

Governor DeSantis (00:20):

Good afternoon. We were able to fly down here. Uh, airport is, is operational. There was some damage to some of the, the structures, but a no problem on the runway. Uh, we were happy to see the interstates are, are flowing on I 75 north and south. We were able to talk with the folks here in Charlotte County at the Emergency Operations Center. Uh, EM director, sheriff, uh, some of the local officials we're also able to go out and tour some of the areas, uh, in, in Charlotte County and, and inspect some of the damage from the wee hours of the morning. Uh, there have been people that, uh, have descended on Southwest Florida, uh, to be able to offer assistance. And so we've seen, uh, a number of, of efforts, uh, on the barrier islands to bring people to safety, uh, particularly in, uh, in, in Lee County, but also in in Charlotte and in in, in Naples in Collier County.

Governor DeSantis (01:09):

Uh, and you have people, the, the, uh, electrical, the power, They're all here. We have Eric Silagy from Florida Power and Light, which will give a, he'll give an update on what they're doing, but from the minute they could get in here, uh, they've been in here, uh, working on being able to get people, uh, connected again. Uh, we're also, I've talked to two of the major, uh, CEOs for the telecom companies, uh, about, about their restoration services. And, and unfortunately, you know, some of their infrastructure has, has done okay, they do more air, Um, um, uh, our DM is also putting the mobile cell phone towers to be able to help, uh, restore communications. And we've got an inordinate amount of, of food and water, uh, that, that is either here, uh, or is very close on the way. Um, life safety, of course, is, is critical.

Governor DeSantis (01:57):

Anyone stranded on one of those barrier islands, uh, wanna make sure that, that, that they're safe. And I know here in Charlotte, any of the neighborhoods that experienced, uh, a lot of wind or, or, or water damage, uh, these folks are there. Uh, they're, they're, they're working to make sure people are safe. And that is true in Lee and Collier County as well. So that's really, really important. Uh, we also got us just stabilize the area with these key services. And so we've got a huge amount of resources, uh, that have been brought to bear to be able to do that. And we're gonna continue doing it. This is gonna be a 24 7 operation because we realize how important it is. We also understand there's a lot of people that have asked what they can do to help the people of the state of Florida, particularly down in this region.

Governor DeSantis (02:38):

And the first lady, you'll talk in a minute, but we have a fund, Florida disaster fund.org, Florida disaster fund.org. You text disaster 2 2 2 2, uh, you can make a contribution. And at the end of the day, we've got supplies that have been pre-stage that are being used. And, and, and that's important. We don't necessarily need people to send us stuff. Uh, what we need is to be able to help those relief organizations help the folks. I mean, there's obviously, we're surveying the damage right now. Some people that evacuated, they're gonna go back and look at their homes and see, is there flood damage? Is there wind damage? Is it gonna be habitable? And so all those things, as those happen, we're gonna get a clearer picture of some of the unique needs that individuals in this region may have. And so your financial contribution can, can, can make a world of difference.

Governor DeSantis (03:25):

And so we're, we're happy that so many people have done, I think we're over \$2 million, um, already within less than 24 hours. And I know many more people want to do. But, um, I'm really impressed with

the resiliency that we're seeing here in Charlotte County. This is not anything anyone wanted to deal with. I mean, if you go back 3, 72 hours before landfall, most of Southwest Florida was not even in the cone. Uh, and then you have a situation where you're dealing, you're staring down the barrel of a hurricane making landfall 155 miles an hour. Uh, so the, the response here, uh, and just the way people have, have reacted, um, has been very, very impressive. And we understand this is just the beginning. There's a lot more that's gonna need to be done in the state of Florida, is gonna be good partners. Uh, with the folks here, uh, at the local level, uh, I'm gonna let, uh, the First Lady talk about relief efforts, and then we'll have Kevin Guthrie and then Eric Silagy from FPL. We'll give, uh, an update on the power situation.

First Lady (04:21):

I just have to echo that we are just so proud of the people of Southwest Florida. The resiliency and the courage and strength that you're exhibiting the people here at the Emergency Operations Center, and frankly, people across the state of Florida, we just could be, uh, not more proud of what you have done to support your fellow Floridians and also the people across the country. So the governor mentioned a second ago, the Disaster Recovery Fund, Disaster Recovery fund.org. You can donate there. It's a 5 0 1 C 3. Uh, why that's important again, is because we can take those resources and micro-target them and get them directly to the ground as quickly and efficiently as possible. As I said, tomorrow, uh, this morning, and I reiterate this, uh, we are gonna cut through any red tape and bureaucracy because we know people need those funds and they need help.

