

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

Gov. DeSantis ([05:53](#)):

Uh, good morning. I'm here with, uh, director Kevin Guthrie, uh, Jimmy Patronis our CFO, Gracia Check, uh, uh, fema, uh, regional, um, administrator. As of 7:00 AM Hurricane in is located roughly 80 miles south southwest of Charlotte County, and it's moving north northeast at 10 miles per hour. It is now a category four hurricane with maximum sustained winds of up to 155 miles per hour. That is knocking on the door of a Category five storm. Uh, we expect landfall in southwest Florida later today as a major hurricane, uh, and will slowly move across the central Florida peninsula before exiting the Northeast Florida coast, probably sometime on Thursday. Uh, much of Southern Florida's already experiencing impacts from the storm as it moves closer to landfall. There have been several tornado warnings issued during the overnight hours, and we expect to see that continue today. Uh, a storm of this magnitude will produce catastrophic flooding and life threatening storm surge on the Gulf Coast of Florida.

Gov. DeSantis ([06:59](#)):

Uh, and the highest risk areas are ranging from Collier County, uh, up to Sarasota County. The current track, uh, has the storm making landfall in Charlotte County. If you are in any of those counties, uh, it's no longer possible to safely evacuate. Uh, it's time to hunker down and prepare for this storm. Uh, this is a powerful storm that should be treated like you would treat if a tornado was approaching, uh, your home. If you're out on the roads, get to a safe place as soon as possible. There's more than 200 shelters open in just the southwest Florida region alone. We're already seeing bridge closures. The Skyway Bridge, uh, is closed now, going from Manatee to Pinellas Counties. Uh, there's 40,000 power outages reported, uh, but outside of southwest Florida, crews are responding to those power outages. Don't go outside in the eye of the storm.

Gov. DeSantis ([07:57](#)):

Uh, it's still dangerous. There's actually a calmness. If the center of the hurricane is right over you, you think maybe, uh, the storm is passed. Um, uh, that's not the case. It's still very dangerous. There's possibilities of tornadoes. Uh, it would also be very difficult to potentially get back into your home. Uh, so even if it seems calm, uh, wait to make sure that the storm has actually passed. Once the storm is passed and it's safe to go outside, I urge you to be cautious. Avoid down power lines. Avoid standing water. Stay clear of damaged trees. If you are using a generator for power, make sure that that is being operated outside your home. Do not operate that indoors. Uh, and then don't drive in flooded streets, Uh, people will look and think they can drive through it, uh, and it doesn't work out well for them.

Gov. DeSantis ([08:50](#)):

Uh, as the storm has approached, we've already had enough winds to have local bridges closed. So the bridge on State Road 64, Vanity Avenue East has now been closed. The bridge at SR 684 in Cortez Road have now has now been closed, and the John Ringling Causeway, uh, has been closed. Uh, and that is basically a function of when the winds, uh, reach a certain threshold. Uh, obviously you're gonna see more bridge use suspended. Given the ferocity of this storm this morning, Director Guthrie asked for additional airlift, hoist and high water vehicles from the Department of Defense in coordination with FEMA. Uh, the Department of Transportation also has 1200 personnel on standby to perform cut and toss operations. Uh, we bringing in supplies by plane, boat, and by high water vehicle. All the airports in

southwest Florida have leave behind teams in place, uh, so that they will be able, uh, to get the runways in good shape once the storm has passed.

Gov. DeSantis ([09:51](#)):

We have 5,000 Florida Guardsmen activated, 2000 from neighboring states. Uh, we have, uh, air assets, uh, urban search and rescue teams stationed now in Miami that will be able to respond, uh, over to southwest Florida, Florida Fish and Wildlife, both vehicle assets, water assets and air assets. And the US Coast Guard is now stage four cutters. They also have shallow draft vessels ready to provide search and rescue assistance to the flooded areas. There are over 30,000 linemen staged and ready for power restoration efforts across the state of Florida. Uh, and that includes linemen across all of our major utilities, and that a lot of these linemen are coming from out of state. So this is a major, major effort. Of course, the storm has to pass. There needs to be the ability for them to get in, uh, and access what they need to access.

