



An International Medical Corps team member surveys building damage in Nashville, GA.

Hurricane Helene is responsible for at least 232 deaths across six states after making landfall on the Florida coast as a Category 4 hurricane on September 26.¹ This storm is one of the deadliest hurricanes to hit the US mainland in the last 50 years, second only to Hurricane Katrina, resulting in excessive flooding, power outages and landslides from Florida through North Carolina. Less than two weeks later, Hurricane Milton is in the Gulf of Mexico, heading toward Florida. Already a Category 5 storm, it is projected to hit the Tampa Bay area on Wednesday, affecting many of the same communities hit by Hurricane Helene. In preparation for the storm, the governor has declared a state of emergency and initiated Florida's largest evacuation since 2017's Hurricane Irma. People who are elderly, bedridden or dependent on battery-powered medical devices remain particularly vulnerable. Communities in Florida continue to clear the debris from Hurricane Helene as they brace themselves for Hurricane Milton.

In Georgia, the Carolinas and Tennessee, the impacts of Hurricane Helene remain severe, with half a million customers still without power or cell service, hundreds of thousands without access to clean and/or running water, and entire communities displaced. Helene's damages have caused major road closures and collapsed bridges, isolating individuals and communities, and leaving them without essential supplies such as water, food, medication and sanitation. The US Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency for Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee on September 30.²

Hospitals and health centers in affected areas are overwhelmed by the increased need, lacking the adequate space, beds and supplies to provide care—with some hospitals in the hardest-hit areas of western North Carolina without enough oxygen to meet patient need. Many healthcare facilities in affected areas are not fully operational, due to damages incurred by the storm, power outages or reduced staff availability (many staff were impacted by the hurricane themselves). The reduced availability of care and reduced access to services have increased the vulnerability of those

FAST FACTS

- **Hurricane Helene** made landfall in Florida on September 26 as a Category 4 hurricane.
- Helene plowed through Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas and Tennessee, and is responsible for more than 230 confirmed deaths across six states, many thousands of injuries and power outages for millions of customers.
- **Hurricane Milton**, which is now a Category 5 hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico, is expected to make landfall in Florida on Wednesday, affecting communities still recovering from Hurricane Helene. Florida has declared a state of emergency and has already initiated mass evacuations in anticipation of the storm's arrival.
- In 2024, there have been **13 named Atlantic storms**, including **five hurricanes** that have already 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 Helene**, International Medical Corps has deployed teams to Florida, Georgia and North Carolina, and is coordinating closely with partners in Tennessee to support response efforts there.
- In preparation for **Hurricane Milton**, International Medical Corps is coordinating with the Florida Division of Emergency Management to possibly deploy a mobile medical unit and is coordinating with local partners to preposition supplies.
- International Medical Corps has so far distributed 1,612 wound-care kits, 8,640 hygiene kits and more than 7,000 items, including first-aid supplies, mosquito repellent, handwashing stations and water bladders to 24 health centers and local partners.

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2024/10/05/us/helene-death-toll-rises-saturday/index.html>

² <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2024/09/30/hhs-secretary-xavier-becerra-declares-public-health-emergency-south-carolina-tennessee-hurricane-helene.html>

already at-risk, particularly those who are elderly or bedridden. Across all affected areas, shelter is a significant need, as entire communities have been displaced and homes that were damaged cannot be occupied due to structural impact, water damage, mold and/or contamination. Many of those displaced are in shelters or sleeping in tents and other temporary accommodations, with some shelters housing more than 300 people. Sanitation continues to be a widespread issue as there is still limited or no access to water and power in affected communities. Ongoing search-and-rescue and relief efforts, as well as grief over dead or missing loved ones, have left communities in need of mental health support.

International Medical Corps' Response

International Medical Corps has deployed multiple emergency response teams (ERTs) to respond to the impacts of Hurricane Helene across Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee. To date, International Medical Corps has distributed 8,640 hygiene kits, 1,612 wound-care kits, and more than 7,000 hygiene and emergency items to 19 health facilities and five relief centers across the region.

In preparation for Hurricane Milton's landfall in Florida this week, International Medical Corps has been requested by the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) to keep a mobile medical unit mission-ready package (MRP) on standby. As part of the standby procedures, International Medical Corps is readying all MRP assets—including clinical and operational staff and volunteers, supplies and equipment—to deploy and be operational within 48 hours of a request by FDEM. The team continues to coordinate with existing partners and distribution centers to preposition emergency supplies, equipment and other items to support a potential response.



