

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lee County morning update for Thursday, Sept. 26, regarding Hurricane Helene

Fort Myers, FL, Sept. 26, 2024 – Lee County Government has the following updates related to Hurricane Helene.

The Lee County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated, and county staff and partners continue to work closely with state and federal partners, including the Florida Division of Emergency Management, the National Weather Service and the National Hurricane Center.

Residents are invited to tune into the county's Facebook Live event planned for today at noon with Public Safety Director Ben Abes. Go to www.facebook.com/leecountyflbocc. The update also will air on the county's YouTube channel and LeeTV.

Emergency Management encourages all residents to stay home, if possible, throughout the day, as Helene's bands of inclement weather will continue to bring heavy rain and strong, gusty winds. Even though the weather may clear for brief periods, you are urged to stay indoors – especially this afternoon.

Do not drive if you do not have to. The massive storm will continue to impact our region even after it has passed to the north of Lee County. Don't drive through standing water. Monitor local law enforcement social media channels and local media outlets for flooded road information. Specifically, Fort Myers Beach Fire & Rescue requests motorists not drive to Fort Myers Beach at this time. Be aware that after the storm passes – depending on the severity of the wind – motorists should use caution at all intersections in case traffic signals are not functioning.

Lee County does not literally "close" bridges during hurricanes with barricades, cones, gates or signs because they can easily blow away, becoming ineffective and hazardous. Lee DOT strongly advises motorists to stay off bridges – and the roads leading to them— when sustained winds reach 40 mph. Motorists may encounter law enforcement officers near bridges. Follow the directions given.

The EOC is fully staffed today at a Level 2, with nearly all seats filled in Plans and Operations. Public Safety partners, including fire and law enforcement, are coordinating on any response issues that arise due to the strong winds. The Department of Transportation (DOT), Natural Resources and Utilities are pre-positioning crews to respond to impacts once the storm passes.

The EOC is working with FPL and LCEC to monitor power issues across the community. Residents who use generators should place generators at least 20 feet from doors and windows and should keep the exhaust pointed away from homes.

Residents who have not yet done so should sign up for AlertLee, which in addition to alerts about hurricane-related warnings and watches also provides tornado alerts. Visit www.leegov.com/hurricane/helene and scroll to the bottom of the landing page.

The Safe Havens that Lee County opened Wednesday remain open today for those who do not feel secure in their housing situation and who perhaps do not have a friend's home or a family member's home to go to.

The two Safe Havens will remain open as Lee County monitors the storm conditions. The locations are:

- North Fort Myers Recreation Center, 2000 North Recreation Park Way, North Fort Myers, FL, 22903
- Estero Recreation Center, 9200 Corkscrew Palms Blvd., Estero, FL, 33928

As of this morning, the North Fort Myers site was housing 44 people, and Estero had 19. No evacuation orders are in place, and no hurricane shelters are open.

Lee County offices are closed today along with all parks, libraries and other facilities. LeeTran's regular, fixed-route bus route service is not running today. Residential garbage, yard waste and recycling collection is suspended for today. Do not place your bins at the curb.

Reopening and resumption of normal operations announcements will be forthcoming later today.

Residents with questions about non-urgent matters can call the Emergency Information Hotline. United Way activated the hotline earlier this week. Call United Way 211 by dialing 2-1-1 or (239) 433-3900 with questions including sandbag distribution sites, closures and real-time updates, Call 9-1-1 for urgent or life-threatening matters.

The Department of Community Development asks that any unincorporated Lee County Residents with water intrusion in their homes, or those residing in the Special Flood Hazard Area with wind damage, send an email to FIRMinfo@leegov.com for assistance with permit requirements and resources. Residents also can visit www.leegov.com/dcd/BldPermitServ/disaster-recovery for information.

Members of the community should continue to take action to stay informed:

- Monitor reputable local media outlets, the National Weather Service-Tampa, and the National Hurricane Center.
- Follow Lee County Government and Lee County Public Safety on social media, including Facebook, YouTube, X and LinkedIn.
- Sign up for AlertLee and download the LeePrepares app from Google Play or the App Store.

To receive updates from Lee County Government, sign up for the newsletter here:

www.leegov.com/resources/newsletters. Follow Lee County Government on Facebook, www.facebook.com/leecountyflbocc.