First Lady (05:07):

And so we're really committed to making sure that we do that. Uh, the other thing is you can text a disaster 2 0 2 2 2, uh, those funds will obviously go to the same spot. Uh, and we'll be able to deploy those resources very quickly. But again, on behalf of, uh, the state of Florida, the governor, myself, all the people, the first responders, the EOC, uh, thank you to the people across the state and the country for stepping up big. We are at 1.6 million, uh, less than 24 hours after we launched the fund. That was at 8:00 AM this morning. We are well over 2 million, uh, as of a little while ago. And I think we're gonna have even more funds at the end of the day. And again, that goes directly to the great people here in southwest Florida and all the way across the state. So God bless you.

Governor DeSantis (05:50):

Yeah, thanks. And, and you know, some of the, the responders who are ready, the storm has gotta, gotta go before you can, can really get in there cuz it's very hazardous. And, and some of these guys are coming across alligator alley, like midnight, like literally knocking on the door of Tropical Storm to be able to get in and, and help people. And so you look at these USAR teams, uh, that we've had over from, from Miami, Dave, uh, we want to thank them, Thank the National Guard, thank the Coast Guard. Uh, they've been able to do, uh, a lot of successful missions, uh, already. And, and it's really been great to see everybody working together. Uh, part of the reason that happens is because of the coordination at the state level. And that's under the direction of Kevin Guthrie, who's our emergency Management director, and he's gonna provide an update.

Kevin Guthrie (06:33):

All right. Thank you Governor. Uh, so I got here first thing with, uh, with the governor. Obviously talked to Sheriff Prommell, talked to the fire chief, talked to emergency management director Patrick Fuller. Um, obviously everyone very thankful of the, uh, resources that have been provided. Um, we, there

were a couple of handful of missions that have just come up in the last couple of minutes. I'm proud to report that we are already mobilizing, uh, personnel for those missions and, and also, uh, providing the, uh, resources. One of those is a generator, so that is, uh, already been sourced and already being mobilized. So we hope to have that here by midnight tonight on the generator. At a minimum, the mechanic for the generator that's in question, uh, that is having some issues is already only 30 minutes out. So I'm very, very, uh, proud of the men and women in our logistics section, specifically at the Florida Division Emergency Management. They have been very, very flexible and they have been very, very responsive, um, at far exceeding our expectations in a normal disaster like this. So to having a mechanic almost 30 minutes away when you make a request about an hour goes just fantastic. So again, that comes from great leadership and it starts with the governor. I really appreciate that. Thank you, sir.

Governor DeSantis ([07:42](#)):

Great. Part of the preparations for, for this storm was to have, uh, as many resources pre-stage that could go in and help with critical infrastructure like power. And we were able to go meet with, uh, some of the alignment in up in Lake City and North Florida. Thank them. These are people coming from all over the country. I mean, they're coming from Louisiana, Alabama, Texas. And we had over 42,000 at landfall. I'm sure there's more in, in the state right now. When we were going back to Tallahassee from Lake City, you know, you saw truck after truck after truck on I 10 eastbound coming in to be able to help respond to this. And part of the reason we're able to do that is because, you know, we've got a lot of utilities that this isn't their first rodeo. Uh, they take this very seriously. Uh, they learn from past storms, uh, and they put that knowledge to good use. And so Florida Power and Light has the biggest footprint of personnel that have been brought into the state to help, uh, get everybody back. And, uh, Eric Silagy is here, who's the president of FPL. And is he, he's gonna provide an update on their efforts.

Eric Silagy ([08:48](#)):

Thank you Governor. Um, so we have deployed about 20,000 crews across the state of Florida. Just to remind you of, the storm is still battering northeast, uh, part of the state. Daytona is being hit right now. Uh, we have about 1.2 million customers who are out of power. Um, but we have been able to restore over 700,000 customers before the storm has even left the state. And we're gonna continue to work 24 7 to do so. Uh, I'm actually pleased with the parts of the system that I've seen a little bit further to the west of here, uh, is in good shape. Uh, at FPL we did not lose one single transmission tower, so that is critical. The backbone is up and operational. Uh, we are now in the process of getting the distribution system back up and the substations, uh, that had flying debris go into them cleared out so we can get them back online.

