

Governor DeSantis (00:00):

Gracia Szczech, administrator for FEMA, region four. Tom McCool, Federal Coordinating Officer for FEMA. Sheriff Carmine Marceno, Senate President designate Kathleen Passidomo. And is Representative Botana here? Adam Botana. So, as you know, we were, four weeks ago, hurricane Ian made landfall here. Major storm, as everybody knows. And as you can see around here we were very forward in terms of staging as much as we could to help with the response. 42,000 linemen. We had a rapid restoration of power throughout the state on a scale that we've never done so quickly before. Of course, unprecedented search and rescue that was helping particularly people out here where we are right now, as well as other barrier islands and other places where people needed help. We also made sure that where there were lagging and resources for things like power restoration, that we marshaled the resources in the state with other companies to come help in Lee County.

Governor DeSantis (01:05):

And so you were able to get Duke as well as FPL helping the Lee County Electrical Cooperative to rebuild or to help get people back. And now to help rebuild the grid that are on the islands. Of course, we had the Barrier islands, both Sanibel and then Pine Island. Both those bridges, they were disconnected from the mainland, and so that created a huge problem just in terms of being able to get the places restored. A lot of people were saying, Well, it's just gonna take too long. People just need to leave the island. But a lot of people on Pine Island wanted to stay, and so they asked us at the state if we could help, and I said we would. So we were able to get that bridge reconnected in three days, which usually is not the timeline that you expect from government.

Governor DeSantis (01:53):

And then we were able to reopen the Sanibel causeway three weeks to the day after the storm. So you've had huge progress being made in both of those areas which we think is very, very much important. And basically, the reason why we've been able to do all that stuff is because I've told, and Kevin Guthrie as our EM director, I said, Look, these things are complex. There's a lot of moving parts. We understand that. But what we don't want is just get mired and bureaucracy and mired and red tape, okay? You have agencies, you have ability, federal, state, local, private organizations that all have a mission related to this in some way. So don't get numb by trying to go through all these dumb red tape. And so cut through it. And that's what we did on the bridges.

Governor DeSantis (02:42):

That's what we did on the search and rescue. That's what we did on the power restoration. And so I asked Kevin, and we wanna make sure we're also doing that on debris collection and the debris reimbursement process particularly for areas like Fort Myers Beach. I mean, you guys see the debris that is here. And yes, we've been approved through FEMA for reimbursement, which, you know, the debris removals typically the public entities remove the debris from the streets and other things like that. But as you've seen, there's debris in residential communities and debris in commercial properties. And so that's really, really significant because you get the debris out as quickly as possible, Then you're able to get things rebuilt and get people back on their feet. And I think that if we do better on this, then the typical norm is, you know, these areas are gonna come back to life much quicker than those areas did. So today we have a number of announcements, but first we're announcing that for the first time ever the state of Florida's come to an agreement with FEMA to expedite debris removal on private and commercial properties.

Governor DeSantis (03:59):

And we're able to do this because FEMA is going to use new technologies, satellite imagery, but also other technologies to be able to assess damage more quickly for both homes and for businesses. It had been in the past, FEMA would literally have to go door to door to physically inspect structures, but as you know, that can take months to be able to complete. So by leveraging technology, we're avoiding that tedious process and allowing FEMA to make quicker determinations for program eligibility. And we are gonna continue to use all remaining resources to expedite recovery in this regard. So, FEMA's gonna be issuing guidance that will allow us to expedite debris removal in the most impacted areas like Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel, where of course, we had the most significant storm surge. And so that will accelerate cleanup and recovery efforts.

Governor DeSantis (04:51):

So these waivers will allow debris removal in private communities and may include removal of damaged slabs on private property. So this is not typically the way this is done. Usually that would be not eligible for this type of reimbursement. So we are doing that, This is a great agreement, and we want to continue to do so. We're moving faster than ever on private and commercial property, debris removal, you know, we were working on this and there's obviously a lot of things initially with the search and rescue, particularly out here. The barrier islands, of course, needed to get the bridges and all that and we wanted the main debris from the roadways and all that was very important. But Kevin's been working on, okay, we do need to get into private and commercial.

