

Floods trap many in Florida as Ian heads to South Carolina

September 30 2022, by TERRY SPENCER, ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and TIM REYNOLDS



Holly Nugyn walks out of her flooded neighborhood after Hurricane Ian passed by the area Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Fort Myers, Fla. Credit: AP Photo/Steve Helber

Rescue crews piloted boats and waded through inundated streets Thursday to save thousands of Floridians trapped amid flooded homes and shattered buildings left by Hurricane Ian, which crossed into the Atlantic Ocean and churned toward South Carolina.

Hours after weakening to a [tropical storm](#) while crossing the Florida peninsula, Ian regained hurricane strength Thursday evening over the Atlantic. The National Hurricane Center predicted it would hit South Carolina as a Category 1 hurricane Friday, with winds picking up to 80 mph (129 kph) near midnight Thursday.

The devastation inflicted on Florida came into focus a day after Ian struck as a monstrous Category 4 hurricane, one of the strongest storms ever to hit the U.S. It flooded homes on both the state's coasts, cut off the only road access to a barrier island, destroyed a historic waterfront pier and knocked out electricity to 2.67 million Florida homes and businesses—nearly a quarter of utility customers.

Four people were confirmed dead in Florida. They included two residents of hard-hit Sanibel Island along Florida's west coast, Sanibel city manager Dana Souza said late Thursday. Three other people were reported killed in Cuba after the hurricane struck there on Tuesday.

In the Fort Myers area, homes had been ripped from their slabs and deposited among shredded wreckage. Businesses near the beach were completely razed, leaving twisted debris. Broken docks floated at odd angles beside damaged boats and fires smoldered on lots where houses once stood.



In this photo taken by a drone, boats lie scattered amidst mobile homes after the passage of Hurricane Ian, on San Carlos Island, in Fort Myers Beach, Fla., Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022. Credit: AP Photo/Rebecca Blackwell

"I don't know how anyone could have survived in there," William Goodison said amid the wreckage of the mobile home park in Fort Myers Beach where he'd lived for 11 years. Goodison rode out the storm at his son's house inland.

The hurricane tore through the park of about 60 homes, many of them destroyed or mangled beyond repair, including Goodison's single-wide home. Wading through waist-deep water, Goodison and his son wheeled

two trash cans containing what little he could salvage—a portable air conditioner, some tools and a baseball bat.

The road into Fort Myers was littered with broken trees, boat trailers and other debris. Cars were left abandoned in the road, having stalled when the [storm surge](#) flooded their engines.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said at least 700 rescues, mostly by air, have been conducted so far and involving the U.S. Coast Guard, the National Guard and urban search-and-rescue teams.



Residents check on one another in a flooded neighborhood in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Orlando, Fla. Credit: AP Photo/Phelan M. Ebenhack

After leaving Florida as a tropical storm Thursday and entering the Atlantic Ocean north of Cape Canaveral, Ian spun up into a hurricane again with winds of 75 mph (120 kph).

A hurricane warning was issued for the South Carolina coast and extended to Cape Fear on the southeastern coast of North Carolina. With tropical-storm force winds reaching about 415 miles (665 kilometers) from its center, Ian was forecast to shove storm surge of 5 feet (1.5 meters) into coastal areas in Georgia and the Carolinas. Rainfall of up to 8 inches (20 centimeters) threatened flooding from South Carolina to Virginia.

National Guard troops were being positioned in South Carolina to help with the aftermath, including any water rescues. On Thursday afternoon, a steady stream of vehicles left Charleston, a 350-year-old city.



CORRECTS DATELINE TO FORT MYERS BEACH, NOT FORT MYERS -
Damaged homes and debris are shown in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian,
Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Fort Myers Beach, Fla. Credit: AP Photo/Wilfredo
Lee

Sheriffs in southwest Florida said 911 centers were inundated by thousands of stranded callers, some with life-threatening emergencies. The U.S. Coast Guard began rescue efforts hours before daybreak on barrier islands near where Ian struck, DeSantis said. More than 800 federal urban search-and-rescuers were also in the area.

