

Gov. DeSantis (00:00):

We have Kevin Guthrie, our DEM director, who's now basically living in southwest Florida as part of the response, Uh, our FDOT secretary, Jared Perdue, CEO of Florida and Power and Light, Eric Sloagee, and our Lee County Sheriff Carmine Marcino. And of course, you see a lot of folks who've been integral in these response efforts. And I want to thank everybody for all that you've done over the past. Uh, now it's, it's going on nine, 10 days, uh, so since this storm hit, so thank you for what you're doing. Obviously here, you suffered catastrophic damage in Fort Myers Beach and there was a premium on rescue efforts and rightfully so, and that, that is, those efforts were ongoing and continue to, to, to go on. But we also have a situation where you have a lot of people who, who left their homes and they're wanting to know when they can get back.

Gov. DeSantis (00:56):

And so I know that they've started, uh, an initial wave of people, uh, just from the state's perspective. It's our hope that, that everybody's able to go back to their property. It's very important that they're able to do that. I know there's some people that are gonna have really significant damage. Some will have total loss, some may have damage that they're willing to live in their house for. And if it's safe, you know, obviously they, they have a right to do that. They have a right to be, uh, where they wanna be. So, so getting people back into their, uh, their homes, uh, in these areas is, is really, really important. And so, as of 7am this morning, the first group of residents did return to the island more will becoming throughout the day. Uh, but, but this is their home and we wanna make sure that, that they're here in order to help facilitate that.

Gov. DeSantis (01:47):

Obviously, you see there's a lot of damage here. It's not as easy to just say, go back. You may not have any services at your home. So we have authorized, we gotta request to the, from the county via the city here for, uh, portable restrooms, hand wash stations, shower trailers, a toilet trailer. So all that is gonna be brought here, and we're gonna do that to make sure that the folks who are living here still have access to those basic necessities. And we'll work with both the county and the city to be able to do more, uh, in terms of what's going on. I will say this as bad as the damage has been, but I think you're seeing these efforts, not just search and rescue, obviously that's been tremendous, but if you look around the debris efforts, you're seeing the debris stacked, uh, I'll tell you in some of these other storms that debris, uh, doesn't start getting dealt with, uh, this early.

Gov. DeSantis (02:41):

So I think that they're on the right track here. We've, uh, I've been saying for, for days now, get those contractors out here. Remove the debris, you get the reimbursement, take advantage of that. So I, I like to see all the debris removal activity. That's a good sign. We want to keep that going as you go more. Now, in terms of the power that we have throughout the state of Florida, uh, effectively, I'd say there's a couple spots with LCEC in Lee County. You still have spots in Cape Coral, I think North Fort Myers, when you start talking about Fort Myers Beach Santa, be some of those areas, uh, you obviously are gonna need to remove some of the debris here, uh, before you can go those poles actually did very well here. You know, if you look at those concrete poles, most of them, I think that what, what was the number that, how many concrete poles?

FPL Erik (03:32):

Four out of 396.

Gov. DeSantis (03:34):

So they had Florida power and light at 396 concrete poles for the electrical. Four of them broke. The others are, are, are, are. Okay. I can tell you I was on Sanibel a couple days ago. Uh, that is not the same ratio there. I mean, you had massive numbers of poles snapped in half. You had poles that were totally destroyed. So what that means is that a lot of the core infrastructure held in Fort Myers Beach, there's still a lot of work to do, but the issue is really gonna be getting the debris removed, making sure you can clear the area, and then seeing the homes that can even accept power or not. Because if the home was damaged enough, it may not be able to accept power without there being some additional, uh, renovations to the home. So, so those things are all, uh, obviously gonna be decided, uh, over the coming days in terms of as the debris moves, what can they do?