Governor DeSantis (05:44):

And just so you know, during Hurricane Michael category five that hit Northwest Florida, it took more than 20 months to navigate private and commercial proper property debris removal in some areas. And that actually wasn't like specially slow. That was basically the norm of how a lot of this stuff works. And so this is really accelerating in a positive way, and we know how important it is. And I've been down a lot as many of you know, and you see debris like this. But what you also see are debris from vessels in both the waterways and on land. And so the division of Emergency Management has been working closely with FWC, Department of Environmental Protection, the Coast Guard and local governments to identify and remove vessels and other debris from Lee County Waterways and Upland private property and commercial as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

Governor DeSantis (06:40):

And so we're also pleased to announce the creation of the state of Florida's debris cleanup program to assist hurricane Ian survivors with the removal of displaced and abandon titled Property, Again, Displaced and Abandoned Title Property. So residents can submit an online application @iandebriscleanup.com to report the presence of displaced titled property on private or commercial property, and request the removal of the qualifying debris, including vehicles, vessels, motorcycles, trailers, and ATVs. To date, 869 vehicles and vessels have been identified on private and commercial properties with efforts to identify others continuing on a daily basis. Now, the damage that was caused by Hurricane Ian has created a need, as many of you know, for housing. And we've worked hard to make sure Floridians can stay in their communities. And I think people wanna stay, but they gotta have a valid pathway, a viable pathway to be able to do so.

Governor DeSantis (07:44):

So immediately after the storm, we announced a transitional sheltering assistance program, which provides for short term accommodations like hotels for those impacted by the storm. This past weekend, I announced that the Florida Housing Finance Corporation has awarded \$5 million to local housing partners to help Floridians impacted, pay their home insurance deductibles in the six hardest hit counties. Now you have seniors on fixed incomes. We obviously are in a period where we have a four decade high inflation rate. You know, that's obviously eating up people's savings if they have expenses apart from this. So there's gonna be Floridians that could really use some deductible assistance. And so that's what that will do. FEMA individual assistance also helps with alternate housing, hotels, and rental, and many of you have also used that option, as we know. And we know that many have been staying in temporary housing, but we also know short term lodging ends, and many of you want to be near your home and property, particularly as you rebuild.

Governor DeSantis ([08:43](#)):

So today I'm happy to announce that FEMA Direct Temporary Housing has been improved for impacted individuals whose homes are uninhabitable due to the storm in Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto and Lee Counties. The direct housing program provides up to 18 months of assistance for manufactured housing units, non-motorized recreational vehicles, and other ready to occupy housing. While folks make plans for permanent housing, those who've already applied for FEMA assistance do not need to reapply. If applicants meet the criteria for direct temporary housing, they will be contacted by FEMA. Now, FEMA's Direct Housing program will not be able to meet every household's needs. So I'm also announcing a state-led housing mission to provide travel trailers and recreational vehicles to impacted Floridians who may not be eligible for FEMA's program. Our goal with these programs is for families to be able to live on their own property if they so choose while repairs to their homes are performed.

Governor DeSantis ([09:43](#)):

These communities have been through a lot, and the recovery process, as we know, can be difficult. We know many folks want to be where their home is. That not only gives them more peace of mind, it's more effective with the recovery process as well. So we're happy for this announcement today, these series of announcements. I think it shows that we're committed to aggressively moving this ball forward, continuing to take on issues that the community is seeking assistance from. And I do believe that you're gonna see, and Kevin will talk a little bit more about it, but I don't think that there's probably been a precedent for residential and commercial debris removal to be proceeding anywhere close to the pace that we're starting now. So we'll hear from Kevin Guthrie. We'll hear from Tom McCool. From FEMA, and then we'll hear from our Senate present designate Kathleen Passidomo.

Kevin Guthrie ([10:37](#)):

Thank you, Governor. Thank you for your continued leadership and support as we taught nearly every day, that, you know, I just wanna make sure that people know this governor is committed to this disaster to the people of Florida. Unlike any governor I've ever seen before. So, again, governor, thank you very much. I'd like to point out the incredible coordination between local, state, and federal partners that has led to this record breaking speed of our response to Hurricane Ian. As the governor has said, we have gotten a list of waivers about 11 waivers that we can implement today after this press conference that took 20 months to get done in Hurricane Michael. That's unprecedented.

