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Governor Ron DeSantis Issues Updates on State Preparedness for Hurricane Ian

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — This afternoon, Governor Ron DeSantis issued updates on Hurricane Ian at the State Emergency Operations Center with Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Kevin Guthrie.

Hurricane Ian strengthened into a Category 2 hurricane this evening and continues to rapidly intensify ahead of its impact to the State of Florida later this week. Tropical-storm force winds may begin as soon as tonight in the Florida Keys and south Florida. Ian is forecast to become a major hurricane tonight and remain a major Hurricane over the southeastern Gulf of Mexico on Wednesday. Storm surge has the potential to impact much of Florida's west coast, with the highest risk from Ft. Myers to the Tampa Bay region.

Current Watches and Warnings in Effect:

- A Hurricane Warning has been issued for Englewood to the Anclote River, including Tampa Bay.
- A Hurricane Watch has been issued from the Anclote River to the Suwannee River.
- Tropical Storm Watches have been issued from the Suwannee River to Indian Pass, and from Jupiter Inlet to Altamaha Sound.
- Tropical Storm Warnings are in effect for the Lower Keys (from the 7 Mile Bridge westward to Key West), and from Englewood southward to Flamingo.
- A Storm Surge Warning has been issued from the Anclote River southward to Flamingo, including Tampa Bay.

- Storm Surge Watches are in effect for the Florida Keys and mainland Monroe County, as well as far southern Miami-Dade, Collier, the Tampa Bay area, eastern Clay and Putnam counties, and the coastal areas of Charlotte, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, St. Johns and Volusia counties.
 - Anclote River to Longboat Key including Tampa Bay... **5-10 ft**
 - Suwanee River to Anclote River... **5-8 ft**
 - Longboat Key to Englewood... **5-8 ft**
 - Englewood to Bonita Beach, FL... **4-7 ft**
 - Bonita Beach to East Cape Sable, FL... **3-5 ft**
 - Flagler/Volusia County Line to Altamaha Sound, including the St. Johns River... **2-4 ft**
 - East Cape Sable to Card Sound Bridge, including Florida Bay...**2-4 ft**
 - Aucilla River to Suwannee River... **2-4 ft**
 - Florida Keys including the Dry Tortugas... **2-4 ft**
 - Indian Pass to Aucilla River... **1-3 ft**

State preparation and response efforts include:

Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM)

- FDEM has activated the State Assistance Information Line (SAIL) to provide an additional resource for Floridians to receive up-to-date information regarding Hurricane Ian. Residents and visitors can call this toll-free hotline at **1-800-342-3557**.
- FDEM is deploying several hundred shelter support staff to address staffing needs in counties that have opened their Special Needs hurricane shelters.
- FDEM is leading the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) for the Hurricane Ian response.
- The Division has received more than 500 resource requests for Hurricane Ian and fulfilled 466. Requests are currently being processed and are either en route or being mobilized. This includes the coordination of resources such as: trucks of food and water, generators and water pumps.
- Five Florida Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Teams are activated, and will be prepared to deploy to impacted areas. An additional three federal USAR Teams are standing by to assist.
- Over 27,000 power restoration personnel are on standby to assist impacted areas after the storm.
- FDEM has begun setting up a Logistical Staging Area in Polk County and is identifying potential additional staging areas and points of

distribution to ensure food and water are readily available if counties request it.

- FDEM has loaded 360 trailers with over 2 million meals and over one million gallons of water in preparation for distribution to impacted areas.
- FDEM is in constant communication with all 67 county emergency management offices and state agencies to coordinate protective actions and needed resources ahead of potential storm impacts.
- FDEM is coordinating with utilities to ensure crews are prepared to respond and restore power. Utility providers have more than 25,000 linemen staged and prepared for power restoration efforts.

Florida National Guard

- Following Governor DeSantis' authorization, a total of 5,000 Florida Guardsmen are being activated to State Active Duty and pre-positioned at armories across the state for Tropical Storm Ian response operations. 2,000 Guardsmen from Tennessee, Georgia and North Carolina are also being activated to assist.
- The Florida National Guard is currently supporting missions including staffing and supporting the State Logistics Response Center (SLRC) in Orlando.
- In addition, the Florida Guard has mobilized and is on standby with five Route Clearance Teams and Aviation assets.
- The Florida National Guard is well-equipped, with assets including high-wheeled vehicles, helicopters, boats, generators and more.

Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE)

- FDLE's mutual aid team is coordinating evacuation missions in Cedar Key and security for ambulance response teams who are staging prior to Hurricane Ian.