Gov. DeSantis (04:30):

You know, what we've said is, is we, we would like services restored, you know, as soon as possible. We understand that there's, that there's gonna be a lot of things that that need to be done in the interim. But I do think, given the destruction that you saw, that this infrastructure for, for power held up very well and, and really surprisingly well, cuz I thought we would see, uh, a lot worse than what we have. So we had the storm exit, the state of Florida on Thursday evening of last week. And so here we are now, Saturday, over a week after the storm finally left the East coast of Florida. And you basically have over 99% of Floridians, uh, with power other than some of the LCEC pockets. All the places that can be restored without having a, a major rebuild, uh, at this point has effectively been restored.

Gov. DeSantis (05:23):

So you have Santa Bell, which is gonna require a lot of tlc. Uh, you are now having some restorations on Pine Island. There's more that needs to be done. There was some damage to the infrastructure there. And then of course, Fort Myers Beach, uh, we were able to help facilitate a thousand other linemen from co electrical co-ops throughout the state, and then many more thousand from both Duke and FPL to assist with those LCEC restorations. And so we are, we are hearing that you will have Cape Coral, most of all of that done, uh, this weekend. And I, they're supposed to make a lot of progress today. So, so we're looking forward to that cuz we understand that that's important for a lot of folks, uh, uh, particularly in kind of that southwestern part part of Cape Coral. But, but all said and done to have 42,000 linemen stationed and ready to go, uh, that allowed the power to be restored much quicker throughout the state.

Gov. DeSantis (06:20):

And a storm of this magnitude that not only impacted directly southwest Florida, but cut across the entire state, dropped historic amounts of rainfall, uh, prompted flooding, all kinds of problems, uh, to be able to get this done. Those people who grew up in Florida have lived here a long time. You know, there's some storms, you go back 15 years or so where people could be out for weeks. And I would say this one was a really, really strong effort. So we appreciate everybody that's been involved. We appreciate all those linemen who were ready to go. I remember seeing 'em come across I10 into the, from Pensacola panhandle over into the Florida Peninsula. Then it was a great site to see because there was a big mission. And that mission, uh, was undertaken with, uh, a lot of vigor. And it's made a difference for a lot of Floridians, millions of Floridians.

Gov. DeSantis (07:10):

So thank you for, for doing that. Uh, we've also asked the linemen, uh, the companies, uh, FPL and, and Duke to, uh, help us out on some of the barrier islands. The, those islands, uh, Sanibel and Pine Island are, are done by the co-op. Uh, obviously this is a big, big project, so you need all hands on deck. So we, those folks are engaged in both of those islands, uh, which is something that's really, really important. And we wanna make sure that they continue, uh, to do that. One of the things you're saying with all the debris here is this is a monumental undertaking when you have debris of this nature. And we were in a situation in the state of Florida, uh, four years ago about this time actually, where Hurricane Michael was category five storm rammed into the Florida panhandle. So you're talking about places like Panama City, Lynn Haven, and it barreled all the way through all those rural counties had significant damage.

Gov. DeSantis ([08:12](#)):

It was a little bit different storm than this storm surge not even close to what we saw with Ian, but you did see it like a buzz saw. It created an enormous amount of debris in places like Bay County. And so, uh, we are a, actually, we've requested, uh, to have the mayor of Panama City who dealt with this as a friend of mine, Greg Barkickie and his staff, they saw probably one of the biggest cleanup efforts in state history after Hurricane Michael. Uh, so they're gonna come down on the ground, they're gonna inspect, and then they're gonna offer some advice to the local officials here in Lee County, Fort Myers Beach and other places. You could do what you want. You don't have to, you don't have to to accept their advice. But I'll tell you, that was a major, major effort, I would say that probably had more trees that got knocked down cuz it cut through part of the forest and the roads were, were a disaster and they had to clear you.

