

Hurricane Ian makes devastating landfall in Florida

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Hurricane Ian, a Category 4 storm and one of the most severe weather systems to ever hit the state of Florida, made landfall with the destructive force of 150 mile per hour winds at approximately 3:05 p.m. on Wednesday at the Gulf Coast barrier island of Cayo Costa just west of the cities of Cape Coral and Fort Myers.

The storm hit the mainland at Punta Gorda, moved slowly through the Fort Myers area and brought massive flooding from the intense rain and surge of water from the Gulf of Mexico. Meteorologist Kaitlyn Wright shared a video via Twitter showing the devastation in Fort Myers from the hurricane and reported, “Houses are destroyed and some are floating away as Ian’s eyewall hammers southwest Florida.”

The mayor of Fort Myers, Kevin Anderson, reported on CNN at 9 p.m. that 96 percent of the city was without electricity and the downtown district was under four feet of water. Emergency responders have reported that people throughout the metropolitan area were trapped in their attics as flood waters overtook their homes.

The *New York Times* reported that residents of South Fort Myers who decided to ride out the storm despite a mandatory evacuation order were seeing water coming through their front doors and second story windows. Lilya Cattani, 40, notified the *Times* by text that family vehicles in the garage were completely submerged in water, writing, “It’s an ocean around us.”

In the Gulf Coast town of Naples, water levels set a record of more than six feet above normal high tide, greater than the previous record of 4.25 feet above high tide set in 2017 during Hurricane Irma. Emergency responders in Naples were livestreamed as they waded through waist-deep water to rescue residents stranded or surrounded by water.

A Facebook post by the Collier County Sheriff’s Office said, “We are getting a significant number of calls of people trapped by water in their homes. Some are reporting life-threatening medical emergencies in deep water. We will get to them first.”

An advisory from the National Hurricane Center (NHC) published at 5 p.m. warned, “Catastrophic storm surge inundation of 12 to 18 feet above ground level along with destructive waves is ongoing along the southwest Florida coastline from Engelwood to Bonita Beach, including Charlotte Harbor.”

The NHC statement said the hurricane would “spread across the Florida peninsula through Thursday and reach portions of the Southeast US later this week and this weekend.” The report warned of “life-threatening catastrophic flooding, with major to record river flooding” expected across Florida, southeastern Georgia and eastern South Carolina.

The storm is so large and powerful that the NHC warned of the danger of a “life-threatening storm surge” on Thursday and Friday along the coasts of northeast Florida, Georgia and South Carolina. As of this writing, authorities reported one death from the storm and 1.8 million without electricity in the state of Florida.

Seventeen years after the deadly impact of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the criminal negligence of the government response to it, nothing has been done in the US to advance storm preparedness or provide financial aid to help people evacuate. Meanwhile, no significant financial support from the government can be expected for those who have lost their homes and all their possessions.

The last two hurricanes to strike Florida, Category 4 Hurricane Irma on September 10, 2017 and Category 5 Hurricane Michael on October 10, 2018, both entered

from the southwestern side of the state. Even though the devastating hurricanes hitting Florida are becoming more powerful and are occurring more frequently, the state and federal governments have done nothing to prepare the public for the catastrophic events.

While he has blocked hurricane preparedness programs, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has been appearing in front of television news media over the past few days to boost his credentials as a leading figure in the increasingly fascistic Republican Party. For example, last June, DeSantis vetoed \$4 million in funding for a storm-hardening project at Baptist Health Care's hospital in Gulf Breeze in the Florida panhandle.

Additionally, even though DeSantis has refused to explicitly acknowledge Joe Biden as the legitimately elected US President, the Florida governor and the White House have been leaning on each other to cover up the state and federal government's abandonment of the public to increasingly powerful and deadly weather events fueled by capitalist-driven climate change.

On Wednesday, an article by climate-change and environmental reporters Benji Jones and Umair Irfan Eric in Vox pointed to the rapid intensification of Hurricane Ian within 48 hours. The authors said that there are "three main ingredients that, when mixed together, can result in a rapidly intensifying hurricane: moist air, low wind shear (wind coming from different directions or at different speeds), and warm ocean water."

Quoting Paul Miller, a professor of oceanography and coastal sciences at Louisiana State University, the report says, "All three of those things create a favorable ecosystem for a hurricane to establish circulation and intensify."

An analysis of hurricane data by the Associated Press showed there were 25 percent more rapidly intensifying storms in the Atlantic Ocean and Eastern Pacific in the last 10 years compared to 40 years ago. According to Karthik Balaguru, a climate scientist at the Pacific Northwest National Lab, climate change tends to warm the land faster than the sea forming a temperature gradient along coasts, and this gradient tends to favor rapid intensification of hurricanes.

Hurricane Ian spawned eight tornadoes along the east coast of South Florida as the storm moved towards the US on Tuesday after passing through Cuba where it

knocked out power to the entire island of 11 million people. At least two people were confirmed killed by the storm in Cuba.



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