Gov. DeSantis ([10:43](#)):

Uh, but that's gonna be a priority and Kevin and his team are gonna be working hard on that. I want to thank the other 26 states that have sent support to us during this time, including Tennessee, Virginia, Montana, Louisiana, New York, Colorado, Indiana, New Jersey, and Georgia. Uh, we very much appreciate the assistance. And as this storm hits, uh, we've got massive amounts of assets that that, that are staged. Um, but we're already discussing about ways where, uh, we can get more value added support. Uh, so most of you said call, uh, and, and we may be doing just that, um, as the recovery efforts, uh, go forward. So this is, uh, a major, major storm. It's something that we knew was gonna be significant, um, that the strengthening of this, uh, over the last, uh, night, you know, has been, has been really, really significant.

Gov. DeSantis ([11:33](#)):

Uh, it's potentially that it could, that it could make landfall as a category five, but clearly this is a very powerful major hurricane, uh, that's gonna have major impacts both on impact and Southwest Florida. But then as it continues to work through the state, uh, it is gonna have major, major impacts, uh, in terms of wind, in terms of rain, in terms of flooding. Uh, so this is gonna be a nasty, nasty, day, two days. Uh, probably we think now it will be exiting the peninsula, uh, sometime on Thursday. Yesterday, based on how fast it was moving, thought maybe it would be till, uh, the wee hours of Friday morning. Uh, so, so this is gonna be a rough stretch. Uh, we are here to, to respond to the areas that are affected. Once the storm is passed, uh, local emergency responders are standing by, uh, ready, ready to go. You know, we, I think most people heeded the warnings of doing the, the evacuations in those very sensitive locations. Uh, but, but not everyone, uh, may have done that. And so we understand that a storm of this magnitude, you know, there's gonna be a need, um, you know, to begin those, uh, to begin those rescue efforts. Uh, Kevin Guthrie is here for an update from Florida DEM.

Dir. Guthrie ([12:44](#)):

Thank you Governor. Uh, Hurricane Ian, as the governor has mentioned, is projected to make landfall this afternoon on the Charlotte County Coast. This will cause life threatening storm surge flooding. Tropical storm force winds will be felt throughout the entire state and even isolated tornadoes. I urge Floridians who have made the decision to shelter in place to stay indoors and stay off the roads. You do not wanna be outdoors or on the roads as a storm of this size is making landfall in your area. It is extremely dangerous. If you have battery operated or hand crank weather radios. You should be

checking them now, changing the batteries, making sure that they work. Power outages will occur. If you get a weather alert for a tornado, and as the governor's already mentioned, if you're in the southwest Florida area, you should make the same preparations as if it is a tornado going over your house. Get to an interior room free of windows, have stuff to be able to protect your head and body from the debris, such as a blanket sleeping bag, mattress, or even potentially helmets. If there are flash flood warnings in your area, remember, it is never safe to walk or drive through flooded areas.

Dir. Guthrie ([14:06](#)):

We continue to coordinate with all of our electrical partners. As the governor's mentioned, there are over 30,000 lineman stage throughout the city from north central Florida, all the way down to the, uh, all the way down to Miami. As areas in South Florida and the keys begin to experience the power outages. Remember to contact your service provider, not 911 for power restoration. You can also keep your refrigerators shut, open them as little as possible to help preserve your perishable items. If you're using a generator, as we've been saying now for days, remember to keep it elevated on a hard surface away from doors and windows outside of garages. This will help you stay safe.

Dir. Guthrie ([14:50](#)):

If residents have any questions about resources for Hurricane Ian, I urge them to reach out to their local emergency management or public safety office. This storm is here, it is imminent. I can tell you it is a cat 4 hurricane, nearly a cat five. I know all of the emergency management directors in southwest Florida. Very well combined. They have over 200 years of experience. They're preparing and they're expecting a cat five. So please stay indoors. Stay away from one of those, Get to an interior location of your house. If anyone has any questions and they still have phone service, if you need to contact the state to ask, ask for assistance, we have a cell assistance information line. That number is 1 800 342 3557. That is 1 800 342 3557. As always, please follow us on our social media at Facebook and our Twitter page @FLSERT. Thank you, Governor for your leadership.