Gov. DeSantis ([09:08](#)):

We haven't had to clear quite as many, uh, roads at that level in terms of just having massive numbers of trees falling. But, you know, you see around you the boats, there's probably more vessels than we've had in any storm that I, that I can remember. And you see 'em piled up over there, that's gonna be a massive effort. Of course, some of these structures here gonna be a massive effort. So we're happy that, uh, that we're getting that knowhow. It's sad that, that, that experience has to be, has to be put in into use. And it's unfortunate, but I think that it'll end up helping. So we've talked about Sanibel and the need for services there. We're proud to have been able to do the Pine Island Bridge and Record time. I know a lot of people are very happy. You have things like Publix open, they can now bring fuel.

Gov. DeSantis ([09:56](#)):

You have the utility crews pouring in. They're making progress there in Pine Island, and I don't think that would've been possible without that bridge. And so we also understand Sanibel Causeway need to be able to get that in working order at least temporarily so that people can get across easier. I mean, people have been running boats back and forth. We've had Chinook helicopters dropping in National Guard, Urban Search and Rescue Linemen to, to help. And that's great and, and we're happy to do that. But, but we need to get that going. So Jared Perdue will be talking about that. But they, they believe that they're gonna be able to have the Sanibel Causeway accessible for vehicles, uh, sometime in the month of October. So by the end of the month, they expect that to, to happen. In the meantime, we are helping transport power crews via barge onto Sanibel Island and the barges.

Gov. DeSantis ([10:53](#)):

There's, you need equipment, you need a lot of stuff. We're, we're doing as many as we can. Uh, under the circumstances Kevin Guthrie may talk about, there's bigger types of landing craft that that, that we

are gonna have access to shortly. That does require high tide because low tide, it won't, won't be able to work. So you want to be able to get as many electrical crews and their equipment onto Sanibel Island to, to be helping with that. The, you know, the water, uh, facility actually did okay, from what I, what I understand now, there's gonna be more that needs to be done from there. Uh, but some of the core infrastructure survive on the electrical side. A lot of the poles, there's power lines everywhere. I mean, it was, it was a really significant damage that was done. So my view is just, we are working hard on the causeway that that will be done.

Gov. DeSantis ([11:42](#)):

And I think probably ahead of schedule in terms of what most people would've been able to accomplish. You know, there's some parts of this country would take six months of bureaucracy to even start laying any dirt down. So we get, we cut through that and get the stuff going, but you don't wanna wait until all of that is done, even if we do it in a relatively short term before you start dealing with some of these underlying issues. And so the barges are helpful. Those are running today. That's gonna bring a lot of people. We need capacity to really do a lot more because of, of what we're dealing with. But, but we are continuing to work. And I think our, one of our mantras from, uh, Kevin Guthrie, myself and others, is, you know, there's a lot of needs that happen in the aftermath of the storm, search and rescue, uh, power restoration, water, sewer, all these things work all of them in parallel.

Gov. DeSantis ([12:33](#)):

We don't wanna say, Well, we gotta do the bridge, then when the bridge is done, then we'll start to worry about the power. No, we worry about the power on Sanibel now, worry about the causeway now and work through that. So that's what we're doing. And I think that it'll, it'll make a difference because we want people to be able to get back to their homes on Sanibel as well. And it's important. Uh, some, some of the homes, uh, were wiped out. Some were severely damaged, other had damage that they're gonna be able to recover from. And, and some of 'em that are high enough up, you know, may even have had more modest damage, you know. But that's something we want people to be able to get back. We wanna be able to get in their homes, wanna be able to make whatever repairs, uh, help clear any debris.

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

And so that's important. So right now, that's generally by boat. Uh, so we would ask, you know, those boat ramps, you know, want those boat ramps open. We want people to be able to, to make that happen, and that'll make a big difference. Our relief efforts have been, um, really significant. These points of distribution for food and water have distributed 13 million meals, 47 million bottles of water and about 2.5 million, uh, pounds of ice. So that's a massive effort. Uh, we're fortunate because a lot of the stores came back quicker than what a lot of people probably thought that some of those pods have been, have been collapsed at the request of the counties. And we, we want to help as long as they need it. But a lot of the counties said, we're good and you can send those resources elsewhere. So those have been redeployed, uh, as needed.

