



THE FLORIDA SENATE
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Hurricane Relief, Recovery, and Response Legislation Signed Into Law
SB 180 by Senator DiCeglie Helps Floridians to Rebuild and Fortify Homes, Enhances Resiliency Planning and Emergency Readiness

Tallahassee—Senate Bill (SB) 180, Emergencies, by Senator Nick DiCeglie (R-Indian Rocks Beach) was signed into law yesterday by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. The legislation bolsters hurricane relief, response, and recovery efforts in Florida.

SB 180 supports Florida homeowners rebuilding after a storm with clear, streamlined permitting resources and clarification about rebuilding guidelines to ensure families can make the repairs they need without being hit with a higher tax bill. The bill also increases disaster management planning, emergency resource coordination, financial transparency, and reporting across state and local government disaster management entities.

“Multiple major hurricanes ravaged Florida last year, leaving extensive damage statewide,” said Senator DiCeglie, whose hometown and district were among the hardest hit during the 2024 Hurricane Season. “After a storm, Floridians need a clear path to recovery. We’re fighting for families to focus on rebuilding without additional delays or burdens, especially for those who sustained damage or lost their homes. Working with our state and local emergency responders, we can streamline restoration efforts and improve emergency response coordination, fortifying and strengthening our communities before the next storm.”

“Florida has set a high bar as the nation’s model in storm response and recovery,” said Senate President Ben Albritton (R-Wauchula), whose district experienced major inland flooding and agriculture and citrus loss during the 2024 Hurricane Season. “It’s a testament to our first responders and emergency personnel, as well as the strength and resilience of Floridians in the aftermath of a devastating hurricane. We can always do better. We are incorporating lessons learned and identifying new opportunities to support community restoration and enhance disaster management through proactive planning and coordination. Through these initiatives, Floridians can focus on what matters most: rebuilding their homes, their lives, and their communities.”

The bill makes various changes to the emergency preparation and response activities of state and local governments:

Regarding the responsibilities of the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), the bill:

- Requires the FDEM, for the purpose of the Hurricane Loss Mitigation Program, to prioritize use of funds for shelters located in counties, rather than regional planning councils, that have a shelter deficit, and for projects that are publicly owned, other than schools.
- Combines the FDEM shelter reports and requires it to be submitted to the Governor and Legislature annually, rather than biennially, and requires prioritization of non-school public facilities to be recommended for retrofit.
- Directs the FDEM to conduct annual regional hurricane readiness sessions and provide biennial emergency management training for specified county and municipal personnel.
- Renames the Natural Hazards Interagency Workgroup as the “Natural Hazards Risks and Mitigation Interagency Coordinating Group,” of which the executive director of the FDEM is the administrator and substantially revises the membership and duties of the group.
- Requires the FDEM to report annually to the Legislature on the expenditures related to emergencies incurred over the past year, including a summary of the event, detailed expenditures, and an accounting of all inventory and assets purchased (effective January 1, 2026).
- Requires contracts executed to support the response to a declared state of emergency to be posted on the state’s secure contract tracking system (effective January 1, 2026).
- Provides additional requirements for the FDEM handling of federal funds, including legislative notification for innovative uses and standardizing and streamlining processes related to the distribution of federal financial assistance to state and local agencies.
- Requires state agencies, counties, and municipalities to notify the FDEM by May 1 annually of the person designated as the emergency contact for the state agency, county, or municipality, and his or her alternate.
- Requires the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to submit and biannually update a Flood Inventory and Restoration Report to the FDEM, working with water management districts, local governments, and operators of public and private stormwater systems to identify flooding risks, provide inspection schedules, and list funding priorities.
- Requires the FDEM to consult with local governments and the appropriate state agencies to recommend statutory changes to streamline the permitting process for repairing and rebuilding structures damaged by natural emergencies and submit a report to the Legislature by July 1, 2026.

Regarding the emergency preparedness and response duties and directives of local governments, the bill:

- Requires each county and municipality to post certain information related to emergency response and preparation on its website, including frequently asked questions related to

natural emergency response and preparedness, a disaster supply and emergency shelter list, links to information about flood zone, a checklist for post-storm recovery, and information specific to persons with disabilities.