Kevin Guthrie ([11:25](#)):

The division's recovery team, most of which I brought here for this announcement today, has been on the ground in this community, both prior to and after Hurricane Ian's landfall. The men and women of the recovery, Bureau of the Florida Division Emergency Management, have been working nonstop for four weeks to get this done. And I wanna make sure that I tell them, from the bottom of my heart, from the governor's heart, thank you very much for what you have done, for the Floridians and those that live here. We will be here as long as it takes to get families and businesses back on their feet. With these debris waivers, our ability to assist impacted communities is removing hazardous material, hazardous debris and ifs will be greatly expedited. Under the Governor's leadership, we have already removed enough debris in Lee County alone to fill almost 300 Olympic swimming pools, having these important conversations and centered around innovative solutions to debris removal just weeks after landfall, and as building the foundation for a swift recovery for this community. Please keep in mind that in more inland communities with fewer impacts, the traditional application process will have to be followed. So I want to make sure that people understand what you see around us, the commercial debris that is around us, that is what we will be able to do on waivers. However, when you get into more traditional, less impactful debris, we will, and we must follow the normal processes. So these are for those catastrophic and extensive areas.

Kevin Guthrie ([13:01](#)):

We will continue to work diligently with our partners at DEP FWC, the US Coast Guard to remove other displaced vessels. Again, I reiterate what the governor mentioned today about, Go to our website, sign up, fill out an application. Residents can visit [IanDebrisCleanup.com](#). That's [IanDebrisCleanup](#) altogether no spaces.com, or we have a call center as well. That number is 8 5 0 9 6 1 2 0 0 2. The State is also proud to supplement FEMA's effort to provide direct temporary housing for displaced families impacted by Hurricane Ian. This first of its kind in the state of Florida, is a conglomeration of things that have been taking us about two and a half years to put together. And I want to thank, Colt with FEMA. I want to thank Melissa Forbes with the recovery, for agreeing and letting us run this program. Yes, by all means applause for that.

Kevin Guthrie ([14:00](#)):

Then of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't thank, Deanne Criswell as well as helping us get this done. So that's gonna allow us to do something we've never done before. But I wanna also set the expectations. That is a six month program that we are running. So we need to start working on getting you into permanent housing on day one. Day one is today. So again, folks that'll be, eligible for that six month temporary housing by the state. We need to start programming you into, permanent housing, today. Governor, again, we could not do any of this without your leadership, I thank you for that.

Tom McCool ([14:35](#)):

Sure. All right, Tom.

Kevin Guthrie ([14:37](#)):

Yes, sir.

Tom McCool ([14:41](#)):

Good morning. My name is Tom McCool. I'm the Federal Coordinating Officer. My job is to corral the federal staff on the response to, the recovery from Hurricane Ian. At the high point, we had 4,500 responders here. We still have 2200 FEMA staff in and around here. And this is the most heavily

impacted area. But we have our staff and Kevin's staff all the way to Volusia County. Every county in the state of Florida, all 67 are designated for public assistance. And there's 26 counties currently for individual assistance. The numbers are big, I'm not gonna bore with numbers, but less than 30 days from the federal side, \$1.3 billion. I've been doing this a while and I have not seen that type of money. In terms of the individual assistance, Small Business administration, uh, NFIP and Public Assistance. Kevin and his crew work through, processing expedited project worksheet for over \$300 million.

Tom McCool ([15:45](#)):

It's hard to keep up with the state of Florida, but we've been co-located with Kevin Guthrie and his staff. Three days, four days prior to impacts up in Tallahassee. We moved down here and we are here. We're opening a joint field office up near the Tampa area. That'll be open next week. And it's in Brandon, Florida. We have a robust facility open up near Jet Blue Park and that will house the responders and recovery specialists here. So as we get into the true recovery, we will come to you, the applicants, the individual assistants survivors. Now that being said, we anticipate another hundred thousand, 700,000, Floridian households have applied for individual assistance. We expect about another 130,000. So you'll see disaster survivor assistance, FEMA crews walking down the street, knocking on your doors, Please, if you've already registered, they can update you on your registration.

Tom McCool ([16:44](#)):

We have 18 Disaster Recovery Centers set up from here to Volusia County, and we're opening up more at End State, they'll probably be about 30. And they are a multi-agency, Disaster Recovery Center. Now I want to talk specifically about the initiative. Kevin came up with this idea and we worked on it for the last two weeks. We said, Well, could we possibly go to FEMA headquarters and get some waivers? Cause as the governor mentioned private property and Limited commercial property debris removal, take time. And from FEMA headquarters to the staff at FDM to our staff, worked very, very hard. And this morning at 10:15, the first set, now that is a moving target. We use geospatial, we use individual on the ground assessments. We use National Institute for Standard Technology.