Eric Silagy ([09:35](#)):

There are sections of our territory close to the beach along the, uh, Barrier Islands that will require rebuilding. There are some destructive areas that simply cannot be repaired and they'll have to be rebuilt. Unfortunately, there are also homes of businesses that will simply not be able to safely take the power once it's ready. But the 20,000 plus men and women who are already here, um, are staging and getting out in the field. Currently, they will work 24 7, uh, until we get the lights back on, uh, again, as the, as the governor said, not our first rodeo, but every storm is also different and always poses different challenges. Uh, but appreciate all the support from the state governor, thank you. From, uh, local law enforcement as well, the National Guard. This is a team sport and a team effort. And we're gonna all work together until we get Florida back up on our feet and, uh, and where we all wanted to be. Thank you.

Governor DeSantis ([10:32](#)):

And when they're, when, when FPL and the other companies have have crews in, uh, the extent to which that infrastructure has remained is, is is just critical because, you know, it's a lot easier for them to reconnect an existing system than than to have to rebuild it. So to see some of that that was able to, to withstand is, is, is, is encouraging. It's also just a testament. I mean, you know, some of these folks put money into the resilience of the infrastructure and, and this is like the ultimate test. I mean, you got a hurricane that's a massive hurricane coming in 155 miles an hour producing this type of storm surge, dumping rain, causing flooding. Uh, if you can make it through that, then, then you probably did it, did it pretty good. And so, uh, this is a 24 7 effort, uh, to, to stabilize and, and to restore. And so we're, um, gonna do whatever we can, uh, to, to assist with that effort. And so I'm happy to take a few questions.

reporter ([11:26](#)):

Governor, in our area, Santa Island, for my speech, need images are devastating and we know that from our local agencies that there have been confirmed deaths. We don't know exactly how many. What have you heard from the local agencies about the scope of the tragedy in that sense?

Governor DeSantis ([11:43](#)):

Well, Sanibel, uh, is destruction, uh, I mean this is for those of you haven't been in some beautiful, it's beautiful place, um, really neat community. Um, and it got hit with really biblical storm surge and it washed away roads. It washed away structures that were not, uh, new and, and could withstand that. Uh, there have been a number of people that have been, uh, identified and, and brought off the island safely. And those efforts are ongoing. Uh, not only with the Coast Guard has been involved with that, uh, our USR teams and as well as local law enforcement. I think most people have seen the images of the bridge, the causeway going out to sanibel, uh, where, uh, you, you have destruction of that. And that's something that we obviously, uh, will, will rebuild, but that's not something that will happen overnight. And so most of what's being done to assist is, is air operations.

Governor DeSantis ([12:36](#)):

Since you can't get there on the ground, uh, I think Kevin will probably have, uh, more, um, more, more boats, uh, head over there as well. Uh, but the important thing is I was able to speak to the mayor, uh, this morning and, and she and her key staff did evacuate and so they've been operating off more of the mainland in, in Lee County and, and many people did leave, uh, Sanibel and they did heed the call, which is good. Obviously I think, you know, it's a very seasonal community. We're not quite in the high season yet, but I think she made the point, Hey, it's Florida, more people want to be here year round now. So you do have a contingent of people that that stay there over the summer. So, so that's gonna require a lot of effort to get that back because they took a huge, huge wall up.

Governor DeSantis ([13:19](#)):

And it's interesting, I mean, you know, you can look in a span of like 40, 50 miles, you know, some places that got the storm surge versus some other barrier islands, you know, much less. And that's just kind of the way, way some of this goes. But those were really difficult damages to see, especially just given, uh, that that's a place that, that I've been able fortunate enough to go out and, and, and have some friends and do events there in the past and really a great part of the southwest Florida community. But, but we're committed to restoring the infrastructure is needed. That is not gonna be an overnight task. That is gonna be something that is gonna require a lot of, a lot of love and care. It's gonna require a lot of resources, but, but we're gonna do it because we understand how important it is.

reporter (14:01):

Governor, sorry, piggybacking off of that, governor, what are some of the federal estate funds available to make that happen to kind speed this up?

Governor DeSantis (14:08):

Well, in terms of infrastructure, I think, I mean, Kevin, can we also have gracious check from FEMA who's here? Uh, we've gotten approved for, uh, what, 30 days They approved

Kevin Guthrie (14:18):

Us 30 days on category B and A at, uh, 100%.