Florida Department of Health (DOH)

- DOH has prepared for Special Needs Shelter operations to begin in areas of anticipated landfall. A [press release](#) has been sent with additional information on special needs shelters.
- The State Surgeon General has signed a letter to allow staff of the Department and Agency for Health Care Administration to travel past

any potentially issued curfews across state lines to conduct any necessary health and safety actions.

- DOH continues to coordinate across 67 county health departments on any necessary preparation resources, in coordination with county emergency managers.
- DOH has coordinated with the Office of Insurance Regulation to distribute an alert regarding permitted early prescription refills during a State of Emergency. This alert was sent to health insurers, managed care organizations, health entities, and licensed health care providers. The alert can be found [here](#).
- DOH is supporting Special Needs Shelter operations in areas of anticipated landfall.
- Nearly 300 ambulances, paratransit busses, and support vehicles are being deployed in areas of anticipated landfall.
- DOH has coordinated with Federal partners to support the deployment of nearly 100 individuals through various health and medical teams. These teams stand ready in Orlando, Atlanta, and Warner Robbins Air Force Base in Georgia.

Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)

- AHCA has activated the Emergency Patient Look-Up System (E-PLUS). Special Needs Shelters for 16 counties are able to utilize the system to retrieve patient medical records. E-PLUS is also available to assist medical providers and emergency response personnel with locating missing or displaced persons after the storm.
- AHCA is requiring health providers to update the Health Facility Reporting System by 10 AM daily to ensure each facility is taking the appropriate precautions to ensure patient safety.
- AHCA has completed 124 onsite visits in Nursing Homes and ALFs that were previously identified as out of compliance with generator requirements. **As of today, 100% of operating long-term care facilities have a generator on-site. The Generator Status Map for long-term care facilities is available [here](#).**
- AHCA has reminded all Medicaid Managed Care Plans of the requirement to allow 30-day emergency prescription refills of maintenance medication.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)

- APD sent a statewide message to remind customers to register for the Special Needs Registry if needed.

Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF)

- DCF submitted a request for a federal waiver to allow for the early release of SNAP benefits in preparation for Hurricane Ian.
- DCF has been working with contracted partners, including, Managing Entities, Community Based Care lead agencies, and child care providers to ensure Florida's communities remain apprised of all storm updates and are making preparations for potential impacts.
- DCF is also ensuring all Mental Health Treatment Facilities and methadone treatment programs are prepared for the storm.

Florida Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA)

- DOEA's CARES Assessors are preparing to staff special needs shelters.
- DOEA continues preparation coordination calls with the 11 Area Agencies on Aging and other field staff.

Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA)

- Veterans enrolled in VA Health Care in need of routine or urgent care services in the projected path of the storm can contact VA Health Connect, also known as the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center, at 1-877-741-3400.
- The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System will close the following locations for in person and procedure appointments:
 - C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center: Monday, September 26 through Thursday, Sept. 29. This closure extends to the Emergency Department.
 - North Pinellas and St. Petersburg VA Clinics: Wednesday, Sept. 28 and Thursday, September 29.
 - Sarasota, Bradenton, and Port Charlotte VA Clinics: Wednesday, September 28.

Florida Department of Education (DOE)

- The Florida Department of Education is consistently updating their [website](#) with county school closures, as well as State University System and Florida College System Closures.

K12 School Closures

- Charlotte County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Thursday, September 29, 2022.
- Citrus County Schools will be closed Wednesday, September 28 and Thursday, September 29, 2022.
- Collier County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27 and Wednesday, September 28, 2022.
- DeSoto County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Thursday, September 29, 2022.
- Dixie County Schools will be closed Wednesday, September 28 through Friday, September 30, 2022.
- Gilchrist County Schools will be closed Wednesday, September 28 through Friday, September 30, 2022.
- Glades County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Thursday, September 29, 2022.
- Hardee County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27 and Wednesday, September 28, 2022.
- Hernando County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Friday, September 30, 2022.
- Hillsborough County Schools will be closed Monday, September 26 through Thursday, September 29, 2022.
- Lake County Schools will have early dismissal on Tuesday, September 27 and will be closed Wednesday, September 28 through Friday, September 30, 2022.
- Lee County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27 and Wednesday, September 28, 2022.
- Levy County Schools will be closed Wednesday, September 28 and Thursday, September 29, 2022.
- Manatee County Schools will be closed starting Tuesday, September 27, 2022; they do not have a reopening date at this time.
- Marion County Schools will be closed Wednesday, September 28 and Thursday, September 29, 2022.
- Monroe County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27, 2022.
- Okeechobee County Schools will be closed Wednesday, September 28, 2022.