- Requires each county and municipality to develop a post-storm permitting plan to expedite recovery and rebuilding and ensure sufficient staffing for increased permitting and inspection demands. Each local government must also publish on its website a post-storm permitting guide to advise residents of post-storm permitting procedures and rebuilding requirements.
- Directs each county and municipality to apply to the DEP for authorization of at least one debris management site and encourages local governments to add an addendum to existing solid waste contracts for the collection of storm-generated debris.
- Prohibits each county and municipality located within an area for which a state of emergency is declared for a hurricane or tropical storm from increasing building permit or inspection fees for 180 days after the declaration.
- Prohibits a local government participating in the National Flood Insurance Program from adopting cumulative substantial improvement periods, also known as “lookback ordinances.”
- Prohibits the imposition of impact fees for replacement structures if the land use is the same as the original, unless a replacement structure increases demand on public facilities.
- Increases the threshold above which a property appraiser must assess repairs at just value after damage due to calamity to 130 percent of the square footage before destruction or 2,000 total square feet.

Additionally, for one year after a hurricane makes landfall, the bill prohibits certain counties and municipalities from proposing or adopting a moratorium on the construction or redevelopment of property or more restrictive or burdensome regulations or procedures pertaining to land development. If these provisions are not followed, the bill provides a procedure for a person to file a suit against a local government for declaratory and injunctive relief and entitles a prevailing plaintiff reasonable attorney fees and costs. A county listed in a federal disaster declaration, or a municipality located within such a county, located entirely or partially within 100 miles of a hurricane’s track is subject to the prohibition.

For Hurricane Debby, Hurricane Helene, and Hurricane Milton, the bill provides similar prohibitions on construction moratoriums and burdensome or restrictive regulations. The provisions apply until October 1, 2027, and are applied retroactively to August 1, 2024.

The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) must study the actions of local government after hurricanes which are related to comprehensive plans, land development regulations, and procedures for review, approval, or issuance of site plans, permits, or development orders. The OPPAGA must submit a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2025, which includes recommendations for options to remove impediments to construction, reconstruction, or redevelopment and prevent local governments from implementing burdensome or restrictive procedures or processes.

The bill also introduces the following policy changes aimed at enhancing the state's emergency preparedness and response efforts:

- Allows Florida National Guard servicemembers to provide medical care within their scope of licensure to military personnel and civilians during emergencies.
- Provides for the tolling and extension of a formal determination of the delineation of the extent of wetlands in the event a state of emergency is declared, which applies retroactively to January 1, 2023.
- Requires a tenant to be given an opportunity to collect his or her belongings or given notice of a date by which the tenant will be able to do so when a rented premise is damaged or destroyed.
- Extends the evacuation clearance time for the Florida Keys Area of Critical State Concern from 24 hours to 24.5 hours and directs the Department of Commerce to conduct a study to determine the number of building permit allocations that may be distributed based on this change. Such building permit allocations may not exceed 900 total allocations and must be distributed over 10 years. The bill also establishes requirements for distribution and issuance of the permits.
- Provides for the regulation of hoisting equipment during hurricanes, requiring equipment to be secured in a specified manner no later than 24 hours before the impacts of a hurricane are anticipated to begin. The Florida Building Commission must establish best practices for the utilization of tower cranes and hoisting equipment on construction job sites during hurricane season and report to the Legislature by December 31, 2026.
- Provides that the estimated costs of a renovation of property damaged by a natural disaster must exceed 75 percent of the fair market value of the building prior to the disaster before the property must be rebuilt to current thermal efficiency standards.
- Requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide special needs shelter registration information to its clients and caregivers.
- Requires the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Elder Affairs and with the Agency for Persons with Disabilities to ensure special needs shelter registry information is provided to residents of low-income senior independent living facilities and independent living properties for persons with disabilities that received funding through the corporation.
- Provides that a caregiver of a person with special needs who is eligible for admission to a special needs shelter, and all persons for whom he or she is the caregiver, must be allowed to shelter together in the special needs shelter.

Finally, effective January 1, 2026, the bill requires all state and local government contracts for goods or services related to emergency response entered into, renewed, or amended on or after July 1, 2025, to include a provision that, upon breach during an emergency recovery period, the contractor is required to pay actual, consequential, and liquidated damages and a \$5,000 penalty. The bill defines "emergency recovery period" as the 1-year period that begins on the date the Governor initially declared a state of emergency for a natural emergency.

For more information, please visit www.FLSenate.gov.

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