



MAY 2025

Hurricane Helene: Six-Month Report

RESPONSE AT A GLANCE



Estimated **473,100** people reached with relief and recovery services, including financial assistance



More than **3.3 million** meals and snacks served with partners



More than **149,000** households provided with relief items



Nearly **56,500** overnight shelter stays provided with partners

Cumulative figures in Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia in response to Hurricane Helene as of March 26, 2025.

Delivering Relief and Comfort to Heartbroken Residents Across 10 States

Last September, Hurricane Helene swept through much of the South, bringing heartbreaking destruction to communities from the Gulf Coast to the Appalachians. Homes on Florida's western coast and Big Bend were battered by high winds and inundated by storm surge as the hurricane came ashore. As Helene's remnants swept north, torrential rains caused flash flooding that devastated thousands of homes and businesses, as well as critical infrastructure, with catastrophic impacts in the city of Asheville and other mountain communities across western North Carolina and neighboring states.

To aid tens of thousands of hard-hit survivors, the American Red Cross mounted a massive response across 10 states, including Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana. Battling storm-related communication and access challenges, dedicated Red Cross volunteers and employees were quickly on the ground across this vast geography. They worked side by side with our disaster response partners to provide safe shelter, warm meals, clean drinking water and critical relief supplies to affected individuals and families — some of whom had lost nearly everything they owned.

This essential support made a real difference for Helene survivors like Florida resident Dorothy Brooks. Unable to find a hotel room as Helene approached, Dorothy decided to stay put. That decision turned into a life-or-death struggle as rising waters quickly engulfed her neighborhood. "The storm surge came up so quickly," Dorothy said, "and was rushing like a river so I couldn't open the door. I finally got a window open to get out of the house, but the water was over three feet deep."

Above: Red Cross worker Jillian Robertson stands above the Broad River in Chimney Rock, North Carolina, surveying damage from Hurricane Helene. The river flooded its banks, sweeping away homes, cars, trees and other debris. Months later, the Red Cross is still on the ground providing financial assistance to residents of Chimney Rock and other affected areas as they continue their recovery. Photo by Marko Kovic/American Red Cross



“When you see the Red Cross, you know you are safe. They’ve treated me so good since I’ve been here.”

DOROTHY BROOKS, OF FLORIDA, WHO FOUND REFUGE IN A RED CROSS EMERGENCY SHELTER AFTER BEING RESCUED FROM HELENE’S STORM SURGE

Eventually, Dorothy was rescued by a Coast Guard Humvee and brought to a Red Cross shelter in Hudson, Florida. “When you see the Red Cross, you know you are safe,” she said. “They’ve treated me so good since I’ve been here.”

For many people, finding safe shelter after Helene’s initial impact was just the first hurdle. In some areas, residents were left without power, running water, road access or working communications for days. As individuals and families struggled to pick up the pieces, the Red Cross was there, offering basic health services like replacing lost prescription medications or eyeglasses, bringing comfort to survivors in a time of grief and uncertainty, and providing compassionate assistance to help people reconnect with missing loved ones. Volunteers also visited affected areas in Red Cross emergency response vehicles, delivering food, water and cleanup items, as well as non-traditional relief supplies like laundry trailers, cooking stoves and generator parts.

In addition, our teams reached out to more isolated and economically vulnerable communities across multiple states to ensure they were aware of and able to access the support they needed. Critically, the Red Cross also offered Immediate Financial Assistance — emergency funds storm survivors can use as they see fit, for example, to pay for necessities like groceries and gas, rental deposits and transportation costs, utility bills and much more.



Above: Asheville, North Carolina, resident Danny Bailey receives a case of water from Red Cross volunteer Richard Kimball, who drove an emergency response vehicle through Asheville neighborhoods to deliver meals, water and cleanup kits to residents impacted by Hurricane Helene. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross. Right: Hurricane survivor Dorothy Brooks is comforted by a Red Cross worker at an emergency shelter in Hudson, Florida. Dorothy’s home and neighborhood suffered severe flood damage from Helene’s storm surge. Photo by Marko Kokic/American Red Cross

Financial Assistance Helps Helene Survivors Get Back on Their Feet

Powered by the generosity of countless donors who gave to help people when their lives were turned upside down by Hurricane Helene, the Red Cross has provided financial assistance and more to help some of the hardest-hit residents get back on their feet. In addition to Immediate Assistance provided in the early weeks of our response, we also delivered Bridge Assistance—additional funds to help the most severely affected households overcome additional barriers to their recovery. This assistance helps bridge the gap when a disaster destroys the community’s ability to help itself recover and other large-scale resources may not yet be available. As of March 26, 2025, the Red Cross had distributed approximately **\$10.8 million in direct financial assistance**, including Immediate and Bridge Assistance, to help hurricane survivors with their most pressing needs.

