

Governor DeSantis [\(04:34\)](#):

Good morning. I'm here, joined with Kevin Guthrie, our DEM manager, First Lady and my wonderful wife, Casey DeSantis, General Jim Eifert, Gracia Szczec, and great Coast Guard Admiral McPherson. And they've been so, so good in terms of what's happened. So as soon as that storm passed in the very wee hours of the morning, first responders from the local, state and federal level descended on southwest Florida. The Coast Guard has been performing rescue missions on the barrier islands consistently since the wee hours of the morning. We have Florida Guard assets on the ground participating in efforts, and we have our USR teams who, they got there even while the winds were going. They wanted to get in there, get on the ground across alligator alley and they are performing rescue efforts again, starting with those barrier islands, but also looking at the places that had the most inland flooding and these operations are ongoing.

Governor DeSantis [\(05:38\)](#):

In total, there's 28 large, mostly Chinooks and Blackhawks helicopters, between the National Guard and Coast Guard that are already performing these active rescue missions. And there will be more as air assets brought in as the day goes on. Uh, we've also been working with hospitals overnight, uh, who've been on generator power. Uh, we're in the process of evacuating two healthcare facilities to safer locations north. Uh, we are also surging more medical personnel into the area. Uh, as of 6:00 AM this morning, they have 2.02 million reported power outages, uh, out, uh, but outside of southwest Florida, uh, we may have additional outages from central and and northeast Florida impacts, and people should anticipate that. Uh, if you look, there's 1.5 million outages in seven Southwest Florida counties. Lee and Charlotte are basically, uh, off the grid at this point. Uh, Sarasota has quarter of a million without power.

Governor DeSantis [\(06:39\)](#):

Hillsborough, 222,000, Pinellas, 150,000, Manatee, 129,000. The Charlotte and Lee reconnects are really gonna likely have to be rebuilding of that infrastructure. And so there are linemen. There are crews that are on their way down right now, but that's gonna be more than just connecting a power line back to a, back to a pole. Uh, the other counties, uh, likely are not gonna require the extent of the structural rebuild, but of course, that's gonna be assessed, uh, as the day goes on. But we do have a huge amounts of resources that are in route and are gonna work to get people's power on as quickly as possible. Uh, we've also had interruptions in communications as a result of the storm, particularly in southwest Florida. Uh, we have a hundred portable cell towers being deployed into the area, um, and those would be put up once it's, uh, fully safe to do so.

Governor DeSantis [\(07:38\)](#):

Uh, FDOT is, is on the ground working on making sure that the roads and interstates are open. Alligator alley on 75 across into Collier and into Lee County is open. The traffic is flowing. I 75 South, uh, through Charlotte County, uh, is open and flowing portions of Lee County. Uh, they're still looking at, uh, as you know, some of those areas. Cape Coral, uh, City of Fort Myers. They got really, really inundated and really devastated by this storm. So the hope is, is that all of 75, uh, will be open, but most of it is open, and it gives us what we need to be able to continue to move supplies into the area. Uh, we have a hundred engineers, uh, on site to do bridge inspections, and they work in teams of two. Uh, as they assess the damage and they can ensure safety, then bridges can be safely reopened.

Governor DeSantis [\(08:34\)](#):

Now, of course, we do have reports of structural damages to bridges, such as the bridge, uh, going on to Santa Bell Island, and I anticipate there will likely be other bridges that, that have suffered damage. Uh, but once bridges are inspected and determined to be safe, uh, they, they will be, uh, reopened, uh, as, as soon as, uh, possible. But we know Sanibel Causeway, and we also know Pine Island Bridge. Those two, uh, are not passable, uh, and they're gonna require structural, uh, rebuilds. Right now, if you look in central Florida, you're looking at potential major flooding and orange and Seminole counties, uh, St. John's River, all the way up potentially into, into Northeast Florida, in Jacksonville. The amount of water that's been rising and will likely continue to rise today, even as the storm is passing, uh, is basically a 500 year flood event.

