, on the other side. And, um, yeah, yeah, folks from Missouri that were there that came down to help provide meals.

Gov. DeSantis ([07:22](#)):

I was in Naples. We had people come down from Nashville, North Carolina with a charity to help, uh, provide meals. Uh, so that's really shown just the generosity that we have in this country. Uh, so many different Floridians from across the state of pitched in. Uh, I was just there. See all these law enforcement, you see 'em from all over the state coming down to the affected areas. You know, some of these areas in like southwest Florida, they were prepared to go help Tampa Bay because people said the storm is gonna hit Tampa Bay, You know, when we went to bed on Monday night, Well, it turns out now yet people from Tampa, some of that area is down here. We have people from the panhandle coming down to this part of Florida to help out. So we really appreciate that. Uh, that's been a really, really great effort. A lot of work to do. Uh, but we're continuing to make progress. Okay. Anybody have questions? Yes, ma'am.

Reporter ([08:13](#)):

Also worried about the, what's their message to them?

Gov. DeSantis ([08:17](#)):

So there's gonna be set up probably starting Tuesday morning. And most of the affected areas, I know we're gonna start in Lee and Charlotte. Jimmy Patronis, who's the Chief financial officer for Florida, is including near these disaster recovery centers with FEMA insurance villages where the insurance carriers will be on site so that you can provide evidence of the damage and get busy filing the claims. And so he's done a good job to bring those folks to the table. And my message is basically, you know, we want to get these claims processed as quickly as possible. Obviously if the state is not running this, I mean these are private carriers, uh, but it's very important. I'd also remind people that there's different, the damage you have is different in terms of the policies. If you have wind damage, that's a typical homeowner's insurance policy here.

Gov. DeSantis ([09:10](#)):

I think a lot of that's gonna be flood insurance damage. And so the National Flood Insurance Program, they're gonna have representatives, uh, at the DRCs and these insurance villages. So I, I think from what I've seen in the state, I think most of the damage has been from water rather than wind. There has been wind. I mean, obviously if you look at Fort Myers Beach and you see homes obliterated, you know, that was obliterated because you had almost a cat five storm touch landfall there. So the flood policies are different than the homeowner's policies. Your homeowner's policy almost never will include coverage for flood and vice versa. So just people should just understand that and be prepared to have the proper policy based on the damage it's important, document the damage, take photos, do all that. We've spoken with FEMA and um, about, uh, the NFIP, the flood program, and we're just like, look, you know, there the, we we wanna process this quickly. I think they're receptive to doing that. Uh, and it helps if you have the photos. I if you show photos of the waterline being five feet in your house, uh, what are they gonna say? I mean, your house got flooded. And so we wanna see those done expeditiously.

Reporter ([10:22](#)):

You have directed f get more infrastructure into Saturday residents.

Gov. DeSantis ([10:34](#)):

We are in Pine Island, FDOT under my direction is going to construct temporary passage by car where the bridge was, was destroyed. So it's not gonna be a full bridge, you're gonna have to go over it probably five miles an hour or something. But it'll at least let people get in and off the island with their vehicles. So I've approved that, uh, they're gonna start working on that this week. And, you know, it doesn't, it's not an overnight thing, but it's not gonna take months and months. And so we're sensitive to that. You know, people talk about maybe running boats and all this stuff, you know, honestly, I think that it's better to just kind of build, uh, you know, build a little bit of makeshift road there. Let's let get people on and off the island. You know, those folks, they need access to the mainland, but they do not want to evacuate off their island. They want to be on the island. And we, we understand that their island folks, their pride, they have a lot of pride in their community and, um, and we wanna make sure that we're doing what we can. So, so we have approved, we'll be funding that and that will be something that will, uh, begin, uh, uh, probably tomorrow, but certainly, uh, certainly by Tuesday.

Reporter ([11:37](#)):

Governor, you've refused to let operations cease on your business across the state. Can you give us a more insight on those operations?

Gov. DeSantis ([11:47](#)):

Oh yeah. No, no. The rescue operations are ongoing. Um, there's been, if you, you look, we, we actually have, uh, great data about the sweeps that have occurred. Obviously if someone has called into 911, they will go and respond to that. If somebody has put out some type of of message that they're somewhere and they need help, they will do that. But we also understand that not everyone has communications. So you've had from the beginning, a really concerted effort on the most impacted areas. So think about like Inglewood and Charlotte, think about, uh, Sanibel, Fort Myers Beach, Pine Island, those areas, uh, and they have gone through, uh, most of those areas and, and swept them. And so that's something that, that that is good. It, it makes sure that people aren't falling through the cracks. You know, fortunately, uh, the initial rescue operations people wanted to be taken off the, either the beach or the island, uh, who had gone through the storm as the days progressed, a lot of residents had settled in.

Gov. DeSantis ([12:45](#)):

They were thankful. A lot of 'em just wanna stay, stay put in their homes. And we understand that. I mean, a, a search and rescue is voluntary. If you wanna be rescued, you will. Uh, if somebody does not wanna leave their home, of course they are not gonna do. But it's been a team effort. Uh, we had, there's more urban search and rescue teams in Florida now than in any one place in American history since September 11th. Uh, and if you think about it, there's been massive events that have happened since September 11th and we have more here. And part of that is just a reflection that yes, it was a very powerful hurricane. It was a big hurricane and it cut across, you know, the entire state of Florida. I mean, some of these other ma major hurricane events, it hits one spot and then that's really where you tend to, well this is hundreds and hundreds of miles.

