

Gov. DeSantis (07:20):

Uh, and it is battering, uh, areas in southwest Florida, Lee, Charlotte, uh, and counties. Even beyond that, uh, we have seen, uh, life threatening storm surge, uh, as was predicted. Uh, we've also seen major flooding in places like Collier County, sandal, Fort Myers Beach. Uh, you're also seeing inland flooding because of the inundation that you're seeing. So some of the counties in the interior of the state, uh, are seeing, uh, major water events as well. Uh, we do know that Lee, Hendry and Glades 911 call centers are being rerouted, those coms are down. Uh, so calls are being answered and teams, uh, are in the people that are calling are being noted, and then those local first responders, uh, will deploy, um, as soon as it's safe, uh, to do so. Now, obviously local responders can make, make decisions, but by and large, uh, until the storm passes, you know, they are not gonna go into a situation, uh, for rescue, uh, put their own folks at risk.

Gov. DeSantis (08:21):

And so we know that there are folks who are in the really high risk zone, a evacuation zones, uh, who did not evacuate. Uh, some have called in and those people are being, uh, logged and there will be a response. Uh, but it's likely gonna take, uh, a little time for this storm to move forward so that it's safe for the first responders, uh, to be able to do. Uh, we are getting reports, uh, but it's gonna take a little bit more time to know exactly in terms of structural damage, but we are getting some reports of structural damage in both Lee and and Charlotte counties. But I would say overwhelmingly, uh, it's been that surge that has been the, the, the biggest issue, uh, and the flooding, as a result of that in some areas, uh, we think it's hit 12 feet now.

Gov. DeSantis (09:09):

It is our meteorologist view that the storm surge has likely peaked and, and, and will likely, uh, you know, be, be less in the, in the coming hours than it has been up to this point. Uh, but we know that this has been a, a big storm and, and it's done a, a lot of damage, uh, as it is, is gonna continue to move through the state of Florida. Uh, you're gonna see hurricane force winds in places in central Florida, perhaps, uh, it's clearly a very strong tropical storm all the way until it exits the Florida Peninsula in the Atlantic, uh, Atlantic Ocean. There are, as much as we're focused on Southwest Florida, very important obviously, when you have a storm of this nature. Uh, I think at landfall it's gonna be behind only the Labor Day Hurricane, Hurricane Andrew, Hurricane Michael. In terms of intensity, uh, I think we're gonna end up seeing that it may end up being a category five, but at a minimum it's gonna be a very strong category four that's gonna rank as one of the top five hurricanes to ever hit the Florida Peninsula.

Gov. DeSantis (10:13):

So, so that damage is, is ongoing. It's very, very important. Uh, but the fact is there's gonna be damage throughout the whole state, and people in other parts of the state, uh, be prepared for some impacts. And you are seeing counties in different parts of the state, uh, issue evacuation orders, uh, Clay County in northeast Florida, which we do anticipate some major, major flooding events in northeast Florida. I think folks that are familiar with the St. John's River know, uh, that when you have weather like this, you will see this. And so Clay County is issued mandatory evacuations of low lying areas along the St. John's River. Flagler County has issued mandatory evacuations of its barrier islands, low lying areas and mobile homes. Nassau has issued evacuation orders for low lying areas. St. John's County is evacuating coastal low lying areas, including the city of St. Augustine, as well as the city of St. Augustine Beach.

Gov. DeSantis (11:10):

Uh, Putnam County has recommended evacuation for low lying areas and areas that have a history of flooding. And Sumter County is advising evacuations of mobile homes. And so those are places that are hundreds and hundreds of miles away from the initial impact in southwest Florida. And yet they are having, uh, to evacuate folks that are living in vulnerable areas. Uh, we have over 1.1 million reported power outages. Now, there are crews that are still working outside of southwest Florida, but just understand, uh, that number is gonna grow. You're gonna see more power outages as this storm moves through the center part of our state, and before it exits into the Atlantic, uh, Atlantic coast. There are a hundred portable cell phone towers ready to be deployed, uh, into southwest Florida. Uh, once it is safe to enter and should that be needed, uh, we wanna make sure people are staying out of the way of emergency crews and out of flood waters and away from all down power lines.

