

Florida port gets \$9.5M in Milton storm funding

Hurricane Milton caused an estimated \$200 million in damage to SeaPort Manatee

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A cargo vessel is shown at berth in this aerial view of SeaPort Manatee, Fla. (Photo: SeaPort Manatee)

Florida's SeaPort Manatee will receive \$9.5 million in state emergency funding to aid recovery from Hurricane Milton.

The funding comes as fuel, food and other goods begin to move through the maritime hub near Tampa Bay.

The port serving southwest and central Florida suffered an estimated \$200 million in damage when Milton made landfall Oct. 9.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis announced the funding Monday at the port.

"We want to make sure our supply chain is strong and that we get the port back to where it needs to be as soon as possible," DeSantis said.

Warehouses, berths, the container yard, offices and security installations were battered by the hurricane, according to initial assessments.

The emergency funding is slated to include \$5.5 million for emergency berth repairs and dredging in state waters, \$3.5 million for immediate security needs and access control, and \$500,000 to support planning activities for fortifying port infrastructure.

The port will also receive staff support from multiple state agencies, DeSantis said, as well as Florida National Guard assistance with perimeter security.

President Joe Biden on a visit to survey the storm damage Sunday was to announce \$612 million for six Department of Energy projects to improve the resiliency of the state's electric grid in areas affected by the storm.

The combined efforts of county, state and federal authorities and industry partners has Manatee County's seaport operations "almost normal," said Executive Director Carlos Buqueras in a release. "This additional funding from the state will really make all the difference" in returning to full operational status.

The port has 10 deep-draft berths handling container, liquid and dry bulk, breakbulk, heavy-lift, project, and general cargo. It handled 177,108 twenty-foot equivalent units in fiscal 2023.