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

Uh, you know, we moved a total of 2.2 million gallons of fuel into Southwest Florida to support this response that's been used. I saw some fuel trucks coming in there, a total of 375 Starlink satellite devices from Elon Musk. As more people have internet now and the connectivity's better, those are being moved to the places that that need it most. And we're, we're happy on that. Uh, we've cleared a

total amount of 5,200 miles of roadway and they've inspected and reopened 2,507 bridges throughout the state of Florida. That's our Florida Department of Transportation. And I think most people here in the county saw how quick that they were able to restore access to Pine Island. That was a big deal for those residents and it was really a big deal for the county. So we're happy that we were able to do that. We now have on the Florida Disaster Fund, which people can go to and donate online, [Floridadisasterfund.org](http://Floridadisasterfund.org).

Gov. DeSantis ([15:01](#)):

First Lady has led this effort. It's raised more than 40 million, so this is like a week, a little over a week after she launched it. And you already have over \$40 million. And you have a lot of great organizations that have come down here that are charitable organizations that are doing good work. They obviously can be given funding to expand, uh, individuals who need assistance. There's a lot that can be done with that. So we're really thankful for everybody who's gone. People have gone on and given five bucks online, 10 bucks online, had people give seven figure donations. And we appreciate all of it. It all makes a big, big difference. Uh, we're also, uh, happy that, um, the month of October, starting the last Saturday, is Florida's fuel tax holiday. So your gas, the state gas tax 25 cents is suspended for people buying gas in Florida.

Gov. DeSantis ([15:54](#)):

That means as of last night, I think the average price, uh, for unleaded in Florida was about \$3 and 15 cents. You know, it's 6 35 in California. Uh, we have the fifth lowest gas right now in the United States. Uh, because of, of really, I mean, it was really my effort. Uh, the legislature didn't really want to do it. And so we are at least able to get some relief for Floridians, uh, with the fuel tax. And so I think it's come at a good time. I think it'll help, uh, lessen some, some blows. We are bracing for increases in the price of oil, just given what's going on with OPEC and all these other things. And so hopefully this will, uh, this will make a difference for folks. So we're appreciative of everyone, everything, everyone's done. Uh, there have been people working around the clock. We understand how difficult it is.

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

We understand that there's a lot of obstacles. Uh, these are not easy tasks, but people have really worked hard and done a great job. And also just the, the people throughout the community I think have rallied really well. I was down in Naples High school last night. They had had, the storm didn't get hit quite as bad as here of course, but they had record storm surge in Collier county. And they had the kids back in school yesterday and they had the football game with the big cross town rivalry. And so people really are showing a lot of resilience. I know the school system here is figuring out, you know, what schools can we get the kids back as soon as possible. Some places like here, it's gonna be a little bit more difficult on the beach. Uh, but others, they're, they're moving forward.

Gov. DeSantis ([17:22](#)):

So that's a great spirit. It's gonna help people get back on their feet quicker. We know that there's people that have lost everything. We know there's people that have been displaced that are gonna need, uh, a lot of support. But I think you have that here in the community. All the people that have come to pitch in. And of course, we're here as a state for the long haul cuz we understand this is something that is gonna require a lot of effort over a lengthy period of time. Okay, Kevin Guthrie is here to give, uh, to give an update.

Dir. Guthrie ([17:53](#)):

Thank you Governor. Thank you for your leadership. Thank the First Lady. Thank, uh, secretaries and directors that are out here helping us respond to this from all agencies across state government.

Dir. Guthrie ([18:05](#)):

I'm not surprised, but I continue to be amazed by the efficient response the state of Florida initiated both before landfall, during landfall, and immediately after the aftermath of Hurricane Ian. To date, we've processed more than 5,000 mission requests and we continue to fill those requests as they come in. This includes missions such as clearing debris, working to help the people of Southwest Florida clean up and rebuild. I, we could not do this without the men and women of the state emergency response team back in Tallahassee and stretched across nearly 20 counties statewide. I want to give a special thank you to the logistics section of the Emergency Operations Center who has done a herculean effort and what might be one of the, uh, largest logistical lifts the state has ever undertaken.

