

Tornadoes spawned by Hurricane Milton brought deadly destruction to communities in eastern Florida

Kevin Reed
15 October 2024

The number of confirmed deaths from Hurricane Milton remained at 23 as of Tuesday, including those killed by tornadoes that swept through Florida before the climate-change-fueled storm made landfall six days ago.

At least 12 deaths from tornadoes, most of them many miles from where the hurricane came ashore, have been reported.

At least six people were killed by an EF-3 tornado that struck the Spanish Lakes neighborhood in St. Lucie County, according to the county sheriff's office. St. Lucie County is on the Atlantic coast of Florida due east of where Hurricane Milton made landfall near Sarasota on the Gulf Coast.

St. Lucie County Sheriff Keith Pearson reported that the most impacted area was about a half-square-mile community made of older modular homes that a tornado completely destroyed. The homes were mangled and there were people trapped underneath them, Pearson said.

Two people killed by a tornado in Fort Pierce, county seat of St. Lucie County, have been identified by a relative as Alejandro Alonso, 66, and Mary Grace Viramontez, 70, who died when a twister went through the Spanish Lakes Country Club Village.

Another tornado touched down in West Palm Beach and left a trail of damage. In nearby Wellington, FOX Weather Meteorologist Kendall Smith said the scenes of destruction were surreal. Smith said, "The devastation I have just come upon is the most significant devastation that I've seen so far since I've been on the ground covering the aftermath of the tornadoes produced by Hurricane Milton."

Four people were killed by a tornado in Volusia

County, also on the Atlantic side of Florida, which includes Daytona Beach, and one was killed in Citrus County, which is on the Gulf Coast side, north of the hurricane impact area. At least two people were killed by falling trees, another was fatally electrocuted after stepping on a downed power line and others died after their medical emergencies could not be immediately tended to by first responders because of the weather.

Clara, a Tampa resident who was unable to evacuate the area spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* about what has been happening since Hurricane Milton passed through the area a week ago.

All my food got trashed, probably, I don't know. Four or five hundred dollars, if not more, in my deep freezer and my freezer in my refrigerator. Everything is garbage, right. We had to throw it all away.

There's no ice to keep anything cold. If they do have ice, the lines are either really, really long or you're going to use up all your gas to get to the ice.

Clara discussed the gasoline and hotel room shortage which made evacuating impossible for so many:

Supposedly there was gas at the port, but then they said, "Oh, the port got flooded," so we couldn't get gas there. Now they're telling people that there's no water pressure because of the lack of electricity, and the sewage is going

to start backing up.

I was trying to find AirBnB's and found one, but the area I found it in has been flooded. We were willing to drive as far as Ocala, but it's showing there are 20 stalled cars. So, you don't know whether the stalled cars are because they ran out of gas, or they got flooded on the way there.

All the stores are closing early because there's still no power. Where I live in Riverview, there's all these massive subdivisions, right? Too many people on one power grid, or two power grids, or however many grids there are. So that whole story, you'll read the stories. If they've got 6,000 linemen, you'd be hard pressed to see them. I saw some the first day after this happened on Thursday where they were. It was like a whole bunch of tree cutters and then one power person, right?

On the flooding and ability to get out of the area, Clara said,

They can't restore the power if certain people's houses have floods. We woke up this morning and there was a pile of water in the kitchen. So of course, now I'm not going to have a kitchen for I don't know how long because I can't get the people that I rent from to even call me back.

There is standing water in a lot of neighborhoods, absolutely, because their drainage system is not up to par. Let me explain. I'm going to give you a scenario. The subdivision I live in maybe has 150-200 houses. So, the subdivision goes out onto one road called Sims. Sims is a two lane highway and there is another subdivision that probably has the same number of houses. And down the street a block, you've got another subdivision with about the same number of houses.

So, you've got all these different subdivisions all spilling out onto one two lane road. This whole thing about, "evacuate when you can," or

"go when you can," or "get where you got to go when you can," that's not accurate. It's just not happening.

I never thought to witness it. When we first moved into this neighborhood, it maybe took 15 minutes for the kids to get to the school. Now it takes 45 minutes, because there's so many people. And now put the storm in the mix, and that's another thing. Schools aren't open because they have no power.

Discussing the government response, Clara said,

The first day, they mentioned FEMA. They said go and apply for \$750 if you've lost food, or \$1,250, if you have to look for special arrangements or accommodations. Okay, so you go on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, but the list didn't even include Milton at all. So, there was no option for anybody to do anything because they didn't mention Milton. Nope, they're still working on Helene.

I have renter's insurance, but I have a \$500 deductible. So, I have to pay the first \$500 and then they would pay for us to stay in a hotel, but I have to pay up front for me to stay in a hotel. That's number one.

Number two is they're price gouging these hotels and they've been doing it since before Helene and before the last storm. Two years ago, hotels that used to be \$70 or \$80 went up to \$200 and they technically never dropped down because insurance companies are paying that rate. Half of the people in the hotels are from storms two years ago, let alone these two last that we just had.



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