Gov. DeSantis ([12:14](#)):

As soon as emergency crews can get in, they're gonna get in. As soon as it's safe to go and clear the roadways, Florida Department of Transportation is gonna go in and clear those roadways. These are all on standby. Uh, they are ready to go. Uh, they understand the importance of, of a really, really quick response. Uh, as I mentioned earlier today, we have now officially sent the letter, uh, with the request to the Biden administration for a major disaster declaration for all 67 counties, uh, requesting the federal government do 100% reimbursement upfront for 60 days to ensure that we can quickly move forward into this response and recovery phase. And I know sometimes they wait until different damage assessments are made, but in this situation, you got a massive category four storm that, um, you know, you compare Charlie to this, this is way, way, way bigger than Charlie.

Gov. DeSantis ([13:07](#)):

It was as strong as Charlie coming in, but Charlie was, was much smaller. So, so this is a big one, and I think we all know there's gonna be major, major impacts. Uh, we are not only are there a 42,000 linemen, they are positioned all across the state of Florida as soon as it's safe to go, those power those personnel are gonna go into to resume power. And that's something that's very, very important in terms of rescue efforts. Obviously there's robust efforts in each of these counties. I mean, some of these are major counties in our state, like Lee County, Collier County, uh, you know, they, they've got great response teams. The state of Florida, you know, we are providing, uh, a lot of support that stage and ready to go. We have almost 250 aircraft, more than 1600 high water vehicles, and more than 300 boats of all drafts and sizes, uh, including 250 already stationed in the major impacted areas, and nearly 50 that are staged and immediately ready to come in.

Gov. DeSantis ([14:07](#)):

Uh, and so with water this high, you know, these operations may need to be waterborne operations. Now, there are some where you're gonna need to use the water to get to some of the barrier islands anyways, but you look at like Collier County, I mean, downtown Naples is flooded, uh, that's probably gonna subside, uh, as as the time goes on. Uh, but they're prepared for a lot of different eventualities. So we're thankful for the states that have, uh, sent us, uh, resources, and we're very, very appreciative of them stepping up and helping Florida. As this storm passes your community understand it's still a very hazardous situation. You're gonna have down power lines. Uh, you're gonna have a possibility of harm's way because of standing water, uh, misuse of generators. Uh, I asked the Department of Emergency Management, Kevin, to, to produce for me the rundown of the fatalities through direct impacts of storms versus the aftermath.

Gov. DeSantis ([15:06](#)):

And in Hurricane Irma, there were seven fatalities directly because of the storm, and there were 77 that were a result of post storm. And a lot of that is standing water, down power lines, misuse of generators. So, uh, please just take precaution. Obviously a ferocious storm coming in, very hazardous, very ominous. We know the life threatening nature of that. Uh, but once the storm goes, once there's apparent calm, there are still plenty of hazards out there. So just please make sure that you're taking the proper precautions. Um, I'm happy that, uh, Volunteer Florida has now activated the Florida Disaster Fund. Sometimes people say, Hey, we want to help. What can we do? Uh, and there's really two, two things you can do. One, send some donations, uh, money. The other can be donate your time. Uh, what's not helpful is sending items and sending things to us.

Gov. DeSantis ([16:04](#)):

We, we have a lot of stuff prepositioned. If there's a need for other stuff, Kevin and his team will work. FEMA, all these other groups can work to provide that. Uh, but if you provide money to some volunteer organizations and charity groups, they can make into big impact in people's lives. And if you're willing to volunteer your time, uh, there's gonna be, uh, ways you can be put to work. Cause there's gonna be a lot of people that are gonna need help, uh, on the back end of this thing. So if you wanna contribute, you can go to [Floridadisasterfund.org](http://Floridadisasterfund.org) or text disaster to 22202. Uh, for those who want to come and volunteer, we have an official volunteer portal at Volunteer Florida, [www.volunteerflorida.org](http://www.volunteerflorida.org) to find volunteer opportunities. Um, this storm is, is doing a number, uh, on the state of Florida. Uh, it is gonna continue to move through this state, uh, today, uh, and through much of tomorrow. And there's gonna continue to be a number of adverse effects. Uh, I can tell you that, um, as soon as it moves beyond Southwest Florida, uh, you're gonna see a, a, a massive surge, uh, of personnel and supplies, uh, to be able to help those who are in need, get people back on their feet, uh, and help to rebuild those communities. Kevin?