Gov. DeSantis ([16:00](#)):

Jimmy.

CFO ([16:03](#)):

Thank you. Governor

CFO ([16:06](#)):

Florida's urban search and rescue teams are staged, uh, in Miami and also in central Florida. We have over 600 resources to bear. Uh, we have FEMA teams that have come in from outta state. We have Virginia one and two that just literally came back from Puerto Rico in Miami, also there to assist. Out of the eight teams in Florida, five are activated. They will have search and rescue dogs. They will have, uh, swiftwater boats. They will go from door to door with engineers and trauma surgeons. Uh, as soon as it is safe for them to make access to those neighborhoods, they will go from door to door to administer life saving support through their missions. When it comes to, uh, hurricane response, I will put the state of Florida up against any of the 50 states. We have the best professionals. And governor, this is the largest response I've ever seen in this state. It's amazing work that you and your team have done. They've been training for their entire lives for this mission. Please stay safe. And as the governor said, hunker down now is not the time to hit the roads.

Gov. DeSantis (17:05):

Okay. So, so we will be, um, of course monitoring the impacts. Uh, as soon as those, uh, as soon as the storm moves its way through any given part of the state, the priority is, is, is gonna get, be to get personnel in there, uh, to be able to launch, uh, rescue efforts. And then obviously pave the way so that we can bring in more supplies to the airports, clearing roads so that our linemen can get in there and restore power. Uh, so all of that is standing by, but this is gonna be a, a major, major store. You, you've been following the tracks and seeing, obviously we knew for quite some time that it would be a major hurricane. Uh, some of those tracks a couple days ago showed maybe it would weaken as it reached landfall further north. Uh, this one as just strengthened and strengthened and, and, and it is the real deal.

Gov. DeSantis (17:52):

So it's gonna do a lot of damage. So people should be prepared for that. As Kevin said, that there's gonna be widespread power outages, uh, and those power outages are gonna, are gonna occur not just in southwest Florida, but in portions, uh, other portions of the state. And of course, it's a priority to to, to give those linemen the ability to get in there and restore that. But people should just be prepared. Uh, there's gonna be damage to infrastructure with the storm of this nature and, and, and power and communications and all those things, uh, can be affected. Uh, do what you need to do to stay safe. Uh, if you are where that storm is approaching, uh, you're already in hazardous conditions, it's gonna get a lot worse very quickly. Uh, so, so, so please hunker down, treat it like a tornado, and, and make sure that, um, uh, that, that your, that your friends and family know where you are. Um, we're gonna have folks that are, that are gonna be, uh, that are gonna be there very quickly, once, once it's safe. But, um, you know, this is, this is, uh, this is the real deal. So, uh, happy to take some questions.

Reporter (18:52):

Governor, one of the things we're hearing is that about 2.5 million already into been under some kind of evacuation order. You touched on it just briefly, but do we have any concept of how many people have heeded that evacuation order?

Gov. DeSantis (19:03):

Well, I, I think if you, if you talk to the local counties, I think that, uh, I spoke with, with some of the folks in Lee County and, and they said people are by and large abiding by it. Now, it's not gonna be everyone. I mean, you guys know have been in Florida, there'll be a, a major hurricane approaching. There'll be sometimes people wanna go out and surf in that. That's just, you just have some people that do that. Uh, but, but my sense has been, there's been by and large, uh, interest in treating this thing very seriously across those counties. I mean, I do think that when you have tracks that are uncertain, and this is just, it's an exact science, but when they see it in North Florida, then moving down north of Tampa, then Tampa, then some people think, Well, it's probably gonna shift again. So, so why should I do that? You know, we're at the point now. These aren't models. This is what the storm is actually doing. And so it is gonna hit there. That's just the, the, the nature of it. So I think most people did. Of course, we've been stressing the folks in the, uh, mobile homes, uh, to make sure that they evacuated. Again, my talking with the people on the local level, I think a lot of those people did. I don't think it's a hundred percent.

Reporter (20:08):

Uh, question for director Guthrie on this storm is bear a lot of resemblance to Charlie in the way it's gonna cut across the state. And what is your best guess that's gonna have on, uh, the people of central Florida, Orange Ocala, Seminole counties?

