

# Scenic Watch



Special  
Edition  
Post  
Hurricane  
2022

Utility Storm Hardening - "FPL removes last 2 wooden transmission poles in Palm Beach County"



Video: WPTV

"...A historic moment for Palm Beach County on Wednesday. The last two wooden transmission poles in the county are now gone, a sign the county is more prepared for the next storm.

'Wonderful, that's wonderful,' FPL customer John Winfree said...

'We were out of power for 18 days at one point about 10 to 12 years ago,' Winfree said. FPL said this shouldn't happen again by replacing the last two wooden poles

with new concrete and underground ones.

'Hardened poles perform significantly better than wooden poles. They can withstand stronger winds, which helps improve reliability,' FPL spokesman Conlan Kennedy said...

'You've got the waterway here, as well as the waterway running on this side. So there's water all over this area. So, of course, we always think about the ability for this to flood,' Egizio said. poles in Palm Beach County

*But FPL's wiring is not only 80 feet underground, it's also storm-proof.*

*'The lines are protected with an extra layer, so flooding is not a concern for this,' Kennedy said.*

So as this last pole comes off, homeowners like John and Jeff hope this is a sign of promise, knowing it's not if the next storm hits, but when..."

-- Briana Nespral, WPTV

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Underground works! - "One Florida community built to weather hurricanes endured Ian with barely a scratch"



Photo: Carlos Osorio for NPR

"Babcock Ranch, in Florida, runs on solar power and was built to weather the worst storms. After Hurricane Ian, the community didn't lose power or water, and it experienced minimal damage.

Like many others in Southwest Florida, Mark Wilkerson seemingly gambled his life by choosing to shelter at home rather than evacuate when Hurricane Ian crashed ashore last week as a Category 4 storm.

But it wasn't just luck that saved Wilkerson and his wife, Rhonda, or prevented damage to their well-appointed one-story house. You might say that it was all by design.

In 2018, Wilkerson became one of the first 100 residents of Babcock Ranch — an innovative community north of Fort Myers where homes are built to withstand the worst that Mother Nature can throw at them without being flooded out or losing electricity, water or the internet.

The community is located 30 miles inland to avoid coastal storm surges. Power lines to homes are all run underground, where they are shielded from high winds. Giant retaining ponds surround the development to protect houses from flooding. As a backup, streets are designed to absorb floodwaters and spare the houses...

So when the storm hit, Wilkerson and his wife stayed put, as did most other residents here. Although the community didn't experience the hurricane at its most intense, Wilkerson says they felt 100-mph winds. At one point, the lights in his house flickered but 'lo and behold, we never lost power.'

In fact, his house didn't even lose a shingle. That's the basic story of Babcock Ranch, post-Ian: Aside from a traffic light at the development's main entrance that's no longer there, a few street signs lying on the ground and some knocked-over palm trees, you'd hardly know that a hurricane came through.

Unfortunately, not so for many of the surrounding communities, where damaged structures and power outages have not been uncommon...

Their good fortune pays dividends for others in need. Admittedly, Babcock Ranch has a slightly insular feel to it. But partly because residents were spared the full wrath of the hurricane, they have been able to reach out and help those in need.

A community center here was designed to double as a reinforced storm shelter. Everyone staying there right now has come in from other hard-hit communities. Babcock Ranch residents have been fielding requests on social media and shuttling in supplies...

Hurricane Ian was a big test for this community, where houses start at around \$250,000. Languell says the storm provided 'proof of concept' for the community's design. The developers of Babcock Ranch welcome imitators, she adds. Communities elsewhere in the U.S. might benefit from what has been learned here.

But there's still more to learn, Languell says.

'We don't want to brag by any stretch of the imagination, because you do that, and the next thing you know, you get hit by a Category 5 and something doesn't work as well,' she says."