Governor DeSantis ([09:28](#)):

And I know Seminole County has, has, has done evacuations. I know they've issue, uh, opened shelters, uh, but, uh, we're gonna see a lot of images about, uh, the destruction that was done in southwest Florida. And obviously we have massive assets there. Uh, but people should just understand this, this storm is having broad impacts across the state, and some of the flooding you're gonna see in areas hundreds of miles from where this made landfall, um, are gonna set records. And that's gonna obviously be, be things that, um, uh, that will need to be responded to. We have, of course, massive amounts of food and water, um, in the area. We're gonna have probably close to 300 truckloads of food and water in the area today. Fortunately, most of our school districts will be able to reopen on Friday or Monday. Uh, you know, Lee County is, is in a very difficult situation, Charlotte, so we're gonna work with them, uh, and, and see, uh, when they can get back on their feet.

Governor DeSantis ([10:26](#)):

But the damage, there's been just so extensive that, that it's a very difficult, uh, situation. We have received a major disaster declaration for nine counties, but we do expect more. I just spoke with the president this morning. Uh, he offered support. I told him thanks for this, but because the storm has moved, uh, inland and caused a lot of potential damage in the center part of our state, that we were gonna be asking for those counties to be expanded and included there. But for now, we have approval for Charlotte Collier, DeSoto, Hardy, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Pinellas, and Sarasota, that will allow individual Floridians to seek individual assistance, uh, from FEMA. And, and that will be something that as you have people that have been displaced due to the catastrophic impacts of Hurricane Ian, you know, that's gonna be something that's gonna be necessary.

Governor DeSantis ([11:15](#)):

Uh, we have been granted a hundred percent federal assistance, category A and B up front for 30 days to ensure we can quickly move forward into, uh, this response and recovery, uh, situation. Uh, FEMA has, as I mentioned, activated individual assistance. For those in need of help who qualify, you go to fema.gov, or you can call 1 806 2 1 3 2 6 2. Make sure you take a picture of the waterline in your home, because if you can show that we're able to get, uh, assistance, uh, to you faster, as people have merged this morning, particularly in the areas that were hard hit, just understand this is still a hazardous situation. Uh, those folks that were in there in the wee hours of the morning, were taking big risks as first responders navigating this. You have power lines that are down. Uh, you have trees that are down. You have a lot of hazards right now.

Governor DeSantis ([12:13](#)):

We do anticipate a lot of the water will subside in some of the barrier islands and some of the coasts, but some of those inland places off rivers and off these inlets, you know, you're likely to have standing water there, uh, uh, throughout all of today and, and even in, in, in the days ahead. So, so that is a hazard, and, and just be, please be aware that that is something that you, if you weathered the storm to this point, uh, going and doing and getting involved in that, uh, is just totally not worth it. And we wanna minimize any harm to anybody as a result, uh, of what we're seeing right now in the streets. Uh, we have had 26 states provide support. We really appreciate that. Uh, it's, it's gonna be put to use. Uh, this is, uh, I don't think we've ever seen an effort mobilized for, for this many rescues this quickly, but we appreciate it and, uh, we will make good use of it.

Governor DeSantis ([13:04](#)):

We want people to be safe. Those who have, uh, who are in need of, of life, uh, life support right now, help is on the way. What they were able to do is look to see where the areas that were the hardest hit, and they've been focusing assets there. So obviously the barrier islands, but then you also have places, uh, along these different inlets and different rivers where people said the water was rising, They were calling into the county or calling 9 1 1. And so they have a pretty good sense of where those calls were coming from, and they're focusing their, their rescue efforts on those areas that were most hard hit. Uh, and again, I just want to thank the, the Urban Search and Rescue teams, the National Guard, uh, the, the state, uh, resources and the Coast Guard for, you know, not, not waiting around, but going in there and understanding that time is of the essence, and we got a lot of people we need to help for those looking to help people say, What can we do?

Governor DeSantis ([14:01](#)):

Well, the First Lady is spearheading our efforts with Volunteer Florida to activate the Florida Disaster Fund, where people can donate, uh, it's much better to donate financially rather than sending items. We've got a lot of items and resources, uh, financial resources can really help people, uh, get their unique needs met. We have everything we need in terms of supply. Uh, but if you go to Florida disaster fund.org or text disaster to 2, 2, 2, you can provide some much appreciated assistance. And if you wanna volunteer, uh, you have official volunteer portal@www.volunteerflorida.org to find volunteer opportunities. Uh, the impacts of this storm are, are historic, and the damage that was done, uh, has been historic. And this is just off initial assessments. There's gonna be a lot more assessing that goes on, uh, in the days ahead. Uh, but I think we've never seen a, a flood event like this.