Governor DeSantis (14:23):

Okay. And, and that's more of like the immediate, so

Kevin Guthrie (14:26):

That's on the public assistance side, but uh, this particular county is under a, uh, an individual assistance, major disaster declaration. So we will set up a disaster recovery centers and uh, we'll have people be able to register

Governor DeSantis (14:37):

For that. So that's on an individual basis. And so somebody loses their house and they may need temporary assistance, a hotel accommodation, something like that, that they're gonna be able to do. Jimmy Petronis, who's here, our CFO as part of those recovery centers, they're gonna have have insurance villages. You know, if you look at what Lee County had to deal with, these are massive, massive flood events. And so most of these people who have mortgages and they're in a flood zone probably had to have flood insurance. So they're gonna have people that could help with those flood claims. You also have wind damage with the traditional homeowner's insurance policy. So that's gonna be important in terms of the overall infrastructure. Uh, obviously we we'll seek federal support for that. But we're also, you know, Florida, we're, we're well positioned financially right now to, to to, to get through this.

Governor DeSantis (15:23):

I mean we have the largest budget surplus we've ever had and we've worked very hard of course, to keep the economy open and make this a state people wanted to be in. And so we were seeing historic reserves even as we've continued to break records with the revenue coming in with no income tax and low taxes. They revised it in August saying, okay, Florida's getting more revenue and then in September we're like 300 million over what they estimated. So we have, um, put an emphasis on infrastructure partially cuz the state is growing, but we understand in a situation like this, you know, we had a bridge knocked out with Hurricane Sally cuz you had a barge that was left loose and it rammed in the bridge. So we were able to, to do fix that, but it's not something that happens overnight. So to me, I think the more issue is are we, we will have resources between federal and state and local.

Governor DeSantis (16:09):

I'm pretty confident of that, but it's okay, this is an island that you're not gonna be able to access by car until that is done. And so what's gonna be the plan to do? And that's just gonna be something we're

gonna consult with the local leaders at the city level and at the, at the county level, uh, to try to figure out, uh, what the best is. But you know, when you deal with these things, you stabilize, you provide the help with people, but you want to get back to some semblance of normalcy as quickly as possible. And, and it's gonna be harder in some areas than others. But I want to, you know, let's work on Sanibel and let's, let's bring it back to where it was as soon as we can.

reporter ([16:44](#)):

Uh, governor, uh, for properties that were totally wiped out, um, how should it be determined if flood assurance or wind coverage should be appropriate and how was that determined during Mexico Beach? Well,

Governor DeSantis ([16:56](#)):

So that's kind of an age old thing on these storms. I mean, you'll have disputes because obviously if you have both policies and you file a flood claim, the flood is gonna want you to have filed the wind, claim the wind is gonna want you to file the flood claim. You know, what I would say is, uh, when you have, uh, surge that's, that's 10, 14 feet when you have six feet of water in somebody's home, uh, to me that's a flood claim. And it doesn't mean that they may not have also suffered wind damage cuz as we know was a really significant thing. Uh, but you don't, wind alone is not gonna cause the, the the six feet of of water. I mean that's a flood event and it's not just in the barrier islands, which of course had a lot, you know, you go in some of the places in Lee County, you know, that are close to the river and some of these inlets you had massive, massive rising waters.

Governor DeSantis ([17:45](#)):

And so that's just something you do. I mean that's what was happening with some of the folks who, who did not do the evacuation. They were hunkering down and their homes I think were totally fine to handle even a really strong wind event. The problem is if the water is rising, you're in your living room, it's a foot, two feet, three feet, you know that they're the ones that we're calling saying, Hey, this is a big problem. And of course it is. So I think at the end of the day in Lee County, I think most of the claims are gonna be flood claims. Uh, I think in Charlotte maybe the mix will be a little bit different because I did see, you know, some, some, some wind damage and I think that um, uh, and I think that those claims will be appropriate. But clearly, you know, when you're in those, those flood areas and you have the water rising like that into your living room, that is a flood.

reporter ([18:29](#)):

And governors speaking to people today about the insurance, you know, they worry, you know, sometimes, you know, the insurance companies will shuffle their feet on a normal stance on a normal situation. And now we have this where everyone's gonna be flooding the insurance companies. What's your message to those people who might be worried that the insurance companies might not be acting fast enough?

