



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 5, 2016

CONTACT: GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE
(850) 717-9282
media@eog.myflorida.com

GOV. SCOTT: DIRECTING SUSPENSION OF TOLLS; NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENTS

ST. LUCIE, Fla. – Today, Governor Scott directed the Florida Department of Transportation to suspend tolls in counties where there are evacuations. Governor Scott activated the National Guard on Monday and today directed members to be stationed in North, Central and South Florida so they can be mobilized immediately. The National Hurricane Center (NHC) has labeled Hurricane Matthew as an extremely dangerous and powerful storm. Florida is expected to feel impacts beginning Thursday and lasting through the weekend.

Governor Rick Scott said, “Evacuations have started to be ordered this morning and I expect more counties to order evacuations soon. This is a dangerous storm and it is never too early to evacuate. If you live in a low lying area, on a barrier island, or in an area prone to flooding, you need to make plans to leave now. Protecting life and moving people to safety remains our top priority and today I directed the Florida Department of Transportation to suspend tolls as needed to keep traffic flowing. If there is an evacuation order in a county, all tolls will be suspended in that county.

“I have activated 500 National Guard members across the state. Per my direction, they are currently stationed in North, Central and South Florida so they can be mobilized immediately. In addition to this, we have over 6,000 National Guard members ready to be activated if needed. The National Guard will be focused on staging to perform search and rescue efforts and will be ready to assist our counties as they need it. I have directed the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) to preposition high-water vehicles and have search and rescue teams on standby throughout the state.

“This morning, I directed state personnel to deploy to every eastern coastal county to help assist with preparation, recovery and response efforts. The state also has water, food, and other lifesaving materials stationed in North Florida, Central Florida and South Florida. These resources will be able to be deployed to affected communities immediately.

“Shelters will begin to open today and tomorrow for special needs populations, pets and general populations. The American Red Cross will also be opening 97 shelters across the state over the next two days. There is absolutely no reason not to evacuate and there is shelter available for anyone in our state.”

As of this afternoon, Florida is under significant tropical storm and hurricane watches and warnings. A tropical storm watch extends from the Seven Mile Bridge in the Florida Keys eastward and Florida Bay. A hurricane watch extends from the Flagler/Volusia County line north to the Florida/Georgia line. A hurricane warning extends from Golden Beach to the Flagler/Volusia County line and includes Lake Okeechobee.

The National Hurricane Center reports that Hurricane Matthew is a major Category 3 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 120 miles per hour. Matthew is currently moving Northwest at 12 miles per hour.

Based on the current forecast, the state’s entire east coast from Monroe to Nassau County will experience tropical storm or hurricane force winds, beach erosion, rip currents and heavy rain. On Monday, Governor Scott signed an Executive Order declaring a State of Emergency in every Florida county to ensure resources for evacuations, sheltering and other logistical needs across our state are readily available.

The Florida Division of Emergency Management is the state agency charged with preparing for all types of disasters in Florida. The Division is the state's disaster liaison with federal and local agencies, and is the lead consequence management agency for the State Emergency Response Team (SERT). The Division maintains the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Tallahassee and the State Watch Office, the 24-hour communications and command center for response coordination. Follow the Division on social media at [facebook.com/FloridaSERT](https://www.facebook.com/FloridaSERT) or on Twitter @FLSERT.

###