



PRELIMINARY REPORT

Hurricane Evacuation Decision Making in Pinellas County: A Study Focusing on Hurricanes Helene and Milton

January 30, 2026

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Collins, collinsjm@usf.edu

Authors: Elizabeth Dunn¹, Maria Paula Ibarcena Woll¹, Anahita Tyagi², Jennifer Collins³, Laura Myers⁴, Brooke Page³, and Cassandra O'Connor³

Affiliations: University of South Florida College of Public Health¹, USF Chemistry Department², USF School of Geosciences³, University of Alabama⁴

Executive Summary

Emergency managers and communications experts aim to improve compliance with evacuation orders in hurricane-prone areas. Hurricanes Helene and Milton presented an opportunity to better understand preparedness, risk perception, and evacuation decisions among Pinellas County residents. To explore these factors, researchers disseminated a digital survey using Qualtrics—available in English and Spanish—collecting 1,324 responses between April and August 2025 from Pinellas County specifically. This report summarizes preliminary findings on respondents' general evacuation preparedness and the perceived risks that influenced their decisions to evacuate to a shelter or hotel, shelter in place, or relocate elsewhere (e.g., friend, family member, coworker) in response to the storms.

Another study conducted during the 2020 hurricane season in Florida can be found at <https://doi.org/10.1175/BAMS-D-20-0229.1>, along with 2021 hurricane season evacuation intentions for the continental United States at <https://doi.org/10.1175/WCAS-D-23-0003.1>, and also for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands at <https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2025.85>. Lastly, a series of articles were published relating to hurricane impacts since the COVID-19 pandemic, including Hurricanes Laura and Sally (<https://doi.org/10.1175/WCAS-D-21-0160.1>), Hurricane Ida (<https://doi.org/10.1175/WCAS-D-22-0114.1>), and Hurricane Ian (<https://doi.org/10.1175/WCAS-D-24-0007.1>).

Hurricane Helene

According to the National Weather Service (NWS) Tallahassee Weather Forecast Office (2024), Hurricane Helene made landfall near the mouth of the Aucilla River in Taylor County, Florida (approximately 10 miles west-southwest of Perry) at about 11:10 p.m. EDT on 26 September 2024 as a Category 4 storm, as determined by the Saffir Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale, sustaining estimated maximum wind speeds of 140 mph. The storm resulted in 250 fatalities across the impacted states, including twelve deaths in Pinellas County (Hagen et al., 2025; Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners [PCBCC], 2024). The storm produced extraordinary storm-surge and inundation levels in the Big Bend region—surge exceeded 15 feet in some locations (Hagen et al., 2025). National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) indicates that Hurricane Helene produced storm surge levels at least 6 feet above normal tide levels in some gauge-monitored locations, while local reports and academic measurements suggest surges and wave run-up reached 8 feet or higher in barrier-island communities (Hagen et al., 2025; Paul, 2024). Mandatory evacuation orders were issued in Pinellas County for residents living in mobile or manufactured homes, as well as approximately 340,000 residents residing in Zone A (PCBCC, 2024). Evacuation orders prompted the opening of six shelters, housing 1,946 people and 97 pets (Pinellas County Emergency Management [PCEM], 2024a).

The trajectory of Hurricane Helene was accurately forecasted, as the storm progressed across the Gulf Coast and moved inland toward North Carolina and the Appalachian region over four days (Hagen et al., 2025). Preliminary damage estimates total \$78.7 billion, ranking Helene as the seventh-costliest hurricane to make landfall in the United States, after Hurricanes Sandy and Ida (National Centers for Environmental Information [NCEI], 2025; NOAA, 2026). Another significant factor contributing to Hurricane Helene's impact was the unusually favorable atmospheric conditions that enhanced moisture absorption and produced extreme rainfall (NWS, 2024). The extreme rainfall was driven by a combination of high-pressure systems east-northeast of the hurricane, upper-level low-pressure areas to the north, and frontal systems near mountain ranges, which together promoted sustained upward ward air movement and heavy precipitation (Hagen et al., 2025; NWS, 2024). Collectively, these regional pressure dynamics demonstrate how broader synoptic patterns can intensify and extend rainfall during major hurricanes.

Hurricane Milton

On 9 October 2024, ten days after the landfall of Hurricane Helene, Hurricane Milton made landfall near Siesta Key, Florida, at 8:30 p.m. EDT as a Category 3 hurricane with estimated maximum sustained winds of 132 mph, causing 15 confirmed fatalities and generating record-level storm surges that inundated coastal areas with up to 10 feet of water (Beven II et al., 2025). According to Pinellas County Emergency Management (2024b), mandatory evacuation orders were issued for everyone in Zones A, B, and C, as well

as for all mobile home residents. During Hurricane Milton, Pinellas County opened twelve shelters that served 11,942 people and 1,386 pets (PCEM, 2024a).

Damage estimates to date are \$34.3 billion, making Hurricane Milton the eleventh costliest cyclone (after Hurricanes Andrew and Ike) to make landfall in the United States (NOAA, 2026). Another key driver of Hurricane Milton's devastation was the strong winds and the massive tornado outbreak that accompanied it, with at least 45 tornadoes confirmed across Florida as the storm approached and moved inland (Beven II et al., 2025). The tornadoes resulting from Hurricane Milton's landfall exacerbated the widespread structural damage already caused by Hurricane Helene 10 days earlier. Moreover, these tornadoes struck communities where recovery efforts were underway, forcing first responders and emergency managers to suspend operations with compounding response challenges. In addition to the tornadoes' impacts, Milton produced record-high crests and rainfall led to excessive flooding, which was exacerbated by already saturated ground conditions from Hurricane Helene, resulting in prolonged inundation and standing water, in addition to delayed restoration of power and critical infrastructure (Beven II et al., 2025). Collectively, the sequential tropical systems impacting the Florida west coast underscored the rising response challenges and community vulnerabilities during complex emergencies.

