

# U.S. Government Readies for Hurricane Ophelia, Citizen Preparedness is Crucial

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Federal, state and local officials are taking precautions as Hurricane Ophelia makes landfall on the East Coast, and ensuring emergency relief supplies are pre-positioned in strategic locations if needed. Government officials continue to urge residents in eastern coastal states to monitor the storm's progress, to make preparations for themselves and their families now, and to follow the instructions of local officials.

Several hundred trailers of water and ice and dozens of trailers of meals-ready-to-eat (MREs) are pre-positioned today in Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Virginia to address the potential effects of Hurricane Ophelia if needed by the states. The Governor of North Carolina has declared a state of emergency and issued mandatory evacuations of potentially affected areas. In addition, federal agencies stand ready to provide the following support if necessary:

- The **U.S. Department of Agriculture** has identified food sources for meal support operations. Other emergency programs, such as food stamps, are prepared to be activated if required.
- The **U.S. Department of Defense** has Defense Coordinating Officers and Defense Coordinating Elements in place in North and South Carolina and a Defense Liaison Officer in Virginia.
  - The **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** has planning response teams on alert for North and South Carolina for temporary power, ice, water, debris, and logistics.
- The **U.S. Department of Energy** is prepared to track and access power outages and provide assistance to state and local governments and industry as required.
- The **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** has staff in the Emergency Operations Centers in both North Carolina and South Carolina. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have readied Push Packages of medical supplies and equipment from the Strategic National Stockpile along with advisory teams of experts ready to assist both states. For information on hurricane preparedness and recovery information to protect your health see <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes/index.asp>.
- The **U.S. Department of Homeland Security** has deployed a team to monitor the storm's progress and coordinate federal activity. Homeland Security components are providing further support:
  - **FEMA's** National Disaster Medical System and Urban Search and Rescue program have three Disaster Medical Assistance Teams, six Urban Search and Rescue teams and various other expert and medical personnel activated or deployed.
  - **FEMA's** National Response Coordination Center is operating at Level 1 Operations (24-7) in support of regional response efforts for Hurricane Ophelia.
  - Daily video-teleconferences are being conducted with the **National Hurricane Center**, **FEMA** headquarters, FEMA regional offices, the potentially affected states, and other emergency management personnel.
  - **U.S. Coast Guard** crews are pre-positioning search and rescue, pollution response and aides to navigation assets for post storm response. The Captain of the Port for Sector North Carolina has closed the ports of Wilmington and Morehead City to all vessel traffic, and has instituted a safety zone to control vessel movements and port activities in North

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- o **U.S. Customs and Border Protection**

has air assets available to assist rapid needs damage assessment operations. Multiple Safe Boats, Sea Arks, law enforcement vessels, other vehicles and generators could be deployed if necessary.

- **U.S. Department of the Interior**

agencies, including the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, have alerted visitors and closed parks and wildlife refuges to expedite evacuation of areas in the hurricane's path. These facilities include the National Park Service Outer Banks Group, Wright Brothers National Memorial, Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, Cape Lookout and Cape Hatteras National Seashores, Moores Creek National Battlefield and Pea Island Refuge. U.S. Geological Survey offices in North Carolina and Virginia are preparing for possible landfall, and a USGS storm response team has been activated.

- The **U.S. Department of Transportation** is coordinating with the **U.S. Department of Defense** and local authorities to provide for potential fixed-wing and rotor aircraft support.
- The **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** has seven on-scene coordinators (OSCs) available for deployment if necessary.
- The U.S. Department of Labor's **Occupational Safety and Health Administration** is prepared to provide technical assistance to ensure the health and safety of workers during hurricane clean-up and recovery.

The federal government is coordinating closely with state and local officials and emergency management personnel to maximize readiness and response efforts and to provide any assistance requested by the states.

Individual preparedness is crucial for citizens and their families before a storm, and residents should be prepared with 72 hours of supplies. All emergency kits should include as a minimum: first aid kits, emergency food and water, prescription medication, emergency cash and credit cards, valid identification, sturdy shoes and a change of clothes.

Comprehensive tips for disaster kits and family disaster plans are available online at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov), [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov), and [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).