



Press Release

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Episcopal Relief & Development Responds to Deadly Hurricane Florence

Episcopal Relief & Development is working with partners to provide critical support for the most vulnerable communities affected by Hurricane Florence.

Through a partnership with the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina, the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina and the Episcopal Farmworker Ministry, the organization is providing emergency assistance to migrant and seasonal farmworkers including water, food, cleaning supplies, hygiene kits, clothing and transportation to safe locations in two counties in eastern North Carolina.

On Friday, September 14, Hurricane Florence made landfall in Wilmington, North Carolina. The system, which has been downgraded to a tropical depression, has killed at least 16 people in storm-related incidents. Hundreds have been rescued from flooded areas and thousands are in shelters. More than 30 inches of rain fell in parts of North Carolina, surpassing the previous record set during Hurricane Floyd in 1999. As farm fields and riverside neighborhoods fill up with water, residents are bracing for an onslaught of major flooding over the next few days. State officials believe tens of thousands of homes have been damaged so far, with days of challenges on the horizon.

“Hurricane Florence is expected to have a catastrophic effect on the lives of thousands of North Carolinians. Migrant and seasonal farmworkers in rural areas are particularly at risk,” said Lariza Garzón, Executive Director of the Episcopal Farmworker Ministry.

Episcopal Relief & Development is partnering with this joint ministry of the dioceses of East Carolina and North Carolina to provide critical emergency support for this particularly vulnerable population.

H2A workers (migrant workers from abroad who are working in agriculture through the H2A Visa Program) are especially vulnerable since they depend on their employers for housing and transportation, and in many cases, live in isolated basic housing conditions. The ministry will be focusing its support on 64 camps in two counties that its leaders believe are particularly vulnerable.

“I am proud of the work that our church partners are engaged in with seasonal farmworkers,” said Katie Mears, Senior Director for Episcopal Relief & Development’s US Disaster Program. “They are uniquely positioned to help to address the needs of this isolated and remote community.”

Additional response activities include:

- Holding ongoing coordination calls with leaders from affected dioceses to help them assess needs and mobilize to respond to the most vulnerable communities
- Leading online trainings in both English and Spanish to prepare congregational leaders to assess their communities' needs and effectively respond
- Equipping many impacted dioceses with AlertMedia, a cloud-based mass messaging system that was successfully used after Hurricane Harvey and Irma to enable the dioceses to communicate with staff and congregational leaders to share information and assess needs

"The waters are still rising and assessments are limited due to safety concerns," continued Mears.

"We will continue working together with church partners to serve and care for affected communities in the weeks and months ahead."

Church bulletins inserts can be found [here](#). The bishops from impacted dioceses in the Carolinas shared a joint [statement](#) on the challenges of sending donated goods and unaffiliated volunteers from outside the region.

Please continue to [pray](#) for those impacted by Hurricane Florence. Donations to the [Hurricane Relief Fund](#) will help Episcopal Relief & Development respond to this crisis.

For over 75 years, Episcopal Relief & Development has been working together with supporters and partners for lasting change around the world. Each year the organization facilitates healthier, more fulfilling lives for more than 3 million people struggling with hunger, poverty, disaster and disease. Inspired by Jesus' words in Matthew 25, Episcopal Relief & Development leverages the expertise and resources of Anglican and other partners to deliver measurable and sustainable change in three signature program areas: Women, Children and Climate.