Governor DeSantis ([15:03](#)):

We've never seen storm surge of this magnitude, and it hit an area, uh, where there's a lot of people and a lot of those low lying areas, and it's gonna end up doing extensive damage, uh, to a lot of people's homes. Uh, so there's gonna be a lot of work to do. Uh, today is about identifying the people that need help who may still be in harm's way, uh, but also beginning the process, uh, of rebuilding some of the things that we need to have services restored, uh, to have fuel and to have the things that, that people need in terms of communications. Uh, I want to thank, uh, Kevin Guthrie for, uh, having these assets ready to go. Uh, we are gonna use every bit of them, and we're gonna be there, um, until, until all the tasks are completed. So, Kevin, you wanna come up and give an update?

Kevin Guthrie ([15:50](#)):

Thank you, Governor. Thank you first lady for your leadership, uh, across the state. Um, going into a little more detail this morning, obviously as Tropical Storm, Ian continues to move across Central Florida

this morning. We have damaging winds and extreme rainfall expected throughout the northeast Florida and central Florida area. I wanted to emphasize that the storm still poses a major threat to the state, including Central Florida right now and northeast Florida. Orange County Fire Rescue is actively conducting nine wide area search responses on the water for rising water in the central Florida area. That is happening right now. As we speak. At this time, the division has received more than 1500 resources, or, I'm sorry, resource requests from our local impacted partners. And we have filled, or in the process of filling 1300, as the governor said, there are 300 plus truckloads of food and water that have been loaded out, and they are mobilizing to leave to the southwest Florida area right now.

Kevin Guthrie ([16:59](#)):

In addition to portable, uh, in addition to the issues with cell phones, we are deploying cell phone towers, as the governor mentioned, over 100 assets in that arena alone. Um, we want to, reinforce and we appreciate that the fact that we have received over 15,000 inputs to our shelter in place system. So we want to encourage you, if you are sheltered in place, or you know, someone that has sheltered in place and you know that we need to have, uh, go out and check on them. Please register that individual or register yourself at FloridaDisaster.org/report. That's FloridaDisaster.org/report. We have made that more specific yesterday. It was info, but we made it a little more specific so you did not have to, to hunt around for that site. So, again, I'll repeat it for the third time. FloridaDisaster.org/report to complete the shelter in place survey. I wanna reiterate, that is not a replacement for 9 1 1. If you are in an emergency situation, you need to call 9 1 1 in your local area.

Kevin Guthrie ([18:09](#)):

Our logistical staging areas in central Florida have all the additional resources that we need to respond. We have tarps, we have, uh, medical supplies if needed, uh, in those warehouses. We wanna make sure that all the available resources can get to the residents as quickly as possible. We are obviously in a situation now where we are starting our 72 hour clock and that 72 hour clock is that we search first, we secure, and then we stabilize. So that is what the focus of the state emergency response team is gonna be over the next 72 hours. Again, that is search secure and stabilize. I wanna thank the governor and the first lady for their continued leadership and support. They've been here nonstop around the clock. And again, sir, I thank you for that.

Governor DeSantis ([18:57](#)):

Okay, First lady,

First Lady Casey DeSantis ([18:59](#)):

Now, I just wanna say on behalf of the governor and myself, uh, everyone here who's working at the Emergency Operations Center, all of the men and women who have not left since it's a disaster began, uh, to all of those people across the state, our first responders, I wanna say thank you, because the people across the state and the country have stepped up big to support our Florida Disaster Fund so far in less than 24 hours since we launched the fund, we've raised 1.6 million. Uh, I am in constant contact, uh, with two folks. One, the people of Volunteer Florida to pledge that we are going to remove any red tape and bureaucracy from getting those funds deployed to the people who need them immediately. And then also, we're working with a lot of businesses across the state to continue to build upon that. But thank you to the people across this country and this state for stepping up, stepping up to help wonderful people who are in need. Again, there's a couple of ways that if you wanna continue to

donate, you can go to Florida disaster fund.org, uh, or you can also text disaster to 2 0 2 2 2. But on behalf of so many wonderful people, thank you for stepping up and please continue to do so.

