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Orlando-area governments begin preparations with tropical storm on path to Florida



Stephen M. Dowell/Orlando Sentinel

Residents fill sandbags at the Boombah Sports Complex on Lake Mary Boulevard in Sanford on Friday afternoon, September 23, 2022. A tropical storm churning in the Gulf of Mexico is tracking become a major hurricane and wallop Central Florida next week, and preparations have already begun. (Stephen M. Dowell/Orlando Sentinel)



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With forecasts projecting that Tropical Storm Ian currently moving through the Caribbean [will become a major hurricane by the time it reaches Florida next week](#), Orlando-area governments have begun preparations.

Officials in Orange and Seminole counties announced the start of sandbag operations as officials monitor the storm, which is expected to become Hurricane Ian in the coming days.

Empty bags and dirt will be available to all residents of Seminole County at 3450 E. Lake Mary Blvd. in Sanford from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, spokesperson Ashley Moore said in a press release.

Residents, who will have to provide their own shovels and gloves to fill the bags themselves, can collect up to 15 bags per household, the release said.

“In the event a tropical storm or hurricane threat is imminent, Seminole County will open emergency shelters before landfall, giving residents ample time to evacuate,” Moore said.

Shelter locations are not announced until facilities are completely set up, according to the release. Visit [PrepareSeminole.org](#) or call 407-665-0000 for storm preparedness in Seminole County.

Orange County officials announced sandbag distribution efforts at five locations, including Barnett Park, Downey Park, Bithlo Community Park, West Orange Recreation and Meadow Woods Park, according to spokesperson Darell Moody.

The sites will open on Saturday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Moody said.

Orange County residents, who will need to show an ID upon arrival, will be allowed to fill up to 10 sandbags, according to the release. Resident must provide their own shovels.

Moody said county officials are taking preventive measures ahead of the potential storm.

“Our crews are proactively checking canals, ponds, pumps stations, drainwells, control structures, hot spots for any potential blockages today in preparation for the possible storm predicted,” Moody said.

Osceola County officials said the emergency management team is completing internal checklists and revising drainage structures.

“We urge residents to make preparations and watch NWS, the news and county information channels for the most accurate information,” according to Osceola spokesperson Krystal Diaz.

The Greater Orlando Aviation Authority has announced pre-storm procedures at Orlando International Airport and the Executive Airport, including holding briefings with airlines and activating the agency’s hurricane emergency response plan.

The relocation of JetBlue and other airlines to [the new Terminal C](#) will be rescheduled, according to the agency. A dedication event planned for the new terminal will also be postponed until a later date.

UCF’s emergency management said the university is in close communication with the local National Weather Service and the National Hurricane Center to monitor the potential storm and will assess the situation Sunday.

“We will assess the latest projections and provide an update about university operations for the week ahead,” the university said in a [statement](#) on its website. “Decisions about classes, campus operations and UCF Housing would be communicated at that time.”

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