



Road damage from flooding in Buncombe County, North Carolina, following Hurricane Helene.

Less than two weeks apart, Hurricanes Helene and Milton struck the Florida coast, unleashing historic levels of rainfall and flooding, destroying roads, water and sanitation infrastructure, and killing at least 255 people combined. As affected communities continue to undertake recovery efforts in Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas and Tennessee, the long-term health and infrastructure implications of the storms and the impact of back-to-back events on communities continue to be significant.

Hurricane Milton struck south of Tampa, Florida, on October 9 as a Category 3 storm with heavy rainfall and multiple outbreaks of tornadoes as it cut across the peninsula. With heavy rains and sustained winds as high as 120 mph, Milton flooded houses, and destroyed roads, buildings, water and sewage lines. The storm is so far responsible for 23 deaths.¹ Nearly 200,000 residents remain without power, there are more than 3,000 occupants in shelters, water main breaks are making potable water inaccessible for many, and 50 state roads remain closed.² Parts of the state are still under coastal and river flood warnings, raising concern surrounding drainage. In preparation for the storm, the state initiated the largest evacuation in history. Now, as residents return to assess the damage and communities clean up the debris, health needs are expected to rise.

Hurricane Helene hit the Big Bend region of Florida on September 26 as a Category 4 storm and is responsible for at least 232 deaths across six states. The hurricane tore through inland communities of Georgia, the Carolinas and Tennessee, causing catastrophic flooding, landslides and extensive power and water outages—isolating communities and complicating recovery efforts.

In the hardest-hit areas of northwestern **North Carolina**—roughly the size of the state of Massachusetts—the need for shelter and healthcare are high, as entire communities were displaced and have lost belongings and family members.

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2024/10/13/us/hurricane-milton-helene-florida-mental-health/index.html>

² <https://disastercenter.com/FEMA%20Daily%20Operation%20Brief.pdf>

FAST FACTS

- **Hurricane Milton** made landfall south of Tampa, Florida, on October 9 as a Category 3 hurricane, with tornadoes, flash floods and winds of 120 mph. At least 23 deaths have been confirmed and nearly 200,000 customers are still without power.
- **Hurricane Helene** struck Florida's Big Bend region on September 26 as a Category 4 hurricane, and cut through Georgia, the Carolinas and Tennessee, causing more than 230 confirmed deaths across six states. Affected communities across several states have yet to regain power or access to clean water.
- The short-term damage and long-term implications of the storm are extensive, with economic and property losses from Hurricane Helene anticipated to be up to \$250 billion.
- In 2024, there have been **13 named Atlantic storms**, including **six hurricanes** that have made landfall in the United States and Territories. These storms have caused more than **320 deaths** in the US and Territories alone.

OUR RESPONSE

- In response to **Hurricane Milton**, International Medical Corps is coordinating with local health facility partners to support urgent needs.
- In response to **Hurricane Helene**, International Medical Corps deployed teams to Florida, Georgia and North Carolina, and is coordinating with partners in Tennessee.
- In North Carolina, we deployed a team of 25 volunteers to provide medical and behavioral health services in three shelters in Buncombe County, where hard-hit Asheville is located.
- Across all affected states, International Medical Corps has distributed 1,512 wound-care kits, 4,944 hygiene kits and 7,924 hygiene items, including first-aid supplies, mosquito repellent, handwashing stations, water bladders, water tanks and water to 36 health centers and local partners.

Many of the displaced are in shelters or sleeping in tents and other temporary accommodations, with some shelters housing more than 300 people. As the weather cools, there is a concern that people who are unhoused and those in mountainous areas will need additional support. Water and power are returning very slowly, and many communities in more rural and mountainous areas are still without both, with some estimates saying that it will take as long as four to six weeks before it returns. Additionally, there has been a reported outbreak of pertussis (whooping cough) in affected communities. Though cases have yet to be reported within the shelters, this risk—combined with increased cold, flu and COVID cases regionally—are causing significant concern for potential outbreaks in shelters. Isolation plans have been recommended for all shelters and are being discussed with various shelter management and incident command teams.