Dir. Guthrie ([20:27](#)):

So, yes, it, it does have a Charlie-esque feel. I think one of the things that's a little bit different with Charlie, I mean, again, on the prediction models, it may go through central Florida at a less intensity than what we had for Hurricane Charlie dumping more rain as the governor mentioned earlier today. Um, possibly speeding up just a little bit to getting outta here in 24 hours versus 36 hours. So that'll certainly help on the rainfall side of the house. But, um, again, it does have a Charlie-esque feel, but it should not, um, be nearly as catastrophic on the winds like we saw with Hurricane Charlie all the way into central Florida. We do expect rapid weakening, but again, there will be tropical storm force winds, strong tropical storm force winds fell all the way through the central part and up into northeast Florida as a part of the storm.

Reporter ([21:20](#)):

We saw a lot of trees get plowed down during Charlie, obviously, so

Gov. DeSantis ([21:25](#)):

I think one thing for central Florida is because we've had a lot of saturation, you know, those trees are vulnerable, so you're gonna see trees are gonna come down, even with tropical storm force winds, it does not need to be hurricane force. So you are absolutely gonna see that that is gonna cause interruptions and power. And of course, the sheer amount of rain that's gonna come down, it's gonna have a major impact across the center portion of the state. And even with the projected exit of the state in Volusia County, uh, because of what it's gonna do when it gets into the Atlantic, you, you're gonna see impacts all the way up, uh, to Nassau County in Duval County. Absolutely. In terms of some of the, some of the flooding and some of the other things that you'll see because of the effects of this. So, so they will be significant effects. Uh, and you will absolutely see, uh, trees, you will see power interruptions, uh, and you will see a lot, a lot of rain and water

Reporter ([22:19](#)):

With the sunshine and skyway just closing. And I'm sure y'all anticipate many more closures similar to that. Uh, is there any time you'll anticipate them opening back up or first responders, that kind of stuff?

Gov. DeSantis ([22:30](#)):

So basically what happens on the bridges is once it reaches a certain sustained wind, it's no longer safe to go over. So that's when they, that's when they, uh, uh, close it. Of course, as soon as the storm passes and those winds go down, uh, they immediately will go out and inspect the bridge to make sure there's not structural damage and to make sure it's safe. And then the minute it's safe, of course, for first responders, but also we want to get people back into their homes. And so if there's some people evacuated out of Pinellas County, there's a lot of bridges that you need to take, uh, to get back to that peninsula. We want people to be able to do that. Uh, and the further it away, it's away from the, the really, really strong winds, the less likely, I think you will see major structural damage in bridges.

Gov. DeSantis ([23:14](#)):

If you look in Charlotte, Lee counties, I mean, you're gonna end up in situations where you have a massive storm that's impacting those bridges. And it doesn't mean that they're not one of these are built very well, uh, but there's a lot, lot that can happen. One of the things that Kevin and his team have done, with the Florida Department of Transportation is instruct the, uh, securing of these barges that, that are, that are in, that are in the water. When we, when we had Hurricane Sally, you had a barge that was loose, ran into the bridge and, and it, it, and it, and it, and it knocked the bridge out. So that is something that, that is avoidable. And so that's been something, that message has been sent down that if the storm itself knocks out, knocks out a bridge, you know that that's mother nature and we just gotta work to, to remedy that.

Gov. DeSantis ([24:00](#)):

Uh, but if things are being left loose that are then gonna ram into the bridge and, and caused that to be disab, I mean, we worked really hard to get, to get the bridge up in Northwest Florida back, but I mean, it takes time to be able to do it when it has that type of major, uh, major impact like that. So all of that, there's sensitivity, the need to have the bridges open as soon as possible, but there's also sensitivity, the fact that you, you have 60 mile an hour sustained winds on one of those bridges, you know, that's not a place that that, that you want to be as a motorist. And quite frankly, it's not safe, uh, for our first responders even to be using that.

Reporter ([24:33](#)):

Given that there is a lot of rain and flooding and substantial storm surge associated with this storm, uh, does it make it different than storms we've had in the past? Because I believe Director Guthrie last night, you said there's going to be a great humanitarian lift that's going to be needed after this, especially considering some people may not have flood insurance, and that may be the biggest issue for a lot of them. So are there special preparations that you guys are taking for this storm that you maybe haven't taken in the past?

