



Trump says he wants to overhaul FEMA as he travels to North Carolina and California

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California Gov. Gavin Newsom, President Trump and first lady Melania Trump spoke on the tarmac ahead of an aerial tour of fire-ravaged areas in Los Angeles on Jan. 24, 2025.

Mandel Ngan/AFP via Getty Images

President Trump said on Friday that he plans to sign an executive order to overhaul the Federal Emergency Management Agency, as he traveled to one state working to recover from catastrophic flooding, and another actively battling some of the worst wildfires in its history.



CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

Ahead of LA fires damage tour Trump makes false water claims. Here's what experts say

Touring parts of [North Carolina](#) hit hard by flooding after Hurricane Helene, Trump said he thinks the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, is too

bureaucratic and slow. He suggested that state governments handle disasters within their states.

Speaking with reporters, Trump said that a forthcoming executive action would "begin the process of fundamentally reforming and overhauling FEMA — or maybe getting rid of FEMA." As president, Trump would not have authority to close the agency without approval from Congress.

Trump's press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, later told reporters traveling on Air Force One that the executive order would direct a FEMA advisory council to "look at the agency and root out the corruption, the incompetence and the bureaucracy," but would not abolish the agency.

Gov. Newsom met Trump when he arrived in LA

Trump made his comments before leaving North Carolina for California, where the Palisades, Eaton and Hughes fires have burned nearly 50,000 acres combined, destroying countless homes and businesses throughout greater Los Angeles.

Trump toured the devastation by helicopter, later describing what he saw as "an incineration."



Helicopters carrying President Trump and other federal officials fly over the site of the Palisades Fire in Los Angeles on Jan. 24, 2025.

Robyn Beck/AFP

"I don't think you can realize how rough it is, how devastating is, until you see it, Trump said.

Trump met with first responders in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood and then held an emergency briefing, where he said he would work to waive or expedite federal permits to help speed the rebuilding effort.

"We'll be back to celebrate one day soon, I hope soon," Trump said. "The federal government, standing behind you, 100%. The First Lady and I are in California to express a great love for the people of California."

California Gov. Gavin Newsom met Trump when Air Force One arrived in the city, and the two leaders spoke briefly before Trump took an aerial tour of the Pacific Palisades neighborhood.

Trump and Newsom are political foes, but pulled their punches during brief remarks to reporters. "I appreciate the governor coming out and meeting me," Trump said, noting the impact of the fires on real estate. "It's like you got hit by a bomb, right?"

Newsom thanked Trump for visiting. "I have all the expectations that we'll be able to work together to get the speedy recovery," he said.



Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass speaks to President Trump during a briefing in Los Angeles on Jan. 24, 2025.
Mandel Ngan/AFP

Trump has been critical about California water management policies since the crisis began, and on Friday said he planned to issue an executive action to "open the pumps and the valves" in northern California to bring more water south.

But he did not mention the issue in the presence of Newsom, who has said [Trump's claims about water policy](#) are false. California water experts have said any problems fighting the fires had nothing to do with a lack of water traveling from the north to the south of the state.

In the days leading up to his trip, Trump had indicated he sees aid for California as leverage for getting support from Democrats in Congress for some of his legislative priorities. He did not mention that on the ground.

He said he would waive or limit federal permits for rebuilding in Los Angeles, and told Mayor Karen Bass he had heard complaints that the city was prolonging the clean-up. Bass rebutted those complaints. He also sparred with Rep. Brad Sherman, D-Calif., about FEMA and other issues during a briefing.



President Trump and first lady Melania Trump visit a neighborhood affected by Hurricane Helene in Swannanoa, N.C., on Jan. 24, 2025.

Mandel Ngan/AFP

What Trump promised in North Carolina

Earlier, in Swannanoa, N.C., Trump invited families to talk about the flooding that ruined their homes and their struggles with recovery.

Helene left more than 100 people dead after slamming the western part of North Carolina in late September. The state continues to face a mammoth rebuilding effort.

Trump visited the area during the height of the campaign, and was heavily critical of the federal response to the storm. At the same time, Trump came under criticism of his own for repeating [misinformation about the recovery](#), including the false claim that the Biden administration had been diverting disaster money to care for people in the U.S. without legal status.



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After Helene's floods, North Carolina tries to tame trauma's lasting damage

On Friday, Trump said his administration would surge "housing solutions" to North Carolina and said he would sign an executive order on Friday to lift regulations so that roads can be rebuilt without permits.

Trump has said he feels that North Carolina was treated "unfairly" by the Biden administration after Hurricane Helene, which hit in the middle of the presidential campaign. He has said, without evidence, that Democrats withheld aid from

Republican areas.

His remarks echoed criticism that he delivered during his inauguration address earlier this week, when he said the federal government has failed to meet the moment in response to major disasters.

"Our country can no longer deliver basic services in times of emergency, as recently shown by the wonderful people of North Carolina — who have been treated so badly — and other states who are still suffering from a hurricane that took place many months ago or, more recently, Los Angeles, where we are watching fires still tragically burn from weeks ago without even a token of defense," Trump said.

The president's trips to California and North Carolina mark the first travel of his second term. He'll also be making a stop in Nevada this weekend, a state he won in November's election.

president trump

los angeles fires

hurricane helene



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