“[The Red Cross financial assistance] was more than amazing, more than a blessing.... It helped tremendously!”

SAMANTHA HURST, OF DEL RIO, TENNESSEE, WHOSE FAMILY NARROWLY ESCAPED FLASH FLOODING CAUSED BY HELENE

Samantha Hurst, of Del Rio, Tennessee, and her 10-year-old son narrowly escaped floodwaters that reached a height of over eight feet in their home. “It was like boom — all of a sudden — it just came up so fast!” she said. Samantha described the Immediate and Bridge Assistance she received from the Red Cross as “more than amazing, more than a blessing.”

“It helped tremendously,” she added. Water destroyed everything in her mobile home, and it had to be gutted. Samantha and her family had been living with her brother, so some of the Bridge Assistance might initially go to groceries and gas, she explained, but “the next step is [buying] doors! It’s a big help,” she said.

Samantha’s family was just one of thousands across the affected region who received these vital funds, thanks to our compassionate donors. As they work to rebuild their lives, some of these Helene survivors generously shared their disaster stories and how Red Cross financial assistance has helped them meet a variety of pressing needs.

THE GILLEM FAMILY. As Helene battered western North Carolina, Kristin Gillem was hunkered down at home with her family. Suddenly, a falling tree ripped through the roof of their house. While Kristin got out safely with her son and two daughters, the tree trapped her husband upstairs, forcing him to climb onto the roof in the midst of the hurricane to escape.



Hurricane survivor Kristin Gillem hugs a Red Cross volunteer in Brevard, North Carolina. Kristin’s family, whose home was destroyed by Helene, received Bridge Financial Assistance and other support from the Red Cross in the storm’s wake. Photo by Marko Kocic/American Red Cross

According to Kristin, first responders on the scene had never seen this much damage to a home without loss of life. “We’re just blessed,” she said. “We were blessed to get out of the house, be taken to a shelter, have a Red Cross cot.... We even saved the blankets that [the Red Cross] gave us.”

Kristin and her son share an October birthday, and after they had moved out of the Red Cross shelter to stay with family, they celebrated with an overnight stay at a hotel. The gift for her son, she said, was just getting to sleep in his own bed. The Bridge Assistance from the Red Cross will support her recovery and get her to the next step. “One day at a time, one problem at a time,” she said.

THE JOHNSON FAMILY. “I just knew something was going to happen,” Shelita Johnson recalled. That gut feeling turned into a frightening reality for the Augusta, Georgia, resident as Hurricane Helene barreled through in late September. Around 3 a.m., Shelita and her husband, Corey, heard a crash. “That’s when the neighbor’s first tree fell,” Shelita said. Soon after, a second tree crashed onto their home, piercing the roof.

“The ceiling just kind of collapsed on me,” she said. “My husband had to get me out of the rubble, and my heart was pounding.”

In addition to delivering hot meals and drinking water to their neighborhood in Helene’s wake, the Red Cross provided the Johnsons with Immediate Financial Assistance and connected Shelita with counseling services to help her process the traumatic experience. But that wasn’t the last she heard from the Red Cross.

Months after the storm, the Red Cross reached out to Shelita again, letting her know about our Bridge Assistance program. The family is using these additional funds to help cover what insurance won’t — most recently, to make repairs to the roof. “I very much appreciated [the Bridge Assistance],” she said. “I was shocked when I got the text!”

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SHELITA JOHNSON, OF AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, RECALLING THE MOMENT WHEN THE RED CROSS REACHED OUT TO OFFER HER ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO HELP WITH RECOVERY



Shelita Johnson, of Augusta, Georgia, and her husband received Immediate and Bridge Assistance from the Red Cross after a falling tree crashed into their house, piercing the roof and collapsing their bedroom ceiling. Photos by American Red Cross and courtesy of Shelita Johnson

“I’m so thankful for the selfless and consistent support of the American Red Cross.”

