



An International Medical Corps staff member loads critically needed supplies into a van to be delivered to affected communities.

Hurricane Ian made landfall on the southwest coast of Florida on Wednesday, September 28, as a Category 4 hurricane. The devastation in affected communities is continuing to negatively affect people's health, their access to healthcare and their ability to meet basic needs. In the wake of Hurricane Ian's second landfall along the eastern coast, multiple states across the southeast have declared a state of emergency.

The life-threatening winds, flooding rain and storm surges brought by the storm devastated communities, washing out homes and businesses, downing power lines and trapping residents. Approximately 81 deaths in Florida have so far been attributed to the hurricane.¹ Approximately 1.8 million power outages have been successfully restored; however, more than 598,000 people there still are without power, with Lee County and surrounding counties affected the most: some 60% to 100% of residents there are experiencing outages.² As of Sunday, October 2, 1,600 successful rescues were reported, thanks to the more than 1,000 search-and-rescue team members who are active in addition to the 1,000 National Guard and Coast Guard staff deployed yesterday to perform search-and-rescue efforts on the barrier islands. More than 200 public shelters and 12 public-needs shelters are open for the growing number of people—now estimated as high as 30,000—seeking temporary shelter.³ First responders anticipate that emergency-shelter and essential-service needs will keep increasing in the coming days, as longer-term plans for temporary housing solutions are still being created.⁴

Major health infrastructure along the state's west coast was severely damaged, straining the healthcare system's ability to provide care to those affected by the storm. Central health facilities—including several hospitals—remain inoperable, and medical supply chains have been disrupted. Assessments of healthcare facilities in impacted counties are still ongoing—122 have been completed and 21 previously evacuated have returned to full operations as of yesterday. Boil-water notices have been issued across 22 counties, as access to safe and potable water remains a significant challenge for residents.⁵ The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has declared a Public Health Emergency in Florida,

FAST FACTS

- Hurricane Ian, a Category 4 hurricane, made landfall in Florida on Wednesday, September 28.
- 81 deaths in Florida have so far been attributed to Hurricane Ian.
- More than 598,000 people in the state are still without power.
- 11% of Florida's gas stations are either out of operation or without fuel.
- With more than 1,000 search-and-rescue workers active, more than 1,600 rescues have been made
- 30,000 state residents are living in temporary shelters.
- A Public Health Emergency has been declared by HHS and President Biden has approved a disaster declaration for the state.
- International Medical Corps is on the ground deploying a mobile medical unit to provide urgently needed healthcare.

¹ <https://abcnews.go.com/US/multiple-deaths-reported-hurricane-ian-slams-florida/story?id=90693636>

² <https://poweroutage.us/area/state/florida>

³ <https://www.floridadisaster.org/news-media/news/20221002-florida-response-to-hurricane-ian-continues/>

⁴ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/hurricane-ian-survivors-search-storm-death-toll/>

⁵ <https://www.floridadisaster.org/news-media/news/20221002-florida-response-to-hurricane-ian-continues/>

and President Biden has approved a disaster declaration, enabling the state to deploy additional public health and medical resources.⁶

Health needs in the wake of the storm will continue to evolve, but priority concerns include the spread of infectious diseases, increased mental health needs and disrupted treatment of existing medical conditions. Because residents whose homes have been destroyed are living in crowded conditions such as shelters, there is a higher risk of COVID-19, monkeypox, influenza, vector borne diseases and more. In addition, the emotional distress experienced by survivors losing livelihoods and loved ones will increase mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs in the state.

Getting aid into the most affected areas has been made more complicated by the damage and destruction of critical infrastructure. Continued power outages, downed cellular sites, lack of fuel at gas stations, non-operational water plants and the closures of roads, airports, ports and rail lines have made it increasingly difficult for Floridians to connect with relief.⁷ Presently, about 11% of gas stations are without fuel or completely out of operation.⁸

International National Medical Corps' Response

International Medical Corps is joining response and recovery efforts that are underway in affected communities. At the request of the Florida Department of Health (FDoH), we are deploying a mobile medical unit (MMU) to Port Charlotte, one of the hardest-hit areas along the Gulf coast. The MMU will be run by International Medical Corps staff and a team of volunteer clinical staff comprising three doctors, six nurses and a medical coordinator, and will provide outpatient services meeting communities' urgent medical needs, with the capacity to see up to 100 patients per day.

Port Charlotte and the broader Charlotte County have a significant number of retirees, with a median age of over 60 in 2021.⁹ Although Charlotte County Emergency Management ordered mandatory evacuations for the area and opened emergency shelters for those not able to evacuate, the needs in Charlotte County are significant.¹⁰ Affected communities include high numbers of elderly and medically vulnerable individuals whose health has been compromised, as ongoing treatment and access to critical medications have been disrupted for days.

Additionally, International Medical Corps is assessing our ability to provide MHPSS services to meet the urgent needs of local residents. Current identified needs include those in shelters, as well as the frontline staff supporting emergency response efforts, many of whom have been personally affected by the disaster.

Finally, our teams have prepositioned and are ready to distribute critical relief supplies, including tarps, generators, solar lamps, hygiene kits and drinking water. We are coordinating with the FDoH, the state Emergency Operations Center and our federally qualified healthcare center partners to coordinate response efforts.

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.

⁶ <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/09/26/hhs-secretary-becerra-declares-public-health-emergency-for-florida-in-response-to-hurricane-ian.html>

⁷ <https://healthcareready.org/>

⁸ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-09-29/about-11-of-florida-s-gas-stations-without-fuel-says-gasbuddy>

⁹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/hurricane-ian-takes-aim-at-fast-growing-region-in-florida-11664388300>

¹⁰ <https://news.wgcu.org/2022-09-27/evacuations-and-shelters-in-charlotte-county-ahead-of-hurricane-ian>