- Osceola County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Thursday, September 29, 2022.
- Pasco County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Friday, September 30, 2022.
- Pinellas County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Friday, September 30, 2022.
- Polk County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27 and Wednesday, September 28, 2022.
- Putnam County Schools will be closed Wednesday, September 28 through Friday, September 30, 2022.
- Sarasota County Schools will be closed Tuesday, September 27, 2022.
- Sumter County Schools will have early dismissal on Tuesday, September 27 and will be closed Wednesday, September 28 and Thursday, September 29, 2022.

Florida College System Closures

- College of Central Florida will be closed Wednesday, September 28 and Thursday, September 29, 2022.
- Hillsborough Community College will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Thursday, September 29, 2022.
- Florida SouthWestern State College will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Thursday, September 29, 2022.
- Pasco-Hernando State College will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Friday, September 30, 2022.
- St. Petersburg College will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Friday, September 30, 2022.
- State College of Florida will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Friday, September 30, 2022.

State University Closures

- Florida A&M University will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Friday, September 30, 2022.
- Florida Gulf Coast University will be closed Tuesday, September 27 and Wednesday, September 28, 2022.
- Florida State University will be closed Tuesday, September 27 through Friday, September 30, 2022. (Tallahassee & Panama City)
- New College of Florida classes will be canceled Monday, September 26 through Friday, September 30, 2022.

- University of Central Florida will be closed Wednesday, September 28 through Friday, September 30, 2022.
- University of South Florida classes will be canceled Monday, September 26 through Thursday, September 29, 2022. Campuses will be closed starting Tuesday, September 27, 2022.

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)

- To help Florida families safely and quickly evacuate in preparation of Hurricane Ian, tolls are now suspended on many facilities in the projected areas of impact. Tolls were suspended as of 12:00 PM today for the following:
 - Garcon Point Bridge in Santa Rosa County
 - Spence Parkway in Okaloosa County
 - Mid-Bay Bridge in Okaloosa County
 - Polk Parkway in Polk County
 - Suncoast Parkway in Hillsborough, Pasco, Hernando, and Citrus counties
 - Veterans Expressway in Hillsborough County
 - I-4 Connector in Hillsborough County
 - Selmon Expressway in Hillsborough County
 - Pinellas Bayway in Pinellas County
 - Sunshine Skyway Bridge in Pinellas County
 - Alligator Alley in Collier and Broward counties
- FDOT road and bridge contractors have suspended operations on active construction projects within the project path – currently 33 counties.
- Contractors are being instructed to secure all equipment in a manner to mitigate damage by lowering crane booms, securing containment systems, securing work platforms, and moving marine barges away from bridges.
- The SunRail corridor in Central Florida is being secured to prepare for the storm. **SunRail services will be closed effective 8:30am on Tuesday, September 27.** Updates to service can be checked [here](#).
- Florida's 511 Traveler Information System is available for drivers to stay informed about roadway conditions during emergencies.
- FDOT continues to coordinate with transportation partners on needs or planned closings.
 - **Port Tampa Bay** is planning to suspend operations at 8am on Tuesday, September 27.
 - **Port Manatee** is currently planning to remain in operations as long as it is safe to do so.

- **Tampa International Airport** is planning to suspend operations at 5pm on Tuesday, September 27.
- **St. Pete/Clearwater International Airport** will close at 1pm on Tuesday, September 27.

Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FLHSMV)

- The Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) has deployed troopers along major roadways to assist with traffic control and evacuation efforts.
- FHP has placed 330 Quick Reactionary Force troopers on standby, ready to move into affected areas quickly to provide immediate relief.
- All 1,766 sworn FHP members are ready to assist with enhanced evacuation efforts.
- FHP has strategically staged its fixed-wing aircraft to monitor traffic routes and to aid search and rescue and damage assessment efforts.
- FHP has placed its unmanned aerial vehicle teams on standby to assist in search and rescue and damage assessment efforts.
- FHP Regional Communications Centers are preparing to perform take-over services for other impacted FHP dispatch centers to ensure all state law enforcement officers continue to receive dispatch services.
- FHP is providing liaisons to affected county emergency operations centers.
- FHP encourages evacuating motorists to report disabled vehicles or dangerous driving conditions to *FHP (*347).
- FLHSMV driver license and motor vehicle service center closures can be found [here](#).
- FHP is prepared to implement 12-hour Alpha, Bravo shifts in response to Hurricane Ian.
- FLHSMV has issued Emergency Order [092422](#), which:
 - Waives specific requirements for commercial motor vehicles providing emergency relief; and
 - Waives the replacement fees for driver's license and identification credentials, vehicle registrations and titles, vessel registrations and titles and temporary parking permits for impacted individuals.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)

- On September 23, at Governor DeSantis' direction, FWC readied high-water vehicles and all other storm response resources so they may be

rapidly deployed to assist Floridians in need in the event of any damage or flooding.