In **Georgia**, affected areas are beginning to see power and water return, and many health centers have reopened. However, a significant challenge for health centers is the lack of available staffing, as many staff are unable to go to work because they still do not have power in their own homes or do not have available childcare. In **eastern Tennessee**, water and sanitation needs continue, as several wastewater treatment plants are still non-operational. Community members working to clear the debris face increased risk of injury and infection due to contaminated flood waters, increasing the need for vaccinations such as tetanus, hepatitis A and flu shots. In **Florida**, recovery efforts from Hurricane Helene and Milton continue as the state and affected communities work to overcome the challenges presented by repeat disasters.

International Medical Corps' Response

In response to **Hurricane Milton**, International Medical Corps is coordinating closely with Florida Association of Community Health Centers (FACHC), existing health facility partners, and county- and state-run distribution centers to disseminate urgently needed emergency supplies, equipment and other items.

International Medical Corps is continuing our multi-state response to the impacts of **Hurricane Helene** across Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee. To date, we have facilitated the shipment and distribution of 4,944 hygiene kits, 1,512 wound-care kits and 7,924 hygiene and emergency items to 36 sites—including health facilities, community centers and relief centers—across the region. Additionally, we have delivered 14 1,000-gallon tanks and 20 portable toilets to health facilities to support the restoration of their operations and services.

International Medical Corps has deployed 25 clinical volunteers to western **North Carolina** to provide essential primary medical care and behavioral health services in Buncombe County shelters. International Medical Corps coordinated with the Buncombe County Department of Health and Human Services (BCHHS) to embed clinical teams to provide 24-hour care in three shelters, including two general-population and one medical-needs shelter. Since initiating care over the weekend, the team has already conducted 47 medical consultations and six behavioral health consultations. Our emergency response team is also coordinating with the Emergency Operations Center and BCHHS to provide care to hard-to-reach communities in the mountains, including the more rural counties of Henderson and McDowell. The need for medical and behavioral health services in shelters continues to be significant as residents cycle in and out and as cold weather approaches.

International Medical Corps is working closely with the North Carolina Primary Care Association (PCA), the National Association of Rural Health Clinics and the National Association of Community Health Centers to identify and support the needs of FQHC and health partners across the state. The team is partnering with 14 health centers to support the restoration of their operations and services. Because many health clinics are in counties with damaged water treatment plants, sanitation and sewage alternatives are critical, which is why International Medical Corps delivered a 1,000-gallon water tank to 14 health centers and two portable toilets to 10 health centers. We also have given the clinics hygiene kits, sanitation and hygiene supplies, and such additional supplies as tables, chairs and tarps.

In **Florida**, International Medical Corps remains in close communication with FACHC and local health partners to support their responses to both Hurricane Helene and Milton. We procured a trauma kit and additional medical supplies for Steinhatchee Community Center, where community members impacted by Helene gather. As residents return from Hurricane Milton's evacuation to assess damage and clean debris, International Medical Corps remains ready to further support health center and community needs.

In **Tennessee**, International Medical Corps is procuring immunization supplies, including 200 doses of tetanus vaccines, as community members continue to clean up and rebuild damaged buildings and infrastructure. The team continues to coordinate closely with local partners to understand and support their needs as services and operations are restored.



An International Medical Corps team member works with the National Guard to unload, load and deliver 1,000-gallon water tanks to health centers in northwestern North Carolina.

In **Georgia**, International Medical Corps is working with the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA), the Georgia PCA, the Georgia Department of Public Health’s Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Medical Associates Plus, an FQHC network with 19 health centers. International Medical Corps has distributed 1,620 hygiene kits to a GEMA managed Disaster Recovery Center to be made available to affected Richmond County residents, and is working to provide other health centers with essential supplies, as many facilities’ cold chain storage and supplies were lost or damaged in the power outage following the storm. To meet this need, International Medical Corps is working to procure a large order of medication and medical supplies for two Medical Associates Plus facilities in Wren and Augusta.

International Medical Corps in the US and Territories

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 works with national, state and local partners and agencies in the healthcare system to deploy emergency response teams in response to disasters and address the significant challenges that face domestic healthcare services.

Response to Hurricane Helene			
4 states	25 volunteers	53 medical and behavioral health consultations*	
36 health facilities supported	17 FQHCs supported	3 state governments supported	2 non-profit organizations supported
1,512 wound-care kits distributed	4,944 hygiene kits distributed	7,924 hygiene products distributed	599 Other relief and recovery supplies distributed
435,294 indirect beneficiaries			

*services since October 13, 2024

2024 Atlantic Hurricane Season Response*

