

# Harris Visits Georgia After Hurricane Helene, Promising Federal Help

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Vice President Kamala Harris surveyed damage from Hurricane Helene on Wednesday in Georgia, promising residents that the federal government was rushing to help with the recovery.

“The president and I have been paying close attention from the beginning to what we need to do to make sure the federal resources hit the ground as quickly as possible,” Ms. Harris said, adding, “That work has been happening.”

Standing in front of a house covered in fallen trees in the Meadowbrook neighborhood of Augusta, Ga., Ms. Harris announced that the federal government would cover 100 percent of the costs of debris removal and other emergency protective measures for three months to help the state recover. She described how much of the community did not have power, with many lacking access to water, and how she had met one woman who lost her husband. She called the damage “extraordinary” and the loss of life “particularly devastating.”

Ms. Harris also met with local officials and received a briefing on recovery efforts, during which she praised emergency responders who were working even amid their own personal struggles, telling them she was “here to thank you and to listen.” She helped hand out food and snacks at a community center that had been turned into a shelter. Her visit to the battleground state came as she has confronted an extraordinary confluence of political headwinds this week, including a widening conflict in the Middle East and a historic labor strike. The developments have forced her to balance the duties of being second-in-command while also projecting strength as the potential next commander in chief.

Ms. Harris’s visit to Georgia replaced plans for a campaign bus tour in Pennsylvania with her running mate, Gov. Tim Walz of Minnesota, who set off in the Northern battleground on his own the day after his vice-presidential debate. She will continue campaigning on Thursday in Wisconsin and Friday in Michigan, and is later set to travel to North Carolina to assess storm damage. While Ms. Harris visited Georgia in her official capacity, the trip carried significance for her campaign. She is trying to repeat President Biden’s 2020 victory in the state, where polls show former President Donald J. Trump with a narrow edge. The race is also extremely close in North Carolina, which Mr. Biden visited on Wednesday and where the storm ravaged numerous communities, including the Democratic stronghold of Asheville.

After Helene struck, Mr. Trump moved quickly to capitalize, visiting Valdosta, Ga., on Monday and seeking to cast the natural disaster’s fallout as a failure of Ms. Harris’s and Mr. Biden’s leadership. Both Democrats have been in touch with elected officials in the states hit by the storm, and have vowed to send as many resources as each place needs.

“We are here for the long haul,” Ms. Harris said in her remarks on Wednesday. Mr. Biden signed disaster declarations for the affected areas, and the federal government has sent help, including more than 1,200 federal emergency personnel. On Tuesday, Mr. Biden also ordered the Department of Defense to deploy up to 1,000 active-duty troops to help deliver food, water and other services. He has also said that he expects to ask Congress for more relief funding.

But that has not stopped Mr. Trump and his campaign from accusing Mr. Biden and his administration of not being responsive to major emergencies. As the hurricane barreled down on the region over the weekend, the former president criticized Ms. Harris and Mr. Biden for being away from Washington.

“Biden is in Delaware sleeping right now in one of his many estates,” Mr. Trump, who owns more homes than the president, proclaimed at a rally in Pennsylvania. He said that Ms. Harris, who was attending fund-raising events on the West Coast, was “with her radical left lunatic donors, when big parts of our country have been devastated by that massive hurricane and are underwater, with many, many people dead.” Mr. Trump’s knack for politicking off disasters has proved a vulnerability for the Biden administration.

In 2023, the former president visited East Palestine, Ohio, soon after a toxic train derailment saturated the town’s land with chemicals. It took Mr. Biden, who had promised to visit “at some point,” more than a year to arrive, to the dismay of many residents and even some elected officials in his own party.

During his trip to Valdosta on Monday, Mr. Trump falsely claimed that Mr. Biden had not been in touch with Gov. Brian Kemp of Georgia, which the governor, a Republican, promptly denied.

Wearing a red “Make America Great Again” cap, Mr. Trump concluded his remarks by saying, “We’re not talking about politics now.”