Dir. Guthrie ([18:55](#)):

Wanna again, reiterate that uh, the good friend of, uh, Governor DeSantis, Mayor Bernicky, is bringing his, uh, city Manager General Martin McQueen to this area to assist the, uh, Fort Myers Beach Mayor and the Fort Myers Beach City manager to come in and just share best practices of what they learned in Hurricane Michael. I wanna thank the nearly 50,000 linemen who worked around the clock to get the lights turned back on in Lee County. We still, for those that, uh, LCEC, FPL, Duke, and other individuals, standby ready, Just send you more resources to get the power on as quickly as possible. I wanna thank the members of Florida Taskforce two outta City of Miami and the surrounding jurisdictions and the men, men and women of Florida Taskforce eight, which is our central Florida Marion County area who are represented here on Fort Myers Beach.

Dir. Guthrie ([19:51](#)):

Initial debris pickup has been completed on 22,840 miles of State Road. We have 12 Fueling Depots open, including three in Lee County. We developed fuel to Pine Island. We, we have deployed fuel to Pine Island via the Pine Island Bridge that was completed in record speed thanks to Jared and his, uh, his folks at D O T. In addition, we have two Bob Tails and one Humvee are stage in north Captiva. This is something that the governors mentioned about us barging equipment over. So we are staged there and ready to do what we need to do in Captiva. I'm happy to report that, uh, Eric Dellenback, who is my counterpart with the governor's office with, uh, Governor's Faith-based Initiative team, is securing church locations in the area on these islands so that we can set up staging areas more to come on that in the future.

Dir. Guthrie ([20:40](#)):

Operation Blue Roof is fully underway and operational. It is now operating in Charlotte, Collier Lee, and Sarasota Counties. The first roofs that be completed, were here in Dunbar inside of Lee County. For information on that program. Again, it is free to individuals that qualify in Charlotte, Collier, Lee and Sarasota Counties. That one 800 number is 1 888 766 3258. I'm gonna repeat that again. It's 1 888 766 3258. Or you can sign up at [bluroof.us](http://bluroof.us). That's Blue Roof.US. DRCs are open in the following counties. Lee, Sarasota, and Charlotte, Collier open this morning. Orange County is opening on Saturday and Seminole County is opening on Monday with other counties to follow behind that. I think we need to remember that this is a statewide disaster that stretches from St. John's County all the way down to Key West. Governor again, it's my honor to work for you and thank you for your leadership. Okay,

Gov. DeSantis ([21:57](#)):

Jared Perdue.

Sec. Perdue ([22:01](#)):

Yes, thank you. Governor DeSantis, First Lady for your continued leadership. It has truly enabled us to bring every available resource to bear, respond quickly, and help get people back on their feet. Um, we're continuing to work on those things that are important. Um, as the governor mentioned, we, we immediately cleared, uh, over 5,000 miles of roadway right after the storm. It's extremely important to get people moving around, get emergency vehicles, responders in and out of where they're trying to go. Uh, we also inspected over 2,500 bridges, making sure those bridges are safe to cross. Um, and so, so we're happy to have completed that. Moving forward, we're gonna have a, a really big priority on debris removal. This is a big part of, of getting people back to normal, helping them recover in their daily lives, and also really prioritize in signal operation. We've restored, um, around 90% of signals to operational in Lee County.

Sec. Perdue ([22:53](#)):

We still have a few left, but even on the way down here this morning, I noticed that there were several Lee County Crews, FDOT crews working in concert to get those signals back up and running and really enable people to move around. Um, as the governor mentioned, we were really excited to finish the Pine Island access, uh, three days ahead of schedule. And, and again, it's through the governor's leadership that we were able to bring the resources to the table that were needed to do that. Um, we're doing the same thing with, um, Sanibel Causeway. We are definitely bringing all the resources that are available. We've mobilized two contractor, um, that are made up of teams of multiple subs. They brought, uh, over 160 trucks to the job site. We have three dredging operations to fill in. The damage to the causeway was massive.