Dir. Guthrie ([17:19](#)):

Sir. Thank you, Governor. I think everybody should know that the governor's extremely committed to being involved in this response. And, uh, he is, he was here with me to late last night, and he was here with me early this morning, and he has not been anywhere but very near me the entire time. So, Governor, thank you so much for your leadership in that area. I mean, it means a lot to me. It means a lot to the leadership. As the governor said, Hurricane Union has, uh, has made landfall this afternoon as a category four, winds of 155 miles an hour. I'm not gonna read all those statistics that, uh, the governor's mentioned, but I'll, I'll bring a couple of new ones here. 1100 resource requests have been to, uh, uh, we've received 1100 resource requests. We have fulfilled 900 of those. Again, the difference of the 200 is stuff that we just cannot get out, uh, on the road.

Dir. Guthrie ([18:12](#)):

Right now, we're working as quickly as possible to address those needs. Uh, we have well over 200, uh, shelters open. We have, um, 42,000 restoration personnel. We literally have, uh, with first responders across the state and additional ones coming in, there's well over 10,000 responders statewide ready to do stuff. As the storm makes its way across Florida. I remind Floridians due to state indoors, if you're in the path of the storm, if you're sheltering in place in the path of a storm and you still have power and wifi, please visit [Floridadisaster.org/info](http://Floridadisaster.org/info) to fill out our shelter in place. Survey. We've had a really, uh, we've had a lot of people, uh, answer that and give us that information. That helps us provide critical information to first responders about the demographics of your household so that they can aid your family as soon as possible.

Dir. Guthrie ([19:12](#)):

Please keep in mind that first responders may not be able to immediately enter impacted areas to assist you due to the safety hazards. Uh, we'll say we are planning a three prong response to handle that specific issue. We have personnel stage come in via ground, via vehicles. We have personnel stage to come in via air with aerial deployed search and rescue, uh, assets. And then we also have the Coast Guard and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission ready to come in by sea for those, uh, barrier Islands and beachfront properties. So we will have a response mechanism that involves all three of those arms. Shelter in place. Survey, again, I just reiterated as [Floridadisaster.org/info](http://Floridadisaster.org/info). If you need immediate assistance, please dial 911. That site is not a replacement for 911. If it is come outside, you may be in the eye of the storm. As the eye of the storm continues to move inland is getting ready to enter areas such as Henry County, Glades County, do not go outside.

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

If all of a sudden the wind stops in this situation, that means you're in the eye of the hurricane. Seek shelter, immediately get into an interior room and protect yourself. Do not walk or drive through flooded areas. Flood waters can still, I'm sorry, flooded waters can stall your car and sweep you in your car away in the blink of an eye. We receive reports of isolated tornadoes across East central Florida. If you're in a tornado warning, again, seek an interior room free of windows, get low and put something over the top of your head to protect yourself. If a tornado warning, uh, I'm sorry, self deployments, we do not want individuals self deploying out on their own, that is very, very dangerous. Leave that to the professionals that are trained in how to do that. Do not take your personal boat out in these situations. We do not want to have to respond to yet. Another problem, the governor mentioned, there are more deaths as a result of indirect situations, then the actual direct situation of storm surge wind at the beginning of a storm. So please, what we want you to do more than anything else is stay safe. Please be careful out there. Again, Governor, thank you.

Gov. DeSantis ([21:41](#)):

Do we have the Cajun Navy? They're on the way, right?

Dir. Guthrie ([21:43](#)):

Uh, there, there are reports that they are on the way.

Gov. DeSantis ([21:47](#)):

So, you know, so I think, I think the Cajun Navy, uh, is on the way and, uh, you know, okay, there we go. I mean, look, we, we really welcome. I mean, those are some really battle hardened folks. And so, uh, Florida welcomes their support and, and honestly, particularly Louisiana because they've dealt with so much and so the, the governor's been great. And, um, look, we've got, uh, a long way to go before this storm exit the state, and there's gonna be a lot of need, uh, to get into these communities, particularly in southwest Florida and, and offer, uh, the immediate assistance. But I do think the, the three pronged strategy we're going in by ground, air, and by sea, uh, means that all hands are on deck, and there's gonna be people that are gonna be in harm's way. And what I've said is, uh, the folks were told in these areas of the hazards, you know, they were given time to be able, uh, to make arrangements and to leave.

