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## Four dead, clean up begins as Wilma departs

BY MARTIN MERZER, WANDA J. DeMARZO AND TERE FIGUERAS NEGRETE  
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It was our turn -- again. And now, the cleanup and the insurance claims and the repairs begin -- again.

The worst hurricane season in history crashed through South Florida's back door Monday. At least four people died, one of them in Coral Springs.

Hurricane Wilma's vicious winds de-roofed or otherwise damaged thousands of homes. It shattered countless windows in downtown towers, raining shards of glass on the streets of Fort Lauderdale and Miami. It left millions of people shaken and without power.

Miami-Dade police made at least six arrests for looting. Mayor Carlos Alvarez ordered a county-wide curfew from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m., and it may be extended into tonight. Service on Miami-Dade's Metrorail system was suspended because of physical damage.

In Broward, the damage was sweeping. Authorities called Wilma the worst storm to hit that county since Hurricane King in 1950. Broward imposed a county-wide curfew from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Also heavily impacted were much of Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties, the Florida Keys and portions of Southwest Florida, especially rural Glades and Hendry counties.

"I guess I'm going to be one of several hundred thousand looking for a roofer," said Susan Schur, who lives in Kendall.

Search-and-rescue teams were reassigned from the Naples area and dispatched to Glades and Hendry, where mobile home parks and lower-lying single family homes were smashed.

One man was killed in Coral Springs when he was struck by a falling tree. A Palm Beach County man died in Loxahatchee when a tree hit his car. A woman in Immokalee was killed by flying debris. Another man in rural Collier County was killed when a roof collapsed on him, possibly after being hit by a tree.

Several other bodies were found and at least one person died of a heart attack during the storm, but authorities could not immediately confirm that the deaths were related to the hurricane.

Regionally, Wilma gouged much wider -- though thankfully less intense -- damage than Hurricane Andrew, the Category 5 monster that flattened much of south Miami-Dade in 1992.

At one point, Wilma's eye simultaneously touched five counties -- Miami-Dade, Broward, Collier, Monroe and Hendry. President Bush declared 20 Florida counties a major disaster area.

Incredibly, unbelievably, Wilma was the eighth hurricane to strike or brush Florida in 14 months. Katrina and Rita presented local problems, but this one had South Florida written all over it.

"I think it is a blessing to be alive," said Miguel Cabral, who narrowly avoided being struck by a falling construction crane in Miami Beach. Another crane collapsed in Hallandale Beach.

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In the storm's immediate aftermath, only a few reports surfaced of deep-rooted structural damage, but gusts well above 100 mph crushed boat warehouses in Sunny Isles Beach and Deerfield Beach.

Sea water severed U.S. 1 around Mile Markers 31, 73 and 110 in the Florida Keys, which suffered extensive damage. Traffic lights were down throughout the region. Every hospital in Miami-Dade, Broward and Monroe counties relied at some point on generator power, according to state officials.

Miami International Airport and Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International were closed Monday and might be closed today. Call your airline before heading to the airport.

Miami-Dade's Metrorail system sustained widespread damage, as high winds knocked out the third rail at four spots along the 22-mile line. The system will be out of service for at least three days, according to county transportation officials.

More than 3.2 million customers were without power through the southern half of the state, including 1.8 million in Miami-Dade and Broward and the entire city of Homestead. All but 5,000 of the 59,000 customers in the Florida Keys were without power.

Utility officials said full restoration could take weeks. Home repairs will take months -- or years.

"This is 20 times worst than Katrina," said Bob Brumm of Biscayne Park. "It will be Christmas before we get cleaned off."

In Broward, many roofs were severely damaged in Pompano Beach, Coral Springs and elsewhere. Fire stations reported major damage. Water mains broke and residents of Tamarac, Plantation and Pompano Beach were advised to boil water before using it.

Among the thousands of damaged homes: A house in Davie owned by David Paulison, acting director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and former chief of the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department.

"I talked to my wife," Paulison said in Washington, D.C. "We lost roofing tiles and our prized pink grapefruit tree."

Hundreds of windows blew out of office buildings in downtown Fort Lauderdale, primarily in the courthouse area, and in downtown Miami, particularly along the Brickell Avenue business corridor.

"It looks like an explosion," said Carmen Rodriguez, who lives in the Brickell area.

All windows -- 14 stories worth -- were blown out of the Broward County School District building in Fort Lauderdale. Biology work sheets and other school district paperwork flapped along streets near the building.

More than 100 windows blew out of an unoccupied 10-story South Shore Hospital building in Miami Beach.

The first window surrendered just after 7:30 a.m. For the next two-and-a-half hours, they popped out one by one. Soon, furniture, slabs of drywall and shreds of yellow insulation flew through the jagged openings.

"I looked outside, it was raining glass," said Ralph Cellazo, the building's plant manager.

In Sunny Isles Beach, two aluminum warehouses filled with hundreds of boats collapsed in a heap of twisted metal and fiberglass. Another boat storage facility collapsed in Deerfield Beach.

After devastating parts of Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, Wilma landed along Florida's southwest Gulf Coast as a major Category 3 storm. It swiftly rolled its front half and then its eyewall and then its eye through the region.

Just when much of South Florida thought it might be in the clear, the back side of the storm attacked. The storm carved through the area with lightning speed -- its forward progress calculated at 25 mph.

In many cases, what the front half left behind, the second half took away. Barrel tiles peeled off like paper, often slamming through the windows of parked cars.

According to the National Weather Service, gusts of 116 mph were reported near Key Biscayne, 102 mph in Lake Okeechobee, 101 mph at Palm Beach International Airport, 95 mph at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International, and 85 mph at the National Hurricane Center in West Miami-Dade and in Opa-locka.

Broward officials said they had unconfirmed reports of a 120 mph gust in Pompano Beach, 108 mph in Dania Beach, 105 mph at the Fort Lauderdale courthouse and 100 mph at the Miami Dolphins training camp in Davie.

The Florida Keys came under particularly intense attack. Instruments measured wind gusts

of 120 mph at Cudjoe Key, 101 mph at Sombrero Key and 74 mph at Long Key.

"We have a real disaster here," Key West Police Chief Bill Mauldin told a Key West city commissioner. "We are in sad shape right now."

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