Dear Readers,

The cover of this issue features 2 aerial images of a section of Fort Myers beach on the west coast of Florida, before and after Hurricane Ian made landfall nearby at Cayo Costa as a dangerous Category 4 entity on September 28th, 2022.

According to accuweather.com, “Fort Myers Beach was ground zero for storm surge — the area was completely submerged as Hurricane Ian struck…

The National Weather Service (NWS) sent damage survey teams to Fort Myers, Florida, to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the damage caused by Ian…The highest water level found by the team so far was 15 feet above the normal high-water level. At the level detected so far from Ian, all of Sanibel Island, a barrier island just west of Fort Myers, was inundated by feet of water.

Even though the height of the storm surge was correctly forecast by AccuWeather meteorologists and was one of the primary reasons why the AccuWeather RealImpact™ Scale for Hurricanes was rated a 5 for Ian, residents have told AccuWeather reporters that they were taken aback by how quickly the water rushed in from the Gulf of Mexico.

Surge seems to be a difficult aspect of the storm to visualize in a person’s mind when compared to heavy rainfall or wind because on balance, few people have seen for themselves how quickly storm surge flooding can result in rapidly rising water which inundates anything and everything in its path — often times moving well away from the immediate coast through bays, inlets and tidal rivers.”

“According to a report from Florida’s Department of Law Enforcement issued on Wednesday, Oct. 12, of the 108 fatalities reported across the state, at least 58 were related to drowning.”

The tragic outcomes of the effects of this storm drive home the importance of early evacuation, especially away from coastal and low-lying areas in the face of a hurricane threat.

If you zoom in closely on these 2 images, especially near to the shoreline, you can see that swathes of entire buildings are no longer there. While it may be considered to be safer overall to retreat to the second floor or roof of a building rather than to try and outrun a storm surge in a vehicle, neither option can ensure safety or preservation of life.

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