MELISSA MCCABE, OF BREVARD, NORTH CAROLINA, WHOSE FAMILY SPENT MONTHS IN TEMPORARY HOUSING AFTER HELENE DESTROYED THEIR HOME



Red Cross volunteer Anne Piantka-Guymon speaks to Helene survivor Melissa McCabe. Melissa says her family has been staying in temporary housing since the disaster, and financial assistance from the Red Cross will help with expenses. Photo by Marko Kokic/American Red Cross

THE MCCABE FAMILY. When Melissa McCabe visited a Red Cross service site in Brevard, North Carolina, for people affected by Helene, it had been nearly five months since the storm destroyed her family’s home. “So much has happened,” she told volunteer Anne Piantka-Guymon.

Melissa and her husband had been paying for temporary housing themselves, caring for their family of six, plus multiple pets, and running through their retirement savings to keep everyone afloat.

“I’m so thankful for the selfless and consistent support of the American Red Cross,” Melissa said. “They quite literally tracked us down by phone, text and email to give us money, which has been helpful to offset our living expenses.” The family is slated to move back into their home in September and is hopeful for better times ahead.

THE JOHNS FAMILY. “It was like slow motion at first,” Donna Johns said of the terrifying landslide that hit her family’s home when Helene swept through western North Carolina. The wall in front of her bulged, then burst, as water and debris swept over her. Had her husband not rolled out of bed onto the floor in the next room, she wonders what would have happened, as the collapsing roof crushed the head of the bed where he had been sleeping seconds before.

Her grandson, Jamie, was also covered by debris. Only with the help of their dog, Tucker, who climbed to the top of the pile where Jamie was trapped and started barking, were rescue workers able to find and free him.



With their home destroyed, the family stayed in a Red Cross shelter before moving closer to the hospital, where Jamie was being treated for his injuries.

When Donna received a text from the Red Cross saying she had qualified for an additional round of Bridge Financial Assistance, it felt too good to be true. She texted Sheila Crunkleton, the Red Cross executive director for North Carolina, whom she had met months earlier, asking, “Is this legitimate?” Sheila assured her it was. Donna said her family will use the financial assistance to help with rent and other expenses.

Meeting Long-Term Recovery Needs in Hard-Hit Communities

As Helene survivors began to get back on their feet and rebuild their lives, the Red Cross launched extensive recovery operations to support them and their communities. Six months after Helene struck, Red Cross teams were implementing long-term recovery programs in the most heavily impacted states — North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia and Tennessee — to help and support people affected by the devastation the storms left behind.

In addition to providing additional financial assistance to households whose homes were severely damaged or destroyed, we have also funded grants to partner nonprofits and community organizations that can help meet specialized response and recovery needs, **with approximately \$2.3 million in response impact grants and long-term recovery grants awarded so far (and more to come).**

Donna Johns shows Red Cross worker Jillian Robertson photos of her home before and after it was destroyed by a landslide caused by Hurricane Helene, while her husband and two grandkids slept inside. Photo by Marko Kobic/American Red Cross

Red Cross recovery grants focus on supporting individual, family and community needs. This program provides funding to nonprofits and community-based groups to facilitate the expansion of current services and the creation of new programs that aid in individual and community recovery and the strengthening of resilience across the affected area. This could include direct support for hurricane survivors, such as home repair, food security needs, mental health programming and legal advocacy, as well as aid to the impacted communities — from empowering community members to inform and guide recovery efforts to developing and implementing a range of preparedness and resiliency initiatives.

In addition to monetary aid, the Red Cross is also supporting affected communities by providing technical expertise to Long-Term Recovery Groups (LTRGs), community-led organizations comprised of local nonprofits and residents dedicated to helping their community recover after disasters strike. These groups often stay active in communities that have suffered from repetitive disaster impacts. This enables them to stand up faster and retain that important institutional knowledge when the next disaster strikes, so they won't have to start from scratch.

The Red Cross is here for the long haul. Altogether, this array of activities — from direct financial assistance for those affected, to LTRG support and long-term recovery grants — will continue to help impacted individuals and families recover from the damage and destruction caused by Hurricane Helene, and help their communities become more resilient in the weeks, months and years to come.