Gov. DeSantis ([24:57](#)):

Well, I would say, and, and I think Kevin would agree in terms of the resources that have been staged, we, we prepared for Dorian and that came very close. That was a category five that was massive. That was a massive mobilization that we did. We were ready if that would've hit Florida. This has been bigger in terms of the mobilization. I mean the, the assets that we have, uh, are unprecedented in, in the state's history. And unfortunately, I mean, you know, they're gonna need to be deployed because this is a really, really significant storm in terms of how people in the aftermath who have damage. So one of the things with, with the flood insurance is, uh, there's folks that are told, Hey, if you're not in a flood zone, you know, you don't need flood insurance. And so, so people buy homes and they don't get it.

Gov. DeSantis ([25:39](#)):

But the fact is that there are places outside of quote flood zones where you absolutely, in an event like this, uh, could, could be impacted. So FEMA does have programs that can offer support, but though FEMA's support is not going to be, uh, equal to what you would've gotten in, in a flood insurance policy. And so that's gonna be something that, that, that we're gonna have to, to look very seriously at. In terms of what the impacts are of that. There's a lot of folks that, uh, have a homeowner's policy, um, and sometimes they're told that that could also be for flood. And those are just different policies. The homeowners is from the wind, uh, in direct storm damage, the flood, the flood insurance, obviously

from rising waters. There will be debates in people's policies about, okay, you had a cat four, maybe even a five hit.

Gov. DeSantis ([26:24](#)):

Yes, your home got flooded, but is that also direct storm damage and not flood? And can your homeowner insurance? So that'll be good. I know Jimmy will be involved in in doing that to try to help, uh, Florida consumers. But yeah, there's gonna be a lot of fallout, uh, from this in terms of getting people back on their feet. Uh, but that's why we've done the mobilization that that we've done right now. It's about safety. I think most Floridians, uh, made the proper precautions to keep themselves safe. Uh, the ones that didn't, that may end up in harm's way. There's a lot of assets that are staged and those are gonna be deployed, uh, because we, we want to help people. I mean, even if they made a different decision, um, you know, we're all in this together, gonna do that. Uh, once that kind of life saving part of the operation is concluded, you know, it's all about getting people back on their feet.

Gov. DeSantis ([27:09](#)):

And there may be some people that didn't had nothing, one, just losing power. But that's important to get them back to normalcy. You know, there's others that may have really significant structural damages to their residents, You know, they're gonna need, they're gonna need assistance. And so all of that, uh, will be part of, of what will be, um, you know, really an unprecedented effort, uh, in the history of the state. I'm gonna be, um, you know, traveling, uh, into North Central Florida today to be able to meet with a lot of the linemen that we have staged. I think it's important to just thank them for what they're doing because, uh, their quick response be able to help get people back on the grid, uh, really helps with the entire response effort. You know, if you have everyone no power for weeks on end, like we have had in other storms, uh, you know, that makes everything else that we're doing difficult.

Gov. DeSantis ([27:58](#)):

I mean, I've been through these storms, you know, prior to being in elected office and it's like, okay, you know, the power's gonna go out. But then after a while, you know, people just start to get antsy. It's human nature. And so the fact that they're here in, in really huge numbers, ready to go down and descend, uh, they're, they're not only doing their job, they're performing a public service for us. So we're appreciative of that. And, and we're gonna thank them for that. And we will get them deployed, uh, Kevin, FDOT, They're gonna make sure that those roads get cleared as soon as possible. Now, some of that is gonna be very, very difficult because you're gonna have a lot of debris. Uh, you're gonna have a lot of trees. I mean, just think Hurricane Michael, there were some places category five, I mean, you just, it was, it is like the whole forest came down almost on some of these roads. Uh, this is, this is knocking on the door of that and, and, and it's gonna cause a, a lot of damage. And so that's gonna be a, a huge priority. It's gonna take a lot of manpower. Uh, but, but we're gonna use the resources that we need to get it done. Okay. Thank you.