Tom McCool ([17:34](#)):

We use lidar. And we used you when you came in and said, Here's how much damage I have in your home. So that first trunk is coming out, and it came out this morning. We'll continue as we get more damage assessments in, we'll continue to update that. So that is a living document that we will work with the county emergency managers through Florida Department of Emergency Management. And then with the housing mission the housing mission, has been approved for those four counties the governors mentioned, working in tandem with the Florida Department of Emergency Management, with the non congregate sheltering, we think we'll have a housing solution. From the FEMA side, it's up to 18 months. And you might not just get a travel trailer or a mobile home. That's our two options. We also have direct lease. If there's somebody that owns an apartment, we'll go to them and we'll ask to get a direct lease and put the survivors there. Or if we have units that needs some repair and that landlord will agree to repair 'em, we'll reimburse him. And we can move in there. But we want to keep everybody local. We do. We want to keep you in your communities where you go to church, whatever house of worship, where the kids, go to school and where you're comfortable. That's our number one goal. So we'll be working through that in the next several months.

Governor DeSantis ([18:45](#)):

All right. Thank you. Appreciate it, Kathleen. Thank you.

Kathleen Passidomo ([18:51](#)):

I'm Kathleen Passidomo. I have the privilege of representing many of you in the Florida Senate. I'd like to say a few words to my friends and neighbors in southwest Florida. I know how you feel, cause I remember that Thursday when I walked into my house and the water was receding and all of my personal property was lying in mud. I know how you feel and I know how you went through stages of grief and now you're coming back and I guarantee you that we will build back Southwest Florida stronger, better. And I wanna say this because he won't. Governor DeSantis,

Kathleen Passidomo ([20:06](#)):

She's fine. She's fine.

Governor DeSantis ([20:08](#)):

It's gonna be okay.

Kathleen Passidomo ([20:09](#)):

And this just goes to show you the first person that came to our aid was our great governor.

Governor DeSantis ([20:17](#)):

Thank you so much.

Kathleen Passidomo ([20:19](#)):

He won't say this, but I will. He has a heart for Southwest Florida, and he has been here almost every day since the storm. And he will be here. And his agencies, Kevin Guthrie, we love you. You have done an amazing job. And the other thing I wanna say, and one of the biggest issues we have is housing. And it has been a big issue for the last several years. I can tell you Governor DeSantis' office and my office has spent the entire summer working on some legislation that will help relieve the affordable housing crisis. So there's a lot that's gonna happen. We are not gonna abandon you. We care deeply about Southwest Florida, and we will continue to help you rebuild stronger and better. Thank you. Okay.

Governor DeSantis ([21:06](#)):

And I've already spoken with Kathleen. I had mentioned last week that we'll do a special legislative session between now and the end of the year. And we will do the property tax rebates for the people that as property has been destroyed or severely, severely damaged, we suspended that as governor, but I can't do the rebate without the legislature. And then we'll also look to see what other needs there are down in Southwest Florida in terms of additional appropriations or anything that we may need to tweak on a policy front. And so you guys have been great at providing feedback for Kevin and others. But let us know, we've got some good programs that people have been using. We did the no interest loans and we've got, I think they've dispersed 20 million in that, and you've got 50 million total, and there's enough applications that are in process to probably use that all. So we are interested in looking at that. And also the deductible assistance. We'll see how that's used, but, if that's effective, then we could do some more there. So we just want to be helpful and I'm glad that we're gonna be able to get back in very quickly by the end of the year. Okay. Anybody before we go? Yes.

Speaker 6 ([22:17](#)):

For the FDM

Kevin Guthrie ([22:19](#)):

Director. Okay.

Speaker 6 ([22:22](#)):

Hi there. So, your agency partners with CDR McGuire to operate a shelter in North Fort Myers. So we've received reports from people staying inside of black mold and cramped living conditions. What's your response to their concerns?

Kevin Guthrie ([22:38](#)):

So the question was about a shelter that's being run by one of our contract staff. I'm gonna read directly from an email last night, highlighted and underlined, I'm very happy to hear that all have concluded. There were no immediate threats or violations found in the shelter by any groups who have toured that facility. So again, there were some initial findings or, I don't want even to say findings, some initial concerns brought up by people in the shelter. We've had people go to that shelter, look at that shelter. And as of 11:21 PM last night, again, I reiterate, I was very happy to hear that we have all concluded that there were not any immediate threats or violations found in the shelter by any of the groups, having toured the facility.

Speaker 7 ([23:27](#)):

All right.

Governor DeSantis ([23:28](#)):

All right. Thanks guys. We'll see you soon.