In the Orlando area, Orange County firefighters used boats to reach people in a flooded neighborhood. Patients from a nursing home were carried on stretchers across floodwaters to a bus.

In Fort Myers, Valerie Bartley's family spent desperate hours holding a dining room table against the patio door, fearing the storm "was tearing our house apart."

"I was terrified," Bartley said. "What we heard was the shingles and debris from everything in the neighborhood hitting our house."



Cars drive on a flooded street caused by Hurricane Ian Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Fort Myers, Fla. Credit: AP Photo/Marta Lavandier

The storm ripped away patio screens and snapped a palm tree in the yard, Bartley said, but left the roof intact and her family unharmed.

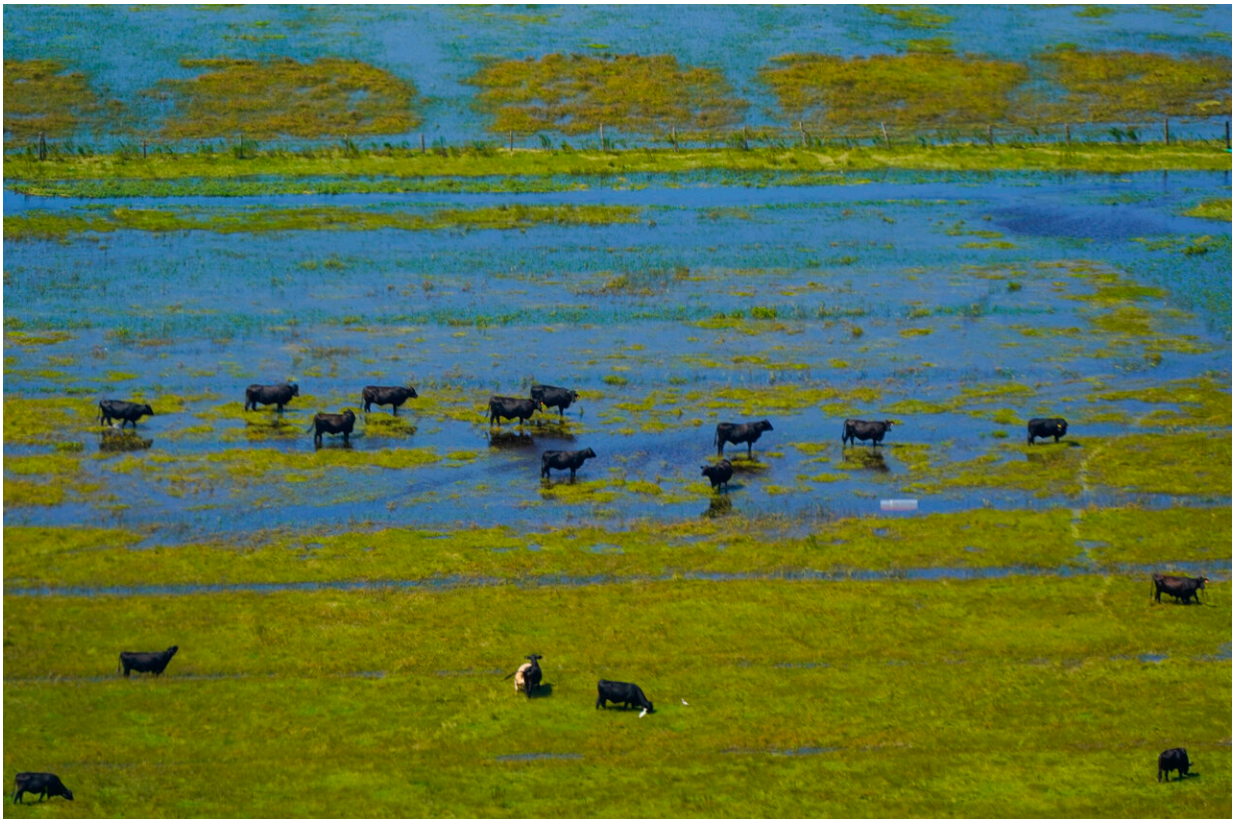
Long lines formed at gas stations in Fort Myers and a Home Depot hardware store opened, letting in a few customers at a time.