Governor DeSantis ([18:46](#)):

Well, Jimmy, where's Jimmy at? Yeah, so, so, and I'll let him say, but you know, part of the disaster recovery are these insurance villages. He's done a great job of leading. He's getting the carriers altogether, you know, they're gonna have a footprint and all these affected counties, uh, people are gonna be able to go and they're gonna file claims. Uh, there's already been things done with our insurance regulation agency, you know, go back 10 days. None of those cancellations are valid and you

can't cancel going forward for, for another couple of months. So, so there's already actions being taken, but I'll let Jimmy come up and do that and look at the end of the day, uh, we've had a lot of, uh, issues with property insurance, but a lot of that is because of lawsuits and a lot of things that don't focus on the core business. This is the core business of, of paying these claims and we understand the time is of the essence. Thanks Kevin. Yep.

Jimmy Patronis ([19:36](#)):

So, uh, we've got a preliminary site set up. We'll make sure it's coordinated with, with Kevin Guthrie's team in the county, but we'll probably pick a large spot initially. Insurance carriers will come in, we'll probably have somewhere between 20 and 25 carriers go in. They'll probably set up an RVs and they will start writing checks. Initially that will be living expense money. This will be the dollars just to help people go find a place to live sustenance dollars. Um, then you'll be signed up where adjusters will come and inspect the damage. Now here's the most important thing I need you to take away from this conversation is the predators that are gonna come up that are gonna initially try to sign up construction management contracts, public adjusters, they're gonna come in like a bunch of locusts and they're gonna try to hit the neighborhoods and people are vulnerable right now, they're gonna look for a solution and their solution is always, um, gonna be important, but that solution's not gonna be knocking on the door every time.

Jimmy Patronis ([20:25](#)):

If it sounds too good to be true, it is. So I please, that first phone call that you're gonna make needs to be to either your agent, your carrier, or to my office at 1 8 7 7, my FL cfo. If one of the first three phone calls you make in your house in order to get insurance claim solved is to one of those threes, there's almost zero chance you can be taken advantage of. But I, Panama City was my hometown. I lived through Hurricane Michael. We did, we did 12 insurance villages there over a year sponsor. So we're gonna be here bringing the carriers back and they will write checks on site. Okay? But when you start complicating the claim because you've allowed predators to get involved with your claim, you're gonna drag it out. So the best solution is between you, your carrier, and us. The more people you bring into it, the harder it's gonna be to get a settlement that's gonna be fair for everybody. And look, at the end of the day, if your carrier doesn't want to work with you, that's when you would call my office and we'll take 'em to task.

Governor DeSantis ([21:24](#)):

And I think the, uh, and, and what, what I've asked Jimmy to do is also, you know, have people with assistance for the, for the National Flood Insurance Program claims. Uh, they obviously have their homeowner's policy. Many people have both. But I think the issue is, is that some people live in areas where they're told you don't need flood and so they don't do it. Well now they may be in a situation where, where that is. So, but bottom line is those who have the flood insurance want them to be able to file those claims, take pictures of the damage of your home, and have those so that you can present those. And, and so you can get paid quicker if you took pictures of the water line. If you have four feet of water, you took pictures, bring that with you if you, if the water's gone down, but you see where the line was, take pictures and document that, uh, so that you can go in, present it and, and there's not gonna be any questions, but, but Jimmy made a good point.

Governor DeSantis ([22:11](#)):

You start signing up, some of these people will swoop in and they want you to sign this stuff and it just hasn't worked out well in the past. In Florida, unfortunately, when you have disasters, there's some people that want to prey on people when they're in vulnerable situations and we do not want that. The other thing I would also say, just from looking at, at some of the images that we've seen on tv, uh, there's gonna be a lot of automobile insurance claims potentially. Um, I, I could tell you my wife, we lost a car in Irma and, um, thank god we had USAA cuz they literally cut us a check very quickly. So hopefully all the auto insurance are gonna be able to do that. But we literally had, had, were seeing cars washed away. Uh, cars totally submerged. And so we understand that people are gonna need, uh, to be able to get that claim.

Governor DeSantis ([22:53](#)):

But the, when we did it with Irma, we got the check within like a week they came out, they did it, they gave us the check. And you know, honestly, um, you know, it's not like losing the car only is like the worst thing in the world. I mean, we were, we were fine, but I mean, to be able to have that, you know, what you have to do, You need to buy a new car, you need to do. So, um, I, I appreciate what Jimmy's doing. I think it's important to get the carriers in to let people go, you know, to make these claims and let's get these things processed as quickly as possible. All right, thanks everybody. Appreciate it.