Dir. Guthrie ([23:39](#)):

There are two very large breaches in the causeway. It's gonna take a lot of material to fill those in, but again, we're working just as quickly as we can. We do have a target to finish that, uh, by the end of the month of October. But, uh, again, we hope to finish early just like we did on Pine Island and we're, we're really striving to do that. Um, so again, thank you governor for your leadership. Um, I'm honored to, to work for Governor DeSantis and continue bringing relief to the, the people in these communities. Thank you.

Gov. DeSantis ([24:07](#)):

Okay. All right. Eric Slo fpl. Thank

FPL Erik ([24:13](#)):

You Governor. Thank you Governor. Uh, after completing nearly a million construction man hours of work, I'm pleased to tell you that FPL has restored power to essentially all of our customers. We are 99.8% restored and crews remain in the field today to restore those who can safely get their power back on. As the governor said, unfortunately, many buildings did, uh, suffer a lot of damage. Uh, some of those require inspections. We have crews standing by ready. So as soon as your building, your home, your business has been inspected and can safely take power. We will get the lights back on to those here in Fort Myers Beach. That's gonna take a little bit longer. But for everybody else that we serve, across the state of Florida, power has been restored. I want to thank all of the men and women. The governor

talked about the tens of thousands who came from across the country to help Florida get back up on her feet.

FPL Erik ([25:10](#)):

We had over 21,000 deployed. 19,000 people came before the storm and were ready to get out as soon as the storm passed from across 30 states. I wanna thank those men and women, uh, and their families back home, uh, for all of their dedication and their support for not just fpl, but for the state of Florida. I also want to reiterate our continued commitment to making sure that Fort Myers Beach, uh, is rebuilt and we will be here to ensure that the power comes on just as soon as it is safe for that to happen. And we will continue to work with Lee County Electric Cooperative, all of their teams who are out in the field working hard to get the power on in Cape Coral and Sanibel and Captiva islands. And we will do everything we can to help them in their effort going forward. Thank you for all of your patience. I know it's hard not to have power, uh, but again, it's been a really, really great effort across the state of Florida. Governor, I want to thank you. I want to thank law enforcement. I want to thank DOT, without their support, we cannot move this amount of people and equipment. And it has been truly a hercule effort and a team effort to get everything done. Proud to be part of Team Florida and to get the lights back on.

Gov. DeSantis ([26:28](#)):

Okay. Thank you Sheriff. Thank you. Thank you.

Sheriff Marceno ([26:34](#)):

Good morning. First I want to thank our great governor. Governor. You know, when you take a hit like this in the state of Florida, specifically here in Lee County, as a sheriff who's in charge of safety and security, there's so many things coming at you at once. And Governor Ron DeSantis has proven every single minute, every hour and every day that he's here with the residents of Florida, not only in every way here, but with law enforcement as he has stood for law enforcement's, the very first day in office. Governor, your staff has been phenomenal. You get things done every time I call, the answer's always yes, it's always, what do you need? And I can assure you, we would not be standing here looking at what we're looking at, being all the electric FPL, LCEC, the resident county took a hard hit, but we stood Florida strong.

Sheriff Marceno ([27:25](#)):

And that's because of a great leader like Governor Ron DeSantis, the greatest Governor in America. I also want to thank all my family members here. And I say family, I use that word because every single one of you are family. No matter where you come from, the calls come from all over. Everyone out of the state. In the state, my fellow brothers at the Florida Sheriff's Association, they sent those people from everywhere. Everyone wanted the help. And I'll tell you this, there's no greater gift when something like this happens. It's tragic, but when you see people come together, it really hits you in the heart. And you see those acts every single day everywhere. The only thing I want to cover besides that, and I've been very, very clear as our governor is, is we are a law and order state. Lee County is a law and order county.