- FWC officers in all 67 Florida counties have been placed on heightened alert status, in anticipation of heavy rains and flooding because of Hurricane Ian. High-water vehicles and shallow draft vessels in all Florida counties have been readied for immediate deployment to affected areas. Contingency plans based on forecasted landfall locations have been developed and are flexible based on the storm's projected path.
- Officers will respond with a variety of specialized equipment, including shallow draft boats, larger platform vessels, ATVs, airboats, and four-wheel drive vehicles. These assets do not include local FWC officers in potentially affected areas.
- FWC Special Operations Group (SOG) teams will serve as reconnaissance units for the State EOC and report back on damage after the storm has made landfall.
- FWC Aviation Section has been placed on standby and has readied all appropriate aircraft for potential deployment for EOC aerial assistance, reconnaissance, and post-storm damage assessments when needed.

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO)

- DEO has activated the private sector hotline at 850-815-4925 from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Inquiries may also be emailed to ESF18@em.myflorida.com.
- Partners including Walmart and Publix have indicated that they are constantly bringing additional supplies into the state to restock inventory.
- DEO is updating www.FloridaDisaster.biz with real-time information for business owners to prepare their businesses, families, and employees for Hurricane Ian.
- Private-sector partner, Uber, is offering round-trip rides to and from Southwest Florida shelter locations in Hillsborough, Pinellas, Manatee, and Pasco counties listed at www.FloridaDisaster.org. Riders can enter promotional code IANRELIEF in the app to redeem a free round-trip up to \$30 each way. Rides must be requested to or from any state-approved evacuation shelter in Florida.
- Career centers in the following counties may experience temporary closures following county closure announcements:
 - Hernando
 - Hillsborough
 - Lee
 - Manatee

- Monroe
- Sarasota

VISIT FLORIDA

- VISIT FLORIDA has activated its Emergency Accommodations Module on Expedia to provide real-time hotel availability and lodging resources for impacted Floridians and visitors.

Florida Housing Finance Corporation (Florida Housing)

- Florida Housing has ensured that all current listings are up to date in the event that families need to quickly relocate at www.FloridaHousingSearch.org.
- Each SHIP office has an adopted disaster strategy that allows for assistance in the immediate aftermath of a declared disaster. Strategies may include temporary relocation and rental assistance, debris removal and short-term repairs to prevent further damage to the structure or to allow for occupancy until further repairs are made.

Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR)

- DBPR is coordinating with wholesale distributors of prescription drugs and medical gases to provide exceptions for the emergency distribution of these critical supplies.

Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR)

- OIR is coordinating with its regulated entities, including property and casualty insurers, to collect information on Hurricane Ian preparedness efforts and to ensure companies have all necessary resources to assist policyholders.
- OIR has updated its list of resources to assist Florida policyholders with their hurricane preparedness and response efforts.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

- Following the issuance of the Governor's Executive Order, DEP issued an [Emergency Final Order](#) waiving permitting requirements for the storage and processing of solid waste, including storm debris.
- DEP has also issued an [Emergency Final Order](#) to expedite necessary repair, replacement and restoration of structures, equipment, surface water management systems, works and other systems damaged by the storm.
- Inspectors completed pre-storm beach surveys in all shoreline counties.
- Hazardous Area Response Teams are preparing for potential assessment and deployment to impacted areas.
- All significant Hazardous Waste facilities within the affected counties have been contacted to ensure all pre-storm landfall preparations are being made.
- Florida state park closures can be found at www.floridastateparks.org/StormUpdates.
- Visitors with existing camping and cabin reservations at impacted parks will be notified of their reservation status.
- WaterTracker is active, DEP's online portal for wastewater and drinking water facilities to report their operational status.

Florida Department of Revenue

- [Florida's temporary licensing program](#), which allows exporters, petroleum carriers, and importers to request a temporary license during a disaster or declared state of emergency, has been activated. Applicants are not required to submit a fee, secure bonding, or undergo a background check if they apply for and receive a temporary license.

Florida Department of Management Services (DMS)

- The Telecommunications Division is working with telecom partners to ensure that the state's communications networks have redundancies and remain operations for first responders to respond to Floridians during the storm.
- As of 5:00 p.m. on September 26, state buildings are closed on Tuesday, Sept. 27, in the following counties:
 - Hernando
 - Hillsborough
 - Lee

- Manatee
- Monroe, and
- Sarasota

An updated list of state building closures can be found [here](#).

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