International Medical Corps team members meet with representatives of an FQHC in Florida.

In response to Helene, International Medical Corps deployed an ERT to **Florida** in advance of the storm's landfall to coordinate with and support response efforts by the Florida Department of Health (FDoH) and FDEM emergency operations center (EOC). During the response, the team coordinated with an existing partner—federally qualified health center (FQHC) network Palms Medical Group, with 13 locations in the region—to distribute food and non-food items to ensure staff wellness and well-being, helping them return to work quickly and promote continuity of care. Items donated included non-perishable food, laundry detergent, tarps, flashlights, bug spray, sunscreen and other requested items. We also provided North Florida Medical Center, which has 10 locations in the region, with wound-care and hygiene kits in Cross City, which they distributed to patients and the local shelters. The team delivered 245 individual wound-care kits and 70 hygiene kits to state-run point-of-distribution sites in the hard-hit communities of Perry and Steinhatchee. International Medical Corps is continuing to coordinate closely with FQHC partners and the FDoH to support response efforts for Hurricane Helene and to prepare for Hurricane Milton.

Our ERT in **North Carolina** is working with the state and county EOCs and with the North Carolina Primary Care Association to support emergency response and recovery needs. Many community health clinics say they are unable to access power, leaving them to rely heavily on generators that require significant amounts of fuel. They also report limited access to running water and limited cell service, preventing patients and providers from maintaining essential lines of communication. Relief agencies and healthcare providers are reporting concerns about the increased needs for behavioral health services among affected populations, particularly for individuals and families displaced in shelters. These needs are anticipated to continue to grow rapidly in the coming days and weeks.

International Medical Corps is supporting 14 local health centers across affected counties. We have procured items to provide water and sanitation solutions, as well as supplies for patients and that enable healthcare staff to return to work, including 5,400 hygiene kits and additional hygiene supplies, handwashing stations, camping toilets, baby and adult diapers, portable washing machines and dryers, and portable showers. International Medical Corps is also coordinating closely with Buncombe County health officials and the local healthcare system to identify additional ways to meet needs and support the restoration of healthcare services to displaced populations, including solutions for clean water. The ERT is continuing to work with the EOC and is positioning assets and personnel to deploy integrated medical and behavioral health teams to support this response if requested by the EOC.

In **Tennessee**, International Medical Corps is partnering with two local FQHC networks to support their patient populations and healthcare staff. With almost all of its clinic locations rendered non-operational after the storm, one FQHC is looking to establish mobile clinics to reach isolated individuals and communities (primarily elderly patients). International Medical Corps is procuring response and relief supplies for each FQHC partner, including supplies for elderly patients and those with chronic conditions. The team has procured insulin cooling packs, bed pads, wet wipes, adult diapers, hand sanitizer, first-aid kits, mosquito repellent, batteries, handwashing sinks and stands, and two 240-liter water bladders.

International Medical Corps is also working to provide vaccines, including tetanus shots, because community members are sustaining acute injuries and are exposed to contaminated waters and surfaces as they undertake property cleanup and recovery efforts. We will continue to coordinate with partners to support additional needs in their recovery.

International Medical Corps also has deployed an ERT to **Georgia** to support response efforts and coordinate with the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency and local FQHCs. The team visited heavily impacted communities in the greater Augusta area of northern Georgia, and Lowndes County in southern Georgia, partnering with first-responder and locally-led response efforts—including the American Red Cross, the Lowndes County EOC and FQHC South Central Primary Care—to distribute emergency supplies. We have so far distributed feminine hygiene products, baby/adult diapers, wet wipes, 2,700 hygiene kits and basic first-aid supplies, and are continuing to work closely with these partners to provide relief and recovery supplies over the coming days.

In all impacted regions, community needs remain significant, particularly for elderly persons, those who are bedridden, and those with chronic disease or dependent on powered medical devices. Across the response, we are working with state bodies, community partners and local health clinics to support the locally-led response. We are offering medical and behavioral-health surge staffing and support, as well as urgently needed supplies. We are facilitating procurements of emergency and recovery supplies for staff and patients of healthcare centers, working with FQHC partners. Other urgent needs across the Southeast region include blood pressure cuffs, respiratory therapy machines, adult diapers, small ice packs and coolers for medication, glucometers, battery-operated fans, solar powered lanterns, cots, outdoor showers, mosquito repellent and hand sanitizers, among others.

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.