Sheriff Marceno ([28:12](#)):

We've had very little incidents of looting in total. We had nine before this morning we had five individuals that decided that they wanted to loot in our south district. Well, if you're lucky and you loot in the state of Florida in Lee County, you end up going to jail. I will tell you, if somebody makes that

grave mistake of trying to prey on one of our great residents, you might be able to walk into a home. You will be carried out. People have the right to be safe and secure. And we are 100% on it from the air, from the waterways and boots on the ground. Zero tolerance is zero tolerance. We're gonna move forward, we're gonna be stronger than ever. And once again, thank you to everybody here and governor from the heart. Thank you for all you've done for us. Yeah, thank you.

Gov. DeSantis (29:05):

Okay, well we appreciate the effort everyone's made. Uh, you know, these are, uh, these are very difficult and challenging circumstances. The, the initial response has been coordinated, uh, overwhelming and I think has done, um, uh, done these communities proud. But there's a lot more to do. And really some of the hardest stuff is still ahead of us. And so we're, we're gonna be working on all those issues. We talked about some of the infrastructure that still needs to be done, uh, that is preceding a pace, are also gonna have people that have been dis uh, uh, who who've been dislocated from their homes, who, um, you know, are gonna need, uh, you know, temporary accommodations. And I know the, the county is working with them. We of course have FEMA assistance for that as well as, uh, uh, potentially, you know, state helping out depending on how some of this comes down with, with our relationship with fema. So hang in there. We know that there's a lot more work ahead, but I think you can look around and see that, that there's been a lot that's been accomplished already and people really do want to get all this taken care of and we want to get back, back to doing well. Okay, thanks. Anyone have any questions?

Reporter (30:19):

Resident of fort myers beach? That's back communication. Do you think this feel out to get back to

Gov. DeSantis (30:25):

The home? Yes. So I said that at the beginning of the press conference. It's our view that, you know, some of them left because they were told to leave and so they followed the directive. They want to get back into their homes. Uh, and some of them will have damage, some may be destroyed, some may be livable, and it's their right to be able to be back into their homes. We've had a lot of search and rescue that's been going on and, and rightfully so. Uh, but we're at a point now where, where everybody who lives here needs to be brought back.

Reporter (30:53):

That announcement is coming back this afternoon, by the way.

Gov. DeSantis (30:55):

Yeah, and I think, I think there is gonna be some announcements. They let an initial wave in. I think the locals are gonna, are gonna let more in, but, but we're a hundred percent supportive of that. And we, if we need to provide more sanitation, trailers, portlets, all that, we will do that as well.

Reporter (31:10):

I know you've been very involved. Sanibel bridge. You say, Okay, there's a need. I need that be heavily involved and you,

Gov. DeSantis (31:25):

Well once it, once they come to us with this. So the Pine Island, what happened was, obviously we saw the images after it happened. They were being told, you just need to get off the island because there's not gonna be access restored. So I had them come to me basically last Saturday saying, Can you help us? And I'm like, Yeah, we'll do it. And so we had a request, it's not a state, state road, uh, but we said we'll do it. We have, uh, a record budget surplus. I have 500 million in a disaster fund that we created just to meet these needs. And so we did it. And so as people are doing that, I've met with the Sanibel mayor now multiple times about what they need. So as we get requests, if the state can be a difference maker, what I'm telling Kevin Guthrie to do, uh, is to go in there, let's put a thumb on the scale and let's make it happen. We have certain amount of ability to marshal resources right now. That's very good because there's a lot of people that just want to be helpful. So even if we don't necessarily have the authority to say, Hey, you need to do this. So we ask people, a lot of them will do it. So we, we want to use that as best we can to be able to, to help the residents of this area.