-- Carlos Osorio for NPR with Scott Neuman, On All Things Considered

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## Reinstalling Undergrounding Post Surge on Marco Island and Volunteering Experience - "Post Ian Cleanup Brings Unusual Items to Beach"



Photo: Coastal Breeze News

"October 15th over 200 volunteers gathered on Residents' Beach for the annual MICA sponsored beach cleanup. For many of the volunteers, this is the first time they've visited the beach post Hurricane Ian...

Hurricane Ian altered many coastal beaches, including Marco Island's. Earlier in the week, Collier County sent a reminder to residents that "they are working around the clock to restore our beaches - that there is still a lot of debris in the sand and items washing up on the shores such as pieces of wood with nails and other items not visible to the naked eye."



Photo: Coastal Breeze News

Volunteers were given the usual instructions to be very careful walking on the dunes area and to pick up only man made objects such as plastic items, bottle caps, cigarette butts, aluminum cans, etc.

We were thinking small items, but we were very surprised when volunteers started returning to the collection area with old tires, wooden planks, pieces of furniture and large netting materials - some halfway buried on the dunes and others from the shorelines. There was a theory that these old tires laden with barnacles were dumped into the Gulf decades ago to make artificial reefs - thinking they would create a habitat - and recently washed ashore by Hurricane Ian's storm surge.

In the small item category, several pockets of the beach were littered with plastic bottle caps. Beach goers and recreational boaters bring water bottles and leave or toss away hundreds of plastic bottle caps, a hazard to marine mammals, birds and fish that mistake these small floating bottle caps as food...

***In addition, Residents' Beach electric lines were buried underground, and though that would have been a benefit during a hurricane, Ian's surge destroyed the electrical line. LCEC had to replace the big electrical box located at Residents Beach and they installed all new underground lines along San Marco and Collier Boulevard...***

Thank you to all the 200+ volunteers who showed up for the MICA sponsored beach cleanup - it was a true community event with an overwhelming show of support. Volunteers left another 500+ pounds of tires and assorted trash at the north end for Collier County to pick up. "

-- Maria Lamb, Coastal Breeze News

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## "Florida to harden electric grid statewide in wake of Hurricane Ian"



Photo: News Service of Florida seen in [clickorlando.com](#)

"Less than a week after Hurricane Ian knocked out power to large swaths of Florida, state regulators Tuesday approved utilities' long-term plans to try to bolster the electric system.

The state [Public Service Commission](#) approved, with some changes, plans submitted by Florida Power & Light, Duke Energy Florida, Tampa Electric Co. and Florida Public Utilities Co. The plans detail a wide range of projects, including increasing the number of underground power lines...

State Rep. Randy Fine announced Thursday that more than 100,000 people in Brevard County lost power during Hurricane Ian's trek across Central Florida. As the commission Tuesday took up what are known as 'storm protection plans,' Commissioner Gary Clark described the situation as a 'balance.'

'We are never going to build a system that is storm-proof. It's not possible,' Clark said.

Commissioner Gabriella Passidomo also raised concerns about costs and benefits, saying that 'maybe we need to just temper our pace a little bit in these investments and reassess over time about how effective they are in certain areas. Because, as we have seen, every storm is very different.'

Utilities filed the proposals in the spring, but Tuesday's commission votes came as crews continued to work on restoring power after Hurricane Ian slammed the Southwest Florida coast Wednesday and continued across the state... As an example of the money involved, FPL's proposal included more than \$4.67 billion in costs over the next three years, according to a commission staff recommendation. That was before Tuesday's changes, which would at least slightly reduce the amount.

In its proposal, FPL said the projects would largely continue efforts started under a plan approved in 2020 by the commission.

'The existing hardening and storm preparedness programs have already demonstrated that they have and will continue to increase T&D (transmission and distribution) infrastructure resiliency, reduce restoration times, and reduce restoration costs when FPL's system is impacted by extreme weather events,' the proposal, filed in April, said."

-- Jim Saunders, News Service of Florida in clickorlando.com

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