On Wednesday, September 28, Hurricane Ian made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane near Cayo Coasta, a barrier island off the coast of Fort Myers, Florida. The storm continued across the state, bringing with it catastrophic 150-mph winds, 14 inches of flooding rain and life-threatening storm surges of up to 12 feet. Ian was downgraded to a tropical storm early Thursday and is expected to move into the Atlantic Ocean and head north, threatening the coasts of northeast Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia.

The total impact of the storm is not yet fully determined, as response and recovery efforts are still underway. As of Thursday morning, more than 2.5 million Florida utility customers were without power, homes and buildings were collapsed and flooded, power lines were knocked down, and roads were littered with debris and vehicles that have washed out. Five people have been confirmed dead in Lee County, with the death toll expected to rise over the coming days as the Coast Guard and National Guard continue search-and-rescue efforts. On Wednesday, a boat carrying migrants near the Florida Keys sunk as the storm approached the state. At least three migrants were rescued, but at least 20 others remain missing.

President Biden approved a disaster declaration in Florida on Thursday morning, directing federal aid to supplement state and local response efforts in nine affected counties. As the strongest hurricane to hit Florida’s west coast since Hurricane Charley 18 years ago, the road to recovery in the state will be long, but response and rehabilitation efforts are already underway as the storm continues to barrel through the southeastern United States.

International Medical Corps’ Response

International Medical Corps readied team members and supplies in Florida prior to the hurricane’s landfall, allowing for a fast response to urgent needs. We have prepositioned a mobile medical unit (MMU), a mobile command center, critical relief supplies (tarps, generators, solar lamps, hygiene kits and drinking water) to support efforts.

As requested by the Florida Department of Health (FDOH), International Medical Corps will provide affected communities with essential lifesaving healthcare services. Preparations are underway to deploy nurse strike teams and

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5 https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/hurricane-ian-florida-updates-09-29-22/h_ae0b58cafb84c0318e7ba3884ac286ee1
Medical task force teams to increase clinical surge capabilities and availability of medical care for patients affected by the storm. Medical field units with clinical care teams may also be established in areas hardest-hit. Each would offer the space and personnel to provide care for up to 100 ambulatory patients per day, with services to meet the diverse needs of community members, including triage and referrals, urgent care and first aid, treatment for existing conditions exacerbated by the emergency, and more.

International Medical Corps is working closely the FDOH and our federally qualified health center (FQHC) partners, PanCare and the Florida Association of Community Health, to coordinate efforts and ensure that our collaboration can expand services and increase our reach to those with the greatest needs.

In addition to emergency healthcare, anticipated needs in affected areas include water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

**International Medical Corps in Florida**

International Medical Corps has provided emergency health services in Florida since 2017, after Hurricane Irma struck the southern portion of the state. After Hurricane Michael made landfall in Florida as a Category 5 hurricane in 2018, International Medical Corps collaborated with the Florida Department of Health to deploy multiple teams of doctors and nurses to medical facilities and special-needs shelters to provide primary healthcare to people affected by the storm. We also deployed a health facility in the Panhandle, helping to keep healthcare services operational while existing facilities were rebuilt.

In responding to Hurricane Ian, we are leveraging decades of experience responding to natural disasters around the world. For example, in the US and Caribbean, International Medical Corps has experience providing hurricane response in the Carolinas after Hurricane Florence; in Puerto Rico following Hurricanes Irma, Maria and Fiona; in Louisiana after Hurricane Ida; in Haiti after Hurricane Matthew; in the Bahamas following Hurricane Dorian; and in Dominica following Hurricane Maria.

[Image: A home burns after Hurricane Ian tore through Lee County on September 29. Source: REUTERS/Marco Bello]