

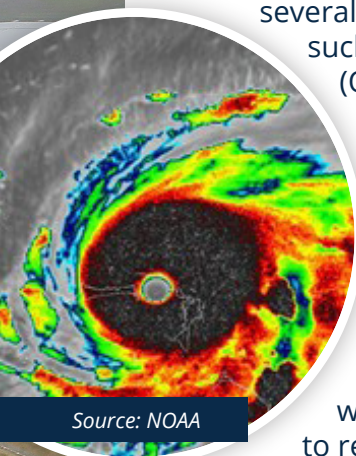
Florida experiences numerous natural disasters, including hurricanes and wildfires. In the lead up to, during, and in the aftermath of natural disasters, emergency preparedness and response is crucial. Airports have been called to action several times to aid with response efforts, including transporting critical supplies to disaster relief areas and aerial firefighting. The following profiles highlight several of Florida's airports assisting with hurricane and wildlife response.

## Hurricane Dorian and Ian

In September 2019, the Category 5 Hurricane Dorian made landfall as one of the most powerful hurricanes to ever hit the Bahamas. Hurricane Dorian recorded sustained winds of 185 miles per hour and devastated the country. In response, several of Florida's airports and on-airport businesses contributed to relief efforts by opening up facilities to supplies and relief flights. AEROBridge, a non-profit organization founded during Hurricane Katrina that crowdsourced general aviation pilots to fly in supplies into the hardest hit areas, organized flights from Ocala International Airport (OCF) and Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport (FXE) to the Bahamas to fly in critical supplies. The Sun n' Fun Aerospace Expo Campus at Lakeland Linder International Airport (LAL) was also used as a staging ground for supplies. Additionally, several large tenants in Florida accepted supplies and provided relief to general aviation flights transporting supplies to the Bahamas. Signature Flight Support and Atlantic Aviation offered fuel discounts and waived parking fees for relief flights. Additionally, both FBOs opened up several of their facilities for accepting donations of essential relief supplies. Airports such as Palm Beach International Airport (PBI), Miami-Opa Locka Executive Airport (OPF), Boca Raton Airport (BCT), and Witham Field (SUA) were all used to stage supplies for ferry flights into the Bahamas.

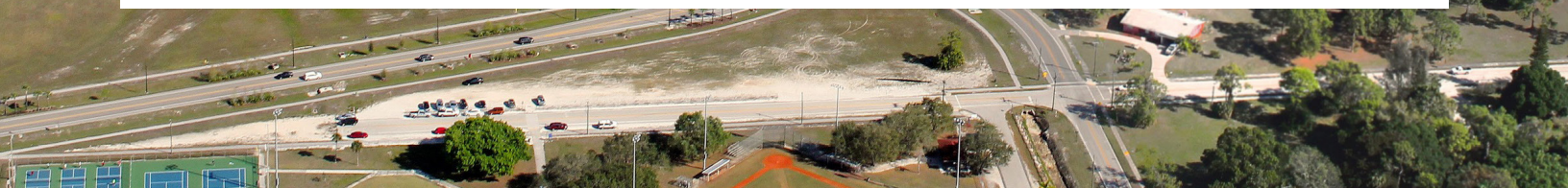


Source: [www.spacecoastdaily.com/2019/09/famed-world-war-ii-veteran-tico-belle-joins-armada-of-aircraft-providing-aid-to-dorian-victims-in-bahamas/](http://www.spacecoastdaily.com/2019/09/famed-world-war-ii-veteran-tico-belle-joins-armada-of-aircraft-providing-aid-to-dorian-victims-in-bahamas/)



Source: NOAA

Hurricane Ian made landfall in September 2022 as a Category 4 storm, leaving over two million without power in the southwest Florida region (nearly a quarter of the state's utility customers). Despite the airfield being flooded immediately after the hurricane, Naples Airport (APF) managed to reopen to aviation activity on a limited basis just 48 hours later, enabling a gateway for residents to return to the area. With other airports opening soon after such as Southwest Florida International (RSW) and Page Field (FMY), other residents were able to return home. Additionally, volunteers started flying in critical supplies to residents through several missions from neighboring states and airports outside of the disaster area. Operation Airdrop is one nonprofit organization that setup a base at Kissimmee Gateway Airport (ISM) in central Florida to collect donations and organize ferry flights with general aviation aircraft.





On September 30, essential water purification desalinization equipment was ferried from ISM to Fort Myers, marking the first of several flights to fly in critical supplies. By October 4, with the support of over 200 pilots and 75 ground volunteers, over 10,000 hot meals and 10,000 lbs of donations was flown into Fort Myers and the surrounding area!

With the help of the collective efforts of several Florida airports, on-site airport tenants, non-profit organizations, and the GA pilot community, the Bahamas and Southwest Florida have been able to recover from the devastation of the hurricanes.

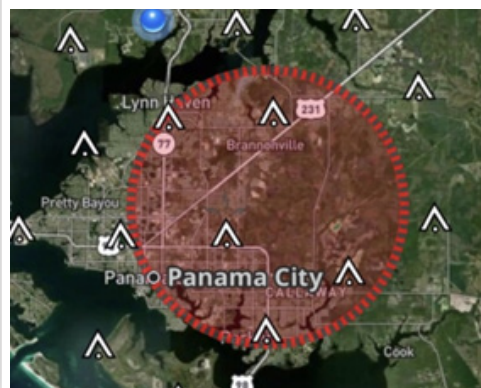
*Source: Naples Airport Authority*

## District 3 Fires

Florida's airports often serve a critical role in responding to wildfires by providing a base for aerial firefighting operations and providing personnel and resources. In March 2022, three fires erupted in Bay County and Northwest Florida Beaches International Airport (ECP) was an integral part of the response team. Known as the Chipola Fire Complex, the fires began with a homeowner burning debris piles that quickly expanded into a nearby wood line. Local firefighters attempted to battle the fire, but the variable and strong wind conditions quickly expanded beyond the capabilities of the local units. In response, the ECP Fire Department, Florida Forestry Services, and other firefighting units were called in to help control the fire.

ECP deployed their own fire department to monitor, coordinate, and extinguish fires on the ground. In addition, and working with the Florida National Guard and local first responders, ECP was used as a staging ground and a refueling base for the CH-47 and UH-60 helicopters that were used to monitor the fires. ECP staff provided constant refueling and refilling of fire-retardant to two single-engine turboprop air tankers (510 Thrush Switchback) that applied 400 gallons of water to the fires on each pass. In response to the increasing fire spread, ECP coordinated with the FAA to establish a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) around the affected area to restrict any non-essential flight activity. All the support provided by ECP provided firefighters with the resources and safe operating environment necessary to extinguish the fires.

The Chipola Fire Complex is now widely regarded as an excellent case of airport support and interagency coordination to save people and property from imminent danger.



## Overview

Florida has demonstrated that aviation can provide a unique edge in combating natural disasters in the face of time-sensitivity and limited resources on the ground. Florida's airports and aviation users are ready to meet the call to action to support humanitarian relief efforts to Florida residents and individuals abroad.