Governor DeSantis ([20:11](#)):

So we will be, um, having all, all assets marshaled, uh, until, until the job is done on this initial, on this, this initial phase. Uh, I may be able to get down, uh, today, uh, to help to survey and talk some of the folks down in Lee and Charlotte counties. But those were, uh, those were, were massive impacts. And so we are looking at, Kevin said, you know, these, these 72 hours, uh, very important for, for safety for folks and, and, and rescuing people that need that. Um, and eventually bringing some stability. Uh, but you're looking at, uh, a storm that, that that's changed, uh, the character, uh, of a significant part of our state. And this is gonna require, uh, not just emergency response now in the days or weeks ahead. I mean, this is gonna require, uh, years of effort, uh, to be able, uh, to rebuild, uh, and to come back.

Governor DeSantis ([21:02](#)):

These are, uh, fantastic communities down in southwest Florida with a lot of fantastic people, and they're very tough and resilient. Uh, of course they didn't ask for this, Uh, but, but they need our help now, and we're, we're gonna be there for 'em. And we understand that, that this is gonna be a very, very long process. Uh, and we also understand that these effects are gonna go throughout the state today, uh, and you're gonna continue to see effects from flooding and, and these other ailments, uh, not just today, but in the days ahead. So, um, thanks for the support for everyone around the country who's donated, and thanks for everyone who's volunteered the time. And thanks for all the other states, uh, who have lent their support to us. Okay. There,

Question ([21:40](#)):

There have been reports that maybe there were hundreds of fatalities in Lee County. You have any clarification on how many

Governor DeSantis ([21:48](#)):

So none of that is confirmed. I think, uh, what what that is is there were 9 1 1 calls for people saying, Hey, the water is rising in my home. I'm gonna go up in the attic, but I'm really worried, Of course, those folks are now, uh, gonna be, uh, gonna be checked on. And so I think you'll have more clarity about that, uh, in, in the next day or so as they're able to go to those locations and determine whether people, uh, need, need services or are able to be rescued. Uh, my sense is, is that, you know, that water was very, very high. Uh, but my hope is, is that if folks did go higher, if they were there, it's not comfortable. Uh, but now we're in a situation. I mean, if you're there, they want to come get you. And, and so hopefully we'll be able to see a lot of those people brought to safety.

Governor DeSantis ([22:31](#)):

And I can tell you in the barrier islands, I mean, there've been a number of people that, that have been helicoptered to safety. And, uh, and it's great because, um, you know, these folks sprung into action and they're doing it. We have had the two unconfirmed fatalities in the sense that we don't know that they're linked to the storm. I mean, our assumption is it, it likely is. And so basically F D L E will will make that assessment, uh, and then that, that will be reported. Uh, but, but that's, what would we have That number that was put out by Lee is basically an estimate of, Hey, these people were calling, the water was rising on their home. They may not have ended up, uh, and ended up getting through. Uh, so, so we're, we're obviously hoping that, that they can be rescued at this point.

Governor DeSantis ([23:15](#)):

And I know the folks there locally, uh, those were the areas that they wanted to spring into action to. And they really used the information that was coming, not just through those emergency calls, but also through signing up on the website to see, and I think it's safe, there's a pattern that's developed about where those calls are coming from and where those people are signing up from. And, and you can see the areas. I mean, no one wants to see, I mean, you see three foot of water in a, in a, in a road. I mean, that's obviously bad that's gonna do damage, but you see the places where the water was 4, 5, 6 feet in a residential area, and that is really the life threatening situation.

Question ([23:52](#)):

Can we get, uh, details of what's, what you're hearing from central Florida as far as flooding and other damages? Yeah.