Reporter ([32:33](#)):

Snowbird season is about ready start. What do you have to tell the snowbirds who haven't come down yet?

Gov. DeSantis ([32:41](#)):

So what I, what I would tell the snowbirds is, look, uh, work is underway. Uh, I think once we get into the full, uh, winter season, you're gonna have seen so much of this debris taken care of. I think that they're working very proactively on that. Certain people may have damage to their homes. Uh, you know, those obviously people want to come down and, and repair that. We, we encourage you to do that. We encourage you to get back to your home, see what the damage is, make whatever repairs. You know, the first couple days we were saying, Hey, you know, you may not want to jam 75 coming down from the Midwest to come to your places here cuz we had a lot of need for power search and rescue and all those things. Well, now we're at the point where the power has been restored except for a little bit of LCEC and then the major areas and the search and rescue has gone on for, for over a week now, what, probably nine or 10 days.

Gov. DeSantis ([33:31](#)):

So it is absolutely appropriate for them to come back, survey their property and make whatever changes. But I think if you look at how these businesses have, have bounced back generally in the area, when I saw Publix open Friday morning after the storm in Cape Coral, that was pretty incredible because after the blow that they just took, you could see that not be open for a week or two. And that would be totally normal for past storm experience. So I think what you're, what people that come down for the winter gonna see, there's a huge, huge, uh, emphasis and effort on, on bouncing back from this. It's not easy. Uh, but that effort's there because you gotta, you have decision to make, you get Delta bad hand. How do you wanna handle that bad hand? Do you just wanna say, Oh, all hope is lost and, and that, Or do you wanna say, you know what, I got delta bad hand, but I'm gonna dig in. We're gonna work together as a community, city, county, region, state, support from the federal government and we're gonna get this done. And I think the spirit that I've seen overwhelmingly is, Hey, we're gonna get this done. We're gonna bounce back, um, and we're gonna be strong. And I think that's a testament to the folks down here.

Reporter ([34:38](#)):

What's your message to the family that are in need of closure, that are still missing Loved ones?

Gov. DeSantis ([34:44](#)):

Well efforts. These have been incredibly, uh, potent efforts. We have not had more search and rescue teams, urban search and rescue teams in one's place since 9/11. So all the, um, all the levers that have been able to be pulled, have been pulled. It's been a herculean effort. Those guys have done an incredible incredible work. Uh, so just know that, that this has happened and it's continuing to happen at the same time, you know, we are situation this debris like, you know, you don't know what happened to people who remained out here during that time and you see if it can move a boat, all that, you know, what could happen. So there's gonna be a lot of things as they go through and, and clear this, you know, there, there, there very well may be some bad news. There's been a lot of good news up to this point to be honest.

Gov. DeSantis ([35:31](#)):

They've saved a lot of people and it's been really, really great to see. But, but just dealing with the destruction that we're dealing with though, that's just something, you know, that, that is possible. And we hope that that doesn't, that doesn't happen. But there's been huge amounts of resources dedicated to identifying people in need and, and bringing them to safety. And, and I just as an American, as a Floridian and proud of these guys for what they did to have the Coast guard, the Usar teams, all this in the wee hours of the morning last Thursday, the morning after the storm to be out there and to see how happy the residents were when they were brought to safety. You know, you're in your house, you see the water rise four or five, you don't know what's gonna happen and then you, you hang in there and then you get rescued.

Gov. DeSantis ([36:16](#)):

Uh, that, that is a huge, huge thing. And I can tell you the folks that I've talked to in the shelters who are displaced, uh, all they can talk about is how thankful they are for the effort of people. And they're not talking about their own misfortune. I thought that more would do that because it's such a devastating thing. They're just saying thank you to these guys that rescued thanks to the, the Red Cross, the charities, everybody who's pitched in. So that's, that's what you call a team effort. And, and I'm proud that this immobilization has occurred. I wish it didn't have to happen, but these things do and so you gotta respond in kind. Okay, we'll be back. Thanks guys.