

Tallahassee, Leon County sending crews, prepare aid ahead of Hurricane Milton

<https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/local/2024/10/08/city-of-tallahassee-and-leon-county-prepare-crews-and-aid-for-milton/75500352007/>

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Members of the city of Tallahassee's Electric Utility and Fleet department shipped out early Tuesday morning as part of [a massive relief effort](#) from local leaders and organizations as [Hurricane Milton](#) barrels towards Central Florida just days after a devastating landfall by [Hurricane Helene in the Big Bend](#).

Local crews had just returned home on Friday from Suwannee County and are now once again out on the road toward Lakeland with a variety of trucks and equipment.

"At the heart of our City's mission is a commitment to service and as our neighboring cities prepare for the impacts from Hurricane Milton, we are sending resources to support them," said City Manager Reese Goad in a prepared statement. "Our team's expertise and willingness to serve will ensure much needed resources are immediately available to assist with recovery efforts."

[Hurricane Milton](#) comes less than two weeks after Hurricane Helene tore through the Big Bend and decimated whole communities in Georgia and North Carolina. Already hitting category 5 level, Milton is expected to bring even more devastation to parts of the peninsula, as well as a storm surge of 10- to 15-feet that hasn't been seen in the last 100 years.

The twin tropical terrors have led to [a two-front response effort](#) for emergency managers and relief organizations.

Right behind the city electric crews are the city's wastewater crews, who arrived from assisting in Taylor and Suwannee counties. Crews are readying generators, pumps, vac trucks and other equipment for redeployment in the coming days.

Alongside them will be the Tallahassee Fire Department Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team who will deploy as soon as Wednesday.

Battalion Chief Kurt Hindle with TFD told the Tallahassee Democrat how crews are ready to be deployed as soon as today, that they are loading up helicopters to head out as soon as needed. Much like other crews, USAR is jumping from Helene to Milton and while that's the "nature of the job," according to Hindle, it can get personal at times depending on the storm.

"The difference is the size and, frankly, the scope of where it hits ... it's family, it's friends, it's neighbors, it's the person you go to church with, so it does change things," Hindle said. "The real challenge is making sure, you know, to keep things in check and understand that ... although we're here to do a job ... they're still people, whether we know them or not."

Hindle said that he expects "a lot of destruction and a lot of people displaced that really don't know what to do." Once on the ground they look at the initial needs and begin working through the several stages of rescue and recovery.

If "people need to be evacuated, all right, we develop an evacuation plan, we set up a landing zone," Hindle said. "Later in the scenario...we got people missing, so we're literally searching door to door, address to address, we're searching structures and then it moves from there....into a recovery."

An unspoken outcome of working during storm recovery and rescue is the toll on one's mental health, but Hindle assured that the men and women on their team are equipped with plenty of resources to help themselves. He said there is a "peer support team...designed to deal with those aspects" which is embedded into their team.

If there is something they can't handle in house, the state has it's own peer support team and healthcare professionals members can turn to.

"If I were to send a message to all the people (to be affected) ... we're working as hard and as dilligently as we can to make sure that everybody get their needs met," Hilton said.

Leon County/Red Cross Helene shelter at fairgrounds remains open for Milton

There is currently an American Red Cross shelter open in Leon County at the Leon County Fairgrounds, located at 441 Paul Russell Road. It was opened during Hurricane Helene and remains open for Milton evacuees, though none are there currently.

The shelter provides meals, snacks and water, health services, mental health services, charging stations, emergency supplies and "access to caseworkers to help you with disaster recovery planning and financial assistance for those who qualify."

The county tourism agency is working with VISIT FLORIDA to ensure that lodging websites, such as Booking.com, Trivago and more, are staying up to date with accurate information as [hotels in the capital county fill up](#).

The county has also notified the state about available debris hauling and clearing equipment and is providing communications equipment to St. Petersburg and staff mutual aid to Osceola County.