



International Medical Corps staff members provide healthcare services at the MMU.

FAST FACTS

- Hurricane Ian made landfall in Florida as a Category 4 hurricane on September 28.
- About 130 deaths in Florida have been associated with Hurricane Ian.
- More than 11,000 people in the state are still without power.
- International Medical Corps is providing healthcare services through a mobile medical unit in Englewood, serving 210 patients to date.
- As International Medical Corps moves into recovery programming, we are identifying effective ways to support local partners and health facilities in the areas with the greatest needs.

On Wednesday, September 28, Hurricane Ian made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane in southwestern Florida, bringing with it life-threatening storm surges, flooding rain and catastrophic winds. At least 127 deaths in Florida have been attributed to Hurricane Ian, but this number continues to climb as search-and-rescue efforts continue throughout the state.¹ The storm devastated homes, businesses and healthcare facilities in its path. More than 11,000 Florida utility customers remain without power, all located in Lee County.²

Though many health facilities and hospitals were severely impacted, most are now operational, with one hospital remaining closed. The Agency for Health Care Administration has successfully conducted 615 damage assessments at health facilities across 18 affected counties.³ Patients seeking care generally are suffering storm related-injuries and existing medical conditions that were exacerbated by the crisis. Healthcare workers across the region have also had their lives upended, as they continue to try serve others in their communities while taking care of their own homes and families. Staffing shortages continue across healthcare facilities and pharmacies, leaving patients with far fewer options when seeking care.⁴

Bacterial infections among residents are on the rise as a result of sewage spills in coastal waters. The warm weather, combined with standing water, allows bacteria to thrive in areas it is not typically found. Many residents are at risk for infections from intermittent or extended exposure to standing waters, particularly following their attempts to flee and then return home in flood waters. There also is a risk of infection caused by prolonged flooding around homes over the past weeks. Increased numbers of elderly people with weakened immune systems and chronic diseases, such as diabetes, kidney and liver disorders, face even greater risks. The Gulf islands and beaches have not been tested for fecal indicator bacteria (FIB) since September 19, limiting responders' access to updated data on indicators for pathogens like salmonella, shigella and vibrio in these areas.⁵

The intense heat, rainfall and flooding in Ian's wake, combined with weeks without power and air conditioning, are contributing to the growth of mold in homes and businesses, as well as environmental health concerns. Mold contributes to respiratory complications, including wheezing and coughing, allergies, throat irritation and worsened asthma. Lower-income communities are disproportionately affected, as residents are more likely to reside in storm-damaged housing out

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

² <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/florida-applies-lessons-from-hurricane-michael-to-costly-ian-recovery>

³ <https://www.floridadisaster.org/news-media/news/20221017-governor-ron-desantis-issues-updates-on-hurricane-ian-recovery/>

⁴ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/hurricane-ian-disabled-florida-veteran-struggled-get-medicine-rcna51043>

⁵ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/10/17/hurricane-ian-bacteria-vibrio-vulnificus-cases/10523593002/>

of necessity and may not have the resources for mold remediation. A mold remediation team working in affected areas estimates that their team may have up to three years of work ahead of them.⁶

International National Medical Corps' Response

International Medical Corps is working in close coordination with the Florida Department of Health (FDoH) to support the continuity of healthcare services in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian. To reach the greatest number of patients, our mobile medical unit (MMU) continues its operations in Englewood at the Ann & Chuck Dever Regional Center.

To date, International Medical Corps' MMU has provided healthcare services to 210 patients, made 24 referrals to higher care and made three transfers. 77 of the patients served by the MMU were displaced from their homes, with many residing in temporary shelters. The majority of medical services sought have been for basic first-aid and wound care, minor injuries, upper respiratory infections, mental health concerns, follow-up treatment for existing conditions and medication refills. We have provided many patients with vaccinations, including flu and tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap). Our teams also has conducted community outreach and wellness checks in the area, reaching 154 households.

By the end of this week, International Medical Corps will conclude MMU services and start to transition to recovery programming. Our recovery strategies will aim to support local partners and federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) in their efforts to rebuild and strengthen their operations, as well as better serve their communities. Recovery programming may include support for rehabilitation and enhancements related to damage. We also may provide medical and non-medical supplies that may be needed for ongoing service delivery, as well as new or expanded program activities that meet the anticipated longer-term health and mental health needs of affected communities.

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.nytimes.com/2022/10/04/climate/hurricane-ian-mold-home-remediation.html?searchResultPosition=1>