

DeSantis showed skillful leadership during Hurricane Dorian, Influencers say

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It was a departure from former Gov. Rick Scott's signature rolled-up sleeves and Navy cap but in his official state jacket and cowboy boots, Gov. Ron DeSantis stepped into hurricane responder-in-chief for the first time with a calm, focused demeanor.

The governor traveled up and down the state's east coast as Hurricane Dorian churned closer, popping into county emergency operations centers as Florida braced for a potentially devastating Category 5 storm. He opened up public access to information on nursing homes and assisted living facilities, opened routine emergency operations center briefings to the media, allowed key agency heads and staff to answer questions and reassured the public that key decisions would be the job of local emergency operations officials.

His measured approach was a pivot from his Republican predecessor, and [he won praise from local officials and emergency managers across the state](#).

Once the storm turned east after nearly one week of a grueling unknown, DeSantis and other state officials switched into recovery mode, calling for Floridians to dig into their pockets and donate to help the Dorian-ravaged Bahamas.

"I was dazzled," Marty Senterfitt, emergency management director for Monroe County, told a Herald reporter. He spent the weekend working out of the state's command center, where he had a chance to watch DeSantis and Lt. Gov. Jeanette Nuñez as they worked with emergency professionals coordinating the state's response to Hurricane Dorian.

The Florida Influencers, a group of 50 prominent political and policy figures from across the state, agree.

In a recent survey, 45% said DeSantis was “excellent” in dealing with Hurricane Dorian preparation and response. Forty-two percent said he was “good,” 10% said “adequate” and only 3% said “fair.” None of the Influencers ranked him as “poor.”

Lenore Rodicio, vice president and provost of Miami Dade College, lauded the governor and his team for their openness with Floridians throughout the duration of the storm.

“Gov. DeSantis and state officials were incredibly communicative and forthcoming before, during and after the storm,” she said. “Seamless communications between local and state officials, clear public announcements about emergency operations, among other steps, truly offered Floridians reassurance and a sense of order despite the looming threat of Dorian.”

Despite the fact that the storm turned away from Florida, other Influencers said he was “well prepared to lead” if it did strike the state.

“The governor and state officials did an excellent job of keeping people informed and aware of the potential impact of the storm,” said Bob Ward, president of business leaders group Council of 100. “We were very fortunate to not have suffered the fate of the people of the Bahamas.”

Patrick Goddard, president of Virgin Trains agreed, noting that DeSantis acted well in an uncertain situation.

“Appropriate precautions and preparations were put in place from what I could tell,” he said. “One never really knows as the storm did not make landfall.”

We asked the Influencers how well Florida officials are doing in focusing on policy solutions that address the needs of all state residents.

Excellent: 11%

Good: 42%

Fair: 42%

Poor: 5%



Florida Governor Ron DeSantis speaks to the media outside the National Hurricane Center in Miami during a press conference about the status of Hurricane Dorian on Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019. JOSE A.

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