

Hurricane Evacuation

Hurricane Irma was the most powerful Atlantic Ocean hurricane in recorded history. By multiple accounts, the storm was also directly responsible for the largest mass exodus in U.S. history, with nearly 7 million people across Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina being asked to evacuate their homes.

According to Florida's Department of Emergency Management (DEM), nearly 6.8 million Floridians evacuated their homes in the lead up to Hurricane Irma, "beating 2005's Houston-area Hurricane Rita exit by millions." Media outlets described police going door to door "telling people to leave to avoid life-threatening rains, winds, and flooding," as well as "large traffic jams on Interstates 95 and 75 and the Florida Turnpike." Additionally, the Federal Aviation Administration reported that Miami's traffic controllers handled 11,500 flights on the Thursday before the storm compared to 8,800 one week prior. As the National Weather Service outpost in Key West tweeted Friday night before Irma's landfall: "THIS IS AS REAL AS IT GETS."

Total Evacuation Orders During Hurricane Irma

13
COUNTIES
Did Not Issue
Evacuation Orders

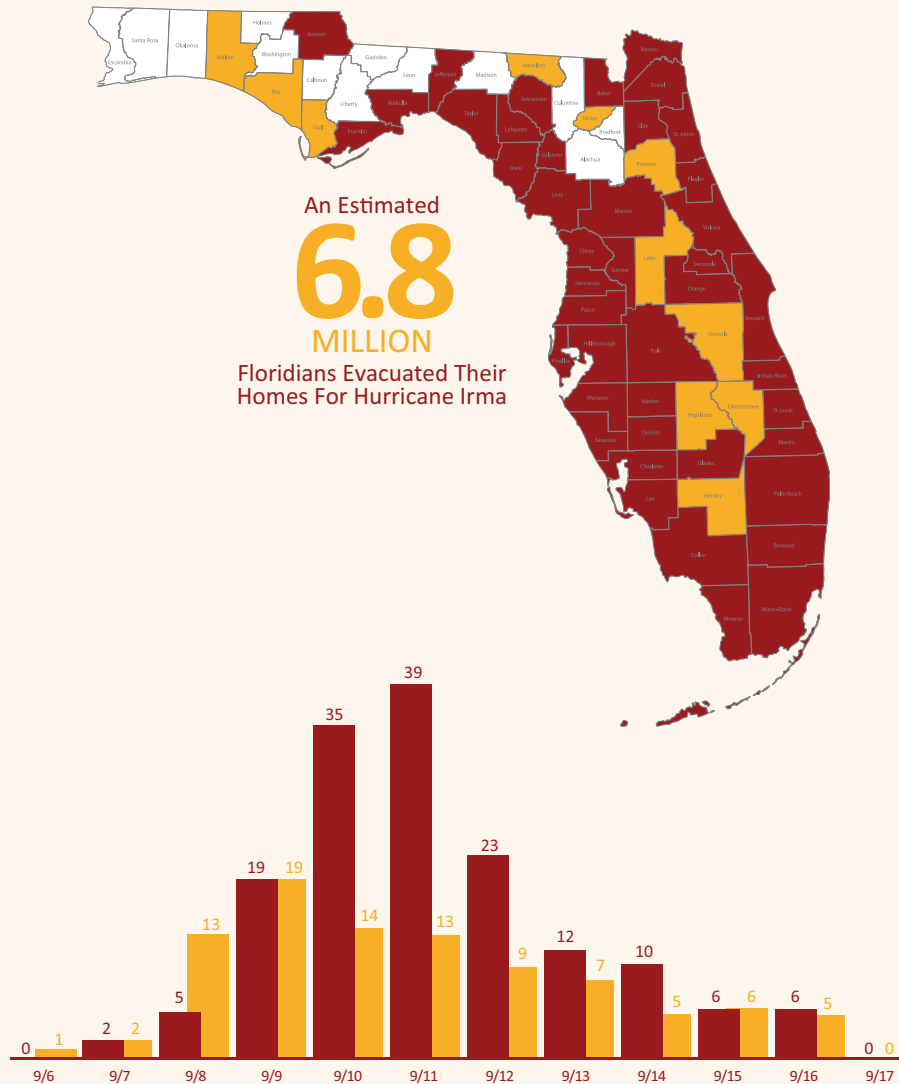
54
COUNTIES
Issued
Evacuation Orders

Data from DEM's Constellation system shows 54 of Florida's 67 counties ended up issuing evacuation orders in response to Hurricane Irma. Mandatory evacuations were ultimately issued in 42 counties, while a remaining 12 counties never went beyond issuing voluntary evacuation orders.

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The number of counties under evacuation orders peaked on September 11th, but declined quickly after. By September 17th, no counties remained under evacuation orders.

An Estimated 6.8 Million Floridians Evacuated Their Homes For Hurricane Irma



Mandatory and Voluntary Evacuations During Hurricane Irma

■ Mandatory Evacuated Counties ■ Voluntary Evacuated Counties

Counties are responsible for creating evacuation zones using data from both the federal and state governments, while also taking local factors into account. Counties also take the lead in issuing evacuation orders within their jurisdictions, whether this is done through the board of county commissioners or the emergency management director. While a hurricane evacuation is anything but routine, state and local emergency management officials adjusted to 10 different evacuation scenarios over the course of Irma's track.

¹Aarian Marhsall. "4 Maps that Show the Gigantic Hurricane Irma Evacuation." WIRED. September 8, 2017. Available online at: www.wired.com/2017/09/4-maps-show-gigantic-hurricane-irma-evacuation/.

²Kelly Swanson. "The massive evacuation effort in South Florida has million fleeing Hurricane Irma." Vox. September 8, 2017. Available online at: www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2017/9/8/16274106/evacuation-south-florida-millions-fleeing-hurricane-irma.

³Wired

⁴<https://twitter.com/NWSKeyWest/status/906266219304685568>.