



The Situation Report

“Honest Reporting”

HURRICANE IRMA SLAMS SOUTH FLORIDA

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On the morning of September 10th, 2017, Hurricane Irma made landfall in the Lower Florida Keys as a Category 4 hurricane and in Naples, Florida as a Category 3 hurricane. The storm killed 69 people and cost the State of Florida billions of dollars in damages.

Six days before Irma made landfall in Florida, Governor Rick Scott declared a “State of Emergency” for all of Florida. Since Irma was projected to make landfall in the Florida Keys, officials ordered mandatory evacuations for all residents and visitors on the islands. In addition, the hurricane also triggered mandatory evacuations of all the barrier islands, the city of Miami Beach, everyone in living in mobile homes or near the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, making it the largest evacuation in Florida state history.

Price gouging was a major impediment to evacuation as airlines charged passengers up to \$1,000 for a one-way flight. To combat this, JetBlue Airways capped its airfares between \$99 and \$159, American Airlines capped its economy tickets at \$99, and Delta capped its fares at \$399, including first class, to select cities. Even so, most evacuees drove north, turning all of Florida’s major highways into the largest traffic jam in state history. In spite of the mass

exodus, a convoy of Power and Utility trucks made their way into South Florida to restore power immediately after Irma passed through. During the ensuing evacuation, gasoline shortages forced people to wait in hours-long lines to fill their cars and trucks before the storm. On Thursday September 7th, state troopers provided escorts to gasoline trucks as they made their way to gas stations throughout Florida.

While millions of Floridians evacuated, others decided to stay in their homes or go to public shelters. Fox News reported that approximately 70,000 people crowded into nearly 400 shelters state-wide. As the primary hurricane shelter for Monroe County evacuees, Florida International University's University Park campus closed on the evening of September 5th to shelter evacuees from the Florida Keys. Coincidentally, its Biscayne Bay campus was also closed as it was located in an evacuation area. Miami Dade and Broward County schools closed on September 6th to be used as shelters for the duration of the storm.

At 9:10 am EDT on September 10th, Hurricane Irma made landfall at Cudjoe Key as a Category 4 Hurricane. Earlier models believed the hurricane would directly hit Miami, but a slower northward turn enabled the city to escape a direct hit. However, Miami never completely escaped a direct hit because it was exposed to the eastern side of the storm, commonly known as "the dirty sector." As a result, Miami-Dade and Broward Counties experienced the worst weather and the strongest winds outside the eye wall. In Pembroke Pines, Irma's wind gusts peaked at 110 mph, the equivalent of a Category 2 Hurricane. In nearby Oakland Park, a tornado touchdown was confirmed, unclear of how much damage was caused. In Miami, wind gusts neared 100 mph, and left Downtown streets flooded.

Irma left its mark on South Florida, with damaged sidewalks, flattened fences, uprooted trees, downed power lines, localized street flooding, and severe damage to mobile homes. In Downtown Miami, two construction cranes partially collapsed and another dangled dangerously over Edgewater. In the lower Florida Keys, entire communities were leveled, leaving 14 people dead, and an estimated \$2 billion in damages. A FEMA estimate reported that 65% of homes in the keys were damaged, and 25% of homes destroyed.

Since Miami-Dade and Broward Counties experienced the dirty side of the storm, residents had to wait for several days for power to be restored. On September 11th, the NPR reported that three-quarters of residents in Miami-Dade County were left without power. Without electricity, basic necessities such as lighting and air conditioning were non-existent. As a result, 12 residents of the Rehabilitation Center at Hollywood Hills, died. Jack Michel, the owner of the Rehabilitation Center, had his license suspended despite claims that Governor Scott ignored pleas to restore power. However, Michel's pleas were false because he never called 911 or medical professionals to report elderly residents in distress.

Despite a nearly \$3 billion investment on strengthening the electrical grid, it was no match for Hurricane Irma. In the city of Coral Gables, residents complained that FPL took too long to restore power. However, the power company backfired, blaming political woes for resisting necessary tree-trimming after the storm. The situation was no better in Pinecrest, with one-third of residents reported without power a week after Irma brushed South Florida.

In addition, Hurricane Irma also impacted For REEL? Pictures' operations. Production of "Phony Pop-Up," which was originally

scheduled for September 9th and 10th, was rescheduled to October 1st and November 12th. The film will be released to YouTube by the end of 2017. “A Day at the Office” meetings, on the other hand, will continue as scheduled.

Florida International University reopened to students on Monday September 18th and extended the fall semester a week to make up for lost classroom time. University of Miami, Miami-Dade College, and all public schools in Miami-Dade and Broward also reopened on September 18th. Power to Miami-Dade and Broward Counties was fully restored by week’s end.