

THE BUZZ

From the staff of the Tampa Bay Times

Governor asks for federal 'pre-landfall' emergency declaration



Mary Ellen Klas, Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

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Gov. **Rick Scott** late Wednesday asked **President Obama** to declare a "pre-landfall" emergency in 26 counties along the east coast, from Monroe to Duval, to accelerate the federal assistance needed in anticipation of the arrival of the hurricane force winds as early as Thursday afternoon.

The governor also activated another 1,000 members of the Florida National Guard to begin assisting emergency evacuations. Earlier Wednesday, Scott suspended tolls along the Florida Turnpike, Alligator Alley, Central Florida Expressway Authority and the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority to ease the evacuation process. Read Scott's letter to Obama here.

"Based on the most recent forecast I received from the National Hurricane Center, the eye of Hurricane Matthew is going to be much closer to Florida," Scott said in the statement. "There are hurricane watches and warnings along Florida's entire east coast and we now have Tropical Storm warnings on Florida's Gulf Coast. This storm is serious and protecting life remains our number one priority."

Scott's formal request allows the state to start receiving federal assistance for food, water and tarps if Obama approves the request. The governor's action also positions 1,500 National Guard members throughout the state. "Storm impacts will begin tomorrow morning in our state," he said in a statement.

"There is still time to evacuate. Get out now if you are in an area with evacuations. If you make a decision not to leave before the storm, we cannot send someone to save you because you made a bad decision. Don't wait until you lose power. You need to leave before it is too late."

The Hurricane Warning remains in effect for: North of Golden Beach to the Flagler/Volusia County line Lake Okeechobee, the state said.

A Hurricane Watch is in effect for: North of the Flagler/Volusia county line to Savannah River. A Tropical Storm Warning is in effect for: Chokoloskee in Collier County to Golden Beach Florida Keys from Seven Mile Bridge eastward Florida Bay. A Tropical Storm Watch is in effect for: North of Chokoloskee in Collier County to the Suwannee River in Dixie County.

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.