Kevin Guthrie ([24:00](#)):

This, this morning at 5:45 AM I received a phone call from, uh, Orange County Emergency Management Director, Chief Laura Lee Avery. She is the, she's actually technically assigned to the fire department as a division chief over the Department of Emergency Management there. Um, she called me to let me know that they were, uh, in the actively responding to nine widespread areas along the Colonial Drive area, um, I four State Road 46 area of Central Florida, and that they were requesting assistance for stuff that we may have staged in Orlando. So very quickly this morning, our overnight crew sprung into action and started moving, uh, National Guard, high water vehicles, as well as other assets that were staged there, uh, for urban search and rescue elements with water elements. And they started moving into action this morning. Um, I do not have a total number of potential saves that they have done, but, uh, it, uh, I, what I, what is linked to is the massive amounts of rainfall that are happening there.

Kevin Guthrie ([25:00](#)):

We were receiving reports that some creeks, tributaries, the area around the St. John's headwaters around the St. John's area. And unconfirmed may have been rising at about a rate, uh, to about four feet in a matter of hours. So, um, lots of rain in the area, lots of instant action, water rise. There's a lot of lakes in central Florida, especially in that Orlando Kissimmee area. Um, and it appears that these lakes were filling up and overflowing into the neighborhoods around them. So, uh, that's what's, that's what is going there on in the central Florida region. I will say, as a part of central Florida and also as a part of southwest Florida, uh, do not come in and tour the area for damage. We have 20,000, 30,000 responders coming into area that need access to those roads, stay at home, do not get on the roads, let the first responders have the roadways, let the power crews have the roadways. We will get things open up exponentially quicker if we don't have to maneuver around individuals that are just coming into area to look around. So please stay outta the area, both in central Florida as well as southwest Florida. Let the crews get in there, do what they need to do. We're coming in full force. We've got a lot of people coming in there, We need you out of our way so we can get our job done. Thank you.

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

But also just, uh, uh, note, I mean, as this exits the state, it's gonna go into the Atlantic Ocean and it's gonna impact other states in our country. And so you look at Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, you know, they may be having impacts and this is just a lot of water, and you're gonna have flooding in those other states as well. Uh, of course, they're, they're not gonna have to deal with the catastrophic impact that, that Florida suffered on the southwest coast. Uh, but this thing is not done creating

damage. I mean, this thing's gonna continue to move. Uh, so, uh, I know they've declared state of emergencies in many of those states, uh, and, and they're gonna have to deal with wi with this storm, which is, which is wreaking havoc across our state, but it's gonna end up wreaking havoc in communities across the southeast and part of the United States. Yes. Governor, you

Question ([27:00](#)):

Made a comment about a pattern, uh, for the 9 1 1 calls and the, uh, the surveys. Is there an area that you're looking at that you can share?

Governor DeSantis ([27:08](#)):

So I would say, I think Kevin can come in and do, I mean, I would say obviously the places that got the, the catastrophic storm surge, So you'd be looking at the barrier islands, uh, in Lee Charlotte counties, uh, some of the coast, um, uh, even in Collier County. Uh, and then you're looking at, as you go inland and kind of that Fort Myers, uh, Charlotte County juncture, where you've got the Caloosahatchee, you've got these inlets, you've got these, these, the harbor, those areas, because the, the storm surge can come on a barrier island, It's there, and then it'll sub that is just co the water's just building up. And so you see that they, they were absolutely consistent with Kevin posted, We have it in there in our room, the inundation map from 24 hours ago of what we projected. And what you'll see is some of those areas, you know, you go inland even many blocks and you have massive inundation that are off those areas.

Governor DeSantis ([28:03](#)):

And so I think it was a pretty consistent pattern. And I think if you look at what's going on, it's gonna be those communities in Lee and Charlotte counties, uh, that, that are close to those, uh, to those bodies of water, uh, that, that probably suffered the, the most severe flooding. And, you know, there's people that had, um, I mean, the Coast Guard has had people that were in their attic and got saved off their rooftops, uh, in those areas because of, uh, of the flooding. So, so that I think is pretty clear that, that, that was really that. But you also have, I mean, normally we would say, you know, having three or four foot of flooding in some residential area was like a big deal. You see that in like, Northport, I think I would say in some, the parts of Sarasota. But that's just, that's just a different degree than what we've seen in, in Lee in, in Charlotte counties. Okay. We will be back here, uh, likely later today.