Gov. DeSantis ([13:34](#)):

Uh, and so, so it's a big deal. And, and they focus on, and we have Coast Guard who's been great. Obviously urban search and rescue local law enforcement's been fantastic. And they'll focus on maybe somebody being helicoptered out of Fort Myers Beach or some of those, and rightfully so. But the local, local law enforcement across the state, uh, these water rescues with the flooding. Now, some of those folks that are rescued, you know, the water's up to certain say they may not be an imminent danger of, of, of a fatality. Uh, but they need, they need to be rescued from that situation. So you've had so many of those water rescues that have taken place here in this county. You had Hardee they've done it, Central Florida, you name it. Uh, so it's really been been great. I think people have worked really, really hard.

Gov. DeSantis ([14:17](#)):

And, um, I was there down at, uh, that the Surfside collapse, uh, in 2021. And we had the urban search and rescue teams, the two Miami teams were, were there from the beginning. And that was really tough because as you're doing the, uh, as you're doing the pile, you know, they're, they're finding, uh, a lot of people and it was very difficult. Um, you know, this one, they were able to get in there so early, you know, that they were actually able to bring a lot of people to safety. And so, uh, so they deserve a lot of credit and we're really proud of, of all the great work that they've done,

Reporter ([14:51](#)):

Your crews have worked powerless to restore power around the state. Do you have an idea of how many use without power spend

Gov. DeSantis ([14:59](#)):

Of time? So the questions about power and uh, you know, just to correct, you know, they've done a great job. They're not my crew, They're their crews. They're doing it now. We paved the way with the state of emergency early and made sure they could be pre-stage. We've cleared roads for 'em and everything. Uh, but ultimately, you know, these utilities, uh, have really, really worked hard to do it. So, so give them a lot of credit. Uh, you know, everyone from, from FPL, uh, to, uh, to, to Duke to the, to the different Municipal electric who've worked hard. Uh, so they do. So, so the question is, we have 7% without power statewide right now. What's the prognosis for extended outages? Um, you know, if you end up having two plus million restored by close of business tonight, uh, you know, that will be a, a world record probably in terms of, especially for how big it is in the state.

Gov. DeSantis ([15:48](#)):

But that's still gonna leave some other folks. What I think that they will tell you in the utilities is the areas that are reconnects will come online in relatively due time. Uh, that can't guarantee you're gonna get it today, but it didn't gonna take a month. Some of the areas like Sanibel, Fort Myers Beach, some of those, they may have suffered real severe structural damage to the underlying infrastructure. So the question on that becomes, do you have to rebuild the infrastructure? And if you do, uh, that just gonna take a little bit longer time. It's not clear to me exactly how many are gonna be rebuilt. There is gonna be some rebuilt for sure. Um, I was just in Northport and I don't know if it's gonna require a rebuild, but they're still flooding in places that they would need to go to be able to reconnect some of the power lines.

Gov. DeSantis ([16:40](#)):

And so obviously it needs to be safe for them to do it. So some of that I think I is, is a little bit, uh, dependent on the circumstances, but I will say if you are in an area where they tell you that they have to structurally rebuild rather than restore, then you would, you should expect longer outages. If it's just a restoration, that's something that's on an easier timetable, uh, than if you have to rebuild everything. Now, um, you know, there's infrastructure that goes into this. Uh, we've asked all the utilities to work together. You know, some municipal co-op needs a part and they don't have, you know, we want FPL these others to help and they've said that they would. Uh, and so what we think that's good. We also announced, uh, yesterday a public request, uh, for Lee County's electrical cooperative to accept mutual aid from other electrical utilities to, to get it going quicker. Cuz right now FPL has about 50% of their lead customers restored. The Lee County co-op or electrical only has 3%. And it's our view that if you had more resources, that may make some of that better. Some of that's gonna be a rebuild, uh, but at least get as much on as quickly as possible, uh, that you can.

Reporter ([17:53](#)):

Um, downtown area County has hit really bad badly. Again, devastation, buildings down has just got over Irma. Some of the buildings themselves is, um, I the doing to help out businesses, you know, a lot of 'em are in food shop, small town shop owners.

Gov. DeSantis ([18:10](#)):

So what'll happen is because we're in the, uh, a disaster, we have a disaster declaration, uh, there will actually be opportunities through the small business administration, uh, to get some some bridge loans. We also, the Department of Economic Opportunity, we have some possible ways where we can help, particularly over the short term. And part of it is, you know, some businesses have suffered damage, some businesses, you know, they need the power to be able to go back into business. And if they don't have, uh, running water power, some of that, then, then they're, they're kind of on the sidelines. I know some have generators, uh, I know some are doing other things, but it's not easy. And so, so we're sensitive. So, uh, think about what, uh, federal government opportunities there are and there are some, It's not, it's not gonna give you everything you need.

Gov. DeSantis ([18:58](#)):

It's there to, to kind of help you get through it. Uh, and then our programs at the state level, you know, we're gonna see, you know, what we have available, uh, to be able to help folks. But I want whatever we do have available to be able to be dispensed, particularly in some of these areas that are, um, a little bit more off the radar. I mean, people are focusing on certain areas and understandably, but in reality, uh, this is far and wide. It's in, um, populated areas like Cape Coral. It's also in more rural communities, uh, like we're seeing, um, over here. So, uh, so, so we're all in it and we all want everyone to do well. Okay guys, Thanks so much. Appreciate it.