



Tornadoes followed in the wake of Hurricane Debby, causing damage to businesses such as the one shown above, in Moncks Corner, South Carolina.

Hurricane Debby made first landfall on Monday, August 5, in the Big Bend region of Florida as a Category 1 hurricane, before moving into Georgia, briefly out to sea, then making a second landfall in South Carolina early Thursday, August 8, as a tropical storm. Though Debby was quickly downgraded to a post-tropical cyclone by Friday, the slow-moving storm released historic levels of rainfall, flooding and tornadoes across Southeast, Mid-Atlantic and New England states. The severe rainfall and tornadoes created by Debby caused widespread power outages, catastrophic flooding and at least eight deaths.

In response to the storm, President Biden issued disaster declarations across Southeast states, while governors declared states of emergencies along the East Coast. On August 7, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra declared Public Health Emergencies for Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, due to the affected healthcare systems and delivery, concern for at-risk individuals who rely on electricity-dependent medical equipment or healthcare services such as dialysis and oxygen tanks, and increased risk of bacterial infection, water-borne disease and mold.¹

The coastal regions of Georgia and the Carolinas received more than a foot of torrential rain in the first 24 hours of the storm. Rainfall rates reached up to 3 inches per hour, drenching areas already prone to flooding, as demonstrated by a history of flooding over the past few years. Some communities reporting up to three feet of moving water in their roadways,² while seven tornadoes were reported in South Carolina and 10 in North Carolina. Through Friday, August 9, more than 17 million people from North Carolina to Maryland remained on tornado watch, 35 million people were under flood alerts and hundreds of thousands of people experienced power outages.³ The tornadoes and flash floods triggered by the heavy rain also led to multiple road closures and evacuations across the region.

After the storm's departure, an extreme heat wave swept through Florida and Georgia, with heat indices—what the body feels due to combined temperature and humidity—of up to 112 degrees.⁴ The Carolinas also continued to experience

FAST FACTS

- Debby made first landfall in the Gulf Coast of Florida on August 5 as a Category 1 hurricane, then continued north, unleashing excessive rain, flash flooding and tornadoes up the East Coast for nearly a week as a tropical storm, severely impacting the coastal Carolinas.
- At least eight deaths have been reported, due to fallen trees and vehicular accidents from flooding in the roads.
- Immediately after the storm, the Southeast experienced an extreme heat event, with heat indices reaching up to 112 degrees F; some areas in the Carolinas remained on flash flood alert from August 7–13.

OUR RESPONSE

- International Medical Corps deployed a team to Charleston, South Carolina, and is partnering with healthcare networks that serve under-resourced and at-risk populations in the area.
- The team has so far distributed 520 individual hygiene kits and 498 wound-care kits to four healthcare-network partners located in both rural and urban areas of South Carolina.

¹ <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2024/08/07/hurricane-debby-public-health-emergency.html>

² <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/death-toll-from-debby-rises-to-8-as-storm-crawls-up-east-coast>

³ <https://www.cnn.com/2024/08/09/weather/tropical-depression-debby-forecast-friday/index.html>

⁴ <https://us.cnn.com/2024/08/09/weather/tropical-depression-debby-forecast-friday/>

rain, with some areas already vulnerable due to crested rivers, washed out roads and damaged infrastructure on flash-flood warning until Monday, August 13.⁵

Debby is the fourth named storm of this so-far very active Atlantic hurricane season, arriving just three weeks after Hurricane Beryl tore through the Caribbean and Texas, and slowing down just as Tropical Storm Ernesto began building near Puerto Rico.

International Medical Corps Response

In response to Debby, International Medical Corps quickly deployed a team to South Carolina, one of the hardest-hit states, to support local response and recovery efforts. The team was deployed to Charleston to support response and recovery efforts by healthcare-network partners across the Lowcountry region—an area vulnerable to excessive flooding and poor drainage due to its low elevation, wetlands and proximity to various waterways, including the ocean and rivers.

Over the past week, our team met with representatives of the Red Cross, local organization One80 Place Homeless Shelter, and federally qualified health centers Networks Beaufort Jasper Hampton Comprehensive Health Services (BJHCHS) and Fetter Health Care Network. We also provided 520 hygiene kits and 498 wound-care kits to these partners, for distribution to their patients. International Medical Corps continues to work with local partners across Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas to understand additional recovery needs.



International Medical Corps staff members unload hygiene and wound-care kits for healthcare-network partners.

- At **Beaufort Jasper Hampton Comprehensive Health Services**, the team met with staff and toured the Chelsea Medical Center clinic, located in Okatie. Six of BJHCHS's 10 clinics serve populations located in economically challenged rural areas, with significant food deserts. BJHCHS has previously distributed gift cards for groceries and critical supplies to food-insecure patients in the lower-income areas of Jasper and Hampton counties, to meet heightened needs in the aftermath of the storm. All BJHCHS clinics had shut down during the two days that the storm passed through, resulting in the cancellation of 620 appointments. Though it currently operates 10 clinics across three counties, BJHCHS only has one backup generator. International Medical Corps' team delivered 120 hygiene kits and 123 wound-care kits for BJHCHS to distribute across clinic locations.
- Located in the greater Charleston area, Moncks Corner, and neighboring counties, **Fetter Health Care Network** serves 19,000 under-resourced patients through schools, public housing, mobile medical units, clinics and rural communities. Tropical Storm Debby damaged roofs, caused substantial leaking in multiple clinics and washed out parking lots, discouraging patients from visiting. All clinics were closed for the duration of the storm, and continued to experience staff shortages when they were reopened due to extensive road flooding and closures. The International Medical Corps team provided 120 hygiene kits and 100 wound-care kits to be distributed to the Charleston Family Health Center, located in downtown Charleston.
- Connected to Fetter Health Care Network, and located in downtown Charleston, **One80 Place Homeless Shelter** houses 80 beds and distributes 500 meals daily to those in the shelter and on the street. We distributed 180 hygiene kits and 25 wound-care kits for the onsite nurse to redistribute to patients.
- The team also visited a **Red Cross shelter** that had opened in a local middle school in Moncks Corner, an area that experienced several tornadoes and severe flooding as a result of the storm. The center had run out of its supply of comfort kits, so the team distributed 100 hygiene kits and 250 wound-care kits for community members.

International Medical Corps has identified that generators and additional hygiene and wound-care kits are needed, and is coordinating with partners to identify further specific facility and community needs. We also are working to procure and distribute gift cards to partners, to enable patient to meet basic needs, and are exploring the possibility of offering emergency preparedness training to healthcare facilities and community members.

⁵ <https://www.readync.gov/aggregator/sources/4>

International Medical Corps in the US

International Medical Corps has been an emergency responder in the United States and Caribbean since 2005, when we partnered with local community clinics overwhelmed by Hurricane Katrina. In the US, International Medical Corps is more active than ever before—for example, working with national, state and local partners in the healthcare system to address the significant challenges that faced domestic healthcare services, and deploying emergency response teams in response to disasters that have struck in recent years. Across the Caribbean and the US, International Medical Corps was a first responder during the 2010 Haiti earthquake, 2017's Hurricane Maria, 2019's Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas, and Hurricane Michael in 2018, Hurricane Ian in 2022 and Hurricane Idalia in 2023. Over the past seven years, International Medical Corps has engaged partner networks of more than 275 hospitals, clinics and health-related facilities and NGOs across 18 states and territories, supporting more than 6 million patients and healthcare providers in the US.



Houses cut off from roadways by flood waters in Charleston County, South Carolina.