Gov. DeSantis ([22:38](#)):

Some chose not to do that. Uh, they would've probably been better off doing that. Nevertheless, uh, if people are in harm's way, uh, you know, we're gonna go and, and, and do whatever we can, uh, to help those folks. And so that is gonna, those operations are gonna commence, um, as soon as it's safe to do so. Uh, certainly I would say what no later than first thing in the morning. Yes, sir. Yeah, no, later, soon as it soon as it's light outside and people, people are able to do it. And then it begins with the clear in the roads, making sure that the, the electrical folks can get in there. I was able to, to thank a number of these linemen. We went over to Lake City where a number of 'em are stage, you know, these are great folks. They're coming from all across the country.

Gov. DeSantis ([23:18](#)):

I mean, I met people from Alabama, from Texas, from Louisiana, uh, they're all coming to Florida. When we were driving back to Tallahassee from, uh, from Lake City, I saw this beautiful site of all these electrical, uh, uh, vehicles coming where, where they had all the electrical equipment on, and these are folks that are gonna help, uh, put people's power back on. It was just the procession of them. So we talked about 42,000. I betcha after today there's probably gonna be significantly even more. So you really are seeing just a, just a great logistical effort, uh, to put, uh, all hands on deck in this response. Okay. Any questions? Yeah

Reporter ([23:54](#)):

Governor, you mentioned, um, getting calls from people who have not evacuated calls for help, about how many calls people will be talking about here. Devi, you wanna take that?

Dir. Guthrie ([24:03](#)):

Right now it's, I don't wanna give you a solid number because it'd be gas. I know earlier today we had the initial report was 21, and then we, uh, because of the 911 issues in that southwest Florida area, we had one small rural county that was answering calls for the larger county saying that they had hundreds of calls. Um, so I can't really quantify that right now, but just go through words that the emergency management directors at the local level told me.

Gov. DeSantis ([24:30](#)):

Yes.

Reporter ([24:31](#)):

Have you spoken to the president at all about, about getting that hundred percent, uh, coverage? I mean, has he, is he, I know there's a lot of folks out there who are pushing for Florida to get that hundred percent coverage, but I know,

Gov. DeSantis ([24:40](#)):

So, um, he, when we spoke yesterday, I mean, he said, you know, all hands on deck that he wants to be helpful. And he said, you know, ask whatever you need, ask us. You know, he, so he was inviting us to request support and so that we think that this is probably the best thing that we can get at this juncture, given what we're dealing with. And so hopefully we'll get a favorable response on that.

Reporter ([25:00](#)):

Yeah. Uh, Mr. Guthrie mentioned this earlier, but you know, this is obviously a big flooding event, and a lot of these places might not have flood insurance. Do you have a sense of, I mean, how exposed a lot of these people are who, who don't have coverage from flood insurance?

Gov. DeSantis [\(25:17\)](#):

Not yet, but I think the issue is, is significant in the sense that, you know, these are not people that, that necessarily live in a 'flood zone.' You know, they live and they're asked, the realtor says, You're not in a flood zone. Well, they're not gonna get the flood insurance. And I totally understand why people don't do that, but just because you're not in a 'flood zone' does not mean that you're not at risk of a catastrophic event like this. And so I think you're gonna see some, clearly how many that remains to be seen. Now, there are programs that FEMA has to try to provide relief for people, but it is not gonna be, uh, a commensurate to having had a policy. And so this is an issue, you know, that we're gonna have to deal with. But I do think it's, it, it will be something because we do, we deal with this in other storms across the country, including Florida, when you have this about, uh, the homeowner's policy will cover certain things.

Gov. DeSantis [\(26:04\)](#):

Uh, but, but the flood policy covers probably the most significant risk for most homeowners in Florida, uh, given, uh, given the risk of flooding that we have in so many different parts of our state. So we're sensitive to that. There's obviously gonna be, you know, some folks that are gonna be in, in need of support and relief. Um, and we're obviously gonna work as best we can. I will say that, uh, you know, people have been asking about some of the overall, uh, homeowner's insurance with like citizens, you know, citizens, I think right now they're between six and 7 billion of surplus. They're modeling based on paying out a lot of money and claims for this was that they, they would still have between 4 and 5 billion in surplus. And so they, they, they view themselves as being able, uh, to, to weather this, uh, individual carriers. Um, they have to go through a stress test, uh, to be able to have their, their policies approved. And so, so this year they had, they had tested under, uh, uh, a direct impact on Tampa Bay. Then what would happen. And so, you know, they have policies, they have reinsurance, we have our, our wrap program and of course the CAT fund. But for citizens, you know, they feel very strongly that they're gonna be able to, to, to handle this and still have pretty significant reserves. Okay. Thanks so much. I'll see you guys.