Nearly a week after Helene's six- to seven-foot storm surge flooded parts of the city, Red Cross volunteer Erica Santella delivers meals to an impacted neighborhood in St. Petersburg, Florida. Many residents lacked electrical power to prepare meals or cool their homes for days, and even weeks, after the disaster. Photo by Marko Kovic/American Red Cross

Generous Donors Power Hurricane Helene Relief and Recovery

Thanks to generous supporters, the Red Cross has raised \$174.1 million¹ designated for our Hurricane Helene response to help people impacted by this disaster — including the value of critical donated goods and services. As of March 26, 2025, the Red Cross had already spent or made commitments to spend approximately \$59.3 million on relief and recovery efforts for Hurricane Helene. We will continue to program the remaining funds, as well as funds from our combined Hurricanes Milton and Helene designation, to provide and support services for both individual and community long-term recovery for people impacted by Hurricane Helene.

Hurricane Helene Expenses and Commitments ^{2,3,4} (in millions) as of March 26, 2025						
Expense Categories	Food, Shelter and Relief Items	Health and Emotional Support	Financial Assistance	Community Recovery and Resilience	Total	Expense %
Financial assistance, food and other relief items ⁵	\$17.6	\$0.7	\$2.9	\$0.4	\$21.6	36%
Long-term recovery programs to help unmet needs	–	–	\$7.9	\$1.9	\$9.8	16%
Deployment of volunteers and staff (includes airfare, lodging, meals and vehicles)	\$7.0	\$0.9	\$1.6	–	\$9.5	16%
Kitchen, shelter and other logistics that enable service delivery	\$2.6	\$0.4	\$0.6	–	\$3.6	6%
Equipment, maintenance and fueling of Red Cross emergency vehicles and rented trucks	\$2.3	–	–	–	\$2.3	4%
Full-time Red Cross employees	\$1.6	–	\$0.2	\$0.2	\$2.0	3%
Temporary disaster hires	\$0.8	\$0.3	\$0.3	\$0.2	\$1.6	3%
IT, communications and call centers	\$1.2	\$0.1	\$0.2	–	\$1.5	3%
Freight, postage and warehousing	\$1.3	–	–	–	\$1.5	3%
Total Program Expenses	\$34.6	\$2.4	\$13.7	\$2.7	\$53.4	90%
Management, general and fundraising ⁶					\$5.9	10%
Total Spent & Committed					\$59.3	100%
Program Dollars to Be Spent on Recovery					\$103.3	
Management, general and fundraising remaining to be applied					\$11.5	
Total Budget					\$174.1	

¹ Does not include \$51.5 million raised through the combined "Hurricanes Milton and Helene" designation. These funds will be programmed as needed to help people impacted by hurricanes Helene and Milton.

² Dollar figures are rounded to the nearest \$100,000; therefore, expenses \$49,999 and below are represented as zero.

³ Includes Hurricane Helene responses in Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

⁴ Includes expenses that will be reimbursed by the State of Florida.

⁵ Two expense categories show a decrease from the 3-month report. This is due to updated, more accurate data splitting to account for expenses in areas where the Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton responses overlapped.

⁶ Management, general and fundraising expenses support our work at its core and are indispensable to running the organization and helping people in need. They include the people and systems to maintain our enterprise-wide computer and telecommunications, HR and payroll systems to support nearly 18,000 employees and more than 265,000 volunteers, fundraising and communications functions, and other support services across all program lines. Ninety cents of every dollar spent for Hurricane Helene will support delivering care and comfort for people affected by this disaster.



Thank you!



**American
Red Cross**

The Red Cross must be ready for every disaster, big or small, and we respond to an average of about 65,000 disasters each year — including home fires, severe weather, floods and wildfires. Those in need turn to the Red Cross in their darkest hours because they know they can depend on us right after the disaster and throughout their recovery. Your donation helps us fulfill this promise. We are grateful for your trust.

To learn more about our response and some of the people we've helped, please visit our **Hurricane Helene Story Map** at redcross.org/hurricane-helene.

Above: Red Cross volunteer Barb Koster spent time with shelter residents Yessica Arias and 3-month-old Emiliano in Fletcher, North Carolina. Yessica and baby Emiliano came to the Red Cross shelter following Hurricane Helene's devastation. Photo by Scott Dalton/American Red Cross