Frank Pino was near the back of the line, with about 100 people in front of him.

"I hope they leave something," Pino said, "because I need almost everything."

A 72-year-old man in Deltona died after falling into a canal while using a hose to drain his pool in the heavy rain, the Volusia County Sheriff's Office said. A 38-year-old man from Lake County died Wednesday in an accident after his vehicle hydroplaned, according to authorities.

Lee County Sheriff Carmine Marceno said his office was scrambling to respond to thousands of 911 calls in the Fort Myers area, but many roads and bridges were impassable.



Livestock move in a flooded field in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, on Sanibel Island, Fla. Credit: AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee

Emergency crews sawed through toppled trees to reach stranded people.

Many in the hardest-hit areas were unable to call for help because of electrical and cellular outages.

A chunk of the Sanibel Causeway fell into the sea, cutting off access to the barrier island where 6,300 people live.

South of Sanibel Island, the historic beachfront pier in Naples was destroyed, with even the pilings torn out. "Right now, there is no pier," said Collier County Commissioner Penny Taylor.

In Port Charlotte, a hospital's emergency room flooded and fierce winds ripped away part of the roof, sending water gushing into the intensive care unit. The sickest patients—some on ventilators—were crowded into the middle two floors as the staff prepared for storm victims to arrive, said Dr. Birgit Bodine of HCA Florida Fawcett Hospital.



A man walks through a street among damaged homes and businesses and debris in Fort Myers Beach, Fla., on Thursday, Sep 29, 2022, following Hurricane Ian. Credit: Douglas R. Clifford/Tampa Bay Times via AP



A home burns on Sanibel Island in the wake of Hurricane Ian, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Fla. Credit: AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee



Damaged homes and businesses are seen in Fort Myers Beach, Fla., on Thursday, Sep 29, 2022, following Hurricane Ian. Credit: Douglas R. Clifford/Tampa Bay Times via AP



A mobile home community sustained damage caused by Hurricane Ian as seen in this aerial view, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Fort Myers, Fla. Credit: AP Photo/Marta Lavandier



Marcus Williamson and Victoria Melendez retrieve fishing rods from their boat at a marina in the wake of Hurricane Ian , Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Fort Myers, Fla. Credit: AP Photo/Steve Helber



Tom Nugyn carries belongings from his flooded home after Hurricane Ian passed by the area Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Fort Myers, Fla. Credit: AP Photo/Steve Helber



Residents walk through a neighborhood with fallen branches and leaves in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Orlando, Fla. Credit: AP Photo/Phelan M. Ebenhack



First responders with Orange County Fire Rescue use an inflatable boat to rescue a resident from a home in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Orlando, Fla. Credit: AP Photo/Phelan M. Ebenhack



President Joe Biden speaks about Hurricane Ian during a visit to FEMA headquarters, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Washington. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell look on. Credit: AP Photo/Evan Vucci



Cars drive on a flooded street caused by Hurricane Ian Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Fort Myers, Fla. Climate change added at least 10% more rain to Hurricane Ian, a study prepared immediately after the storm shows. Credit: AP Photo/Marta Lavandier



A first responder with Orange County Fire Rescue makes her way through floodwaters looking for residents of a neighborhood needing help in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, Thursday, Sept. 29, 2022, in Orlando, Fla. Climate change added at least 10% more rain to Hurricane Ian, a study prepared immediately after the storm shows. Credit: AP Photo/Phelan M. Ebenhack

Ian struck Florida with 150 mph (241 kph) winds that tied it for the fifth-strongest hurricane ever to hit the U.S.

While scientists generally avoid blaming climate change for specific storms without detailed analysis, Ian's watery destruction fits what scientists have predicted for a warmer world: stronger and wetter hurricanes, though not necessarily more of them.

"This business about very, very heavy rain is something we've expected to see because of climate change," said MIT atmospheric scientist Kerry Emanuel. "We'll see more storms like Ian."

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