Demographics

Pinellas County residents made up 44.6% (1,323) of the 2,966 total responses captured across the state of Florida between April 2025 and September 2025 for the Hurricanes Helene and Milton evacuation decision-making survey. The high response rate in Pinellas County is due to the support provided by local emergency managers and risk communication experts, particularly with survey dissemination. There was representation from 32 jurisdictions in Pinellas County that responded to the survey, with 32.0% from St. Petersburg, followed by 11.5% from Clearwater, and 7.5% from Largo, among those who had to make an evacuation decision for Hurricane Helene. For Hurricane Milton, the distribution was similar, with 31.9% from St. Petersburg, 12.2% from Clearwater, and 8.2% from Largo.

Relative to Pinellas County U.S. Census data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023), the study samples for Hurricanes Helene and Milton differed somewhat in demographic composition. For Hurricane Helene, 74.5% of respondents were women, compared to 76.0% for Hurricane Milton (county: 51.6%). Non-Hispanic Whites comprised 91.8% of the total sample (county: 70.6%), whereas Black or African American (1.4%; county: 8.8%) and Asian (0.3%; county: 3.7%) respondents were underrepresented in the survey. A portion of respondents (4.5%) identified as Hispanic (county: 11.4%). Approximately 29.3% of survey respondents were aged 65 years or older, closely reflecting demographics in the county (27.0%), whereas households with children aged 17 years or younger were more prevalent in the sample than in the county overall (28.8%; county: 15.1%).

Household income distributions showed variability: approximately 1.7% reported incomes below \$20,000, and 27.7% above \$150,000. The second largest percent of households during both storms fell within the \$50,000–\$99,999 income range, representing approximately 26.7% of respondents. In comparison, the median household income in Pinellas County in 2023 was \$70,768. Only a small fraction of respondents (5.0%) reported changes in employment status due to the hurricanes. These findings indicate that the survey sample has a higher income than the general Pinellas County population, with most households demonstrating moderate income stability and experiencing relatively limited disruptions to employment following the hurricanes.

Educational attainment in both hurricane samples slightly exceeded county averages, with 99.7% of the sample reporting having completed a high school degree or equivalent, and then 38.6% holding a bachelor's degree. County averages were 92.1% for high school completion and 32.1% for bachelor's degree attainment. However, these data capture a large percentage of individuals with master's (23.7%), doctoral (3.6%), and professional (5.1%) degrees.

Household Hazards, Risk Perception, and Preparedness Measures

In preparation for Hurricanes Helene and Milton, most survey respondents reported a high level of awareness and preparedness regarding their evacuation zones and household risks. Among survey participants affected by Hurricanes Helene and Milton, 94.8% reported being aware of their designated evacuation zone. Overall, 59.6% resided in Zones A, B, or C, with 42.0% specifically identifying their zone as Zone A. Nearly half (47.4%) indicated living in a flood zone, while 38.0% reported not residing in a designated flood zone. In Pinellas County, mandatory evacuation orders were issued for Zone A and mobile homes during Hurricane Helene, whereas Zones A, B, and C, as well as mobile homes, were subject to mandatory evacuation orders during Hurricane Milton. The majority of respondents across both storms identified as homeowners (Helene: 85.3%; Milton: 83.3%), with 13.5% identifying as renters, 1.4% living with family or other arrangements, and a few survey participants indicating they were houseless (1.63% at the time of Hurricane Milton (with 0.0% for Hurricane Helene survey respondents).

When asked about perceived risks in their area of residence, participants expressed great concern for storm-related hazards such as the category of the storm, power outages, wind speed, and wind gusts. During Hurricane Helene, 62.8% of participants reported that they definitely considered flooding when deciding whether to evacuate, and an additional 13.4% said they probably did. Similarly, prior to Hurricane Milton, 78.6% of respondents believed the hurricane would be very or extremely serious for their community—more than double the percentage of those who expressed the same concern before Hurricane Helene (33.7%).

Despite heightened awareness of potential hazards, many residents reported limited implementation of household protective measures. Only 28.6% of Helene respondents and 26.0% of Milton respondents collected sandbags, and 39.3% covered their windows prior to Milton. Most respondents (approximately 93–94% across both storms) had at least three days of emergency supplies, and a large majority reported having a household evacuation plan (70.8% before Helene and 75.9% before Milton). For Hurricane Helene, the large majority (93.7%) of people indicated that they had 3 days (48.96%), and then 44.7% had 7 days' worth of hurricane supplies (food, water, flashlight, batteries, etc.) in preparation, with only 5.02% indicating they did not have supplies. For Hurricane Milton, the large majority of people (93.4%) also indicated that they had either 3 days (44.5%) or 7 days (48.9%) worth of hurricane supplies, with only 6.6% indicating they did not have supplies. These findings suggest that while residents demonstrated strong preparedness behaviors and situational awareness, many households did not take full advantage of available physical mitigation measures to protect their homes from flood and wind damage.

When asked about concerns in their area of residence, 61.1% identified storm surge as a concern. However, despite the perceived risks regarding storm surge, the majority of respondents did not collect sandbags in preparation for Hurricane Helene (71.4%) or Hurricane Milton (74.0%), and only 27.3% of the sample covered their windows (e.g., shutters, plywood) before Hurricane Helene and then 39.3% for Hurricane Milton. Other perceived threats that participants mentioned included storm intensity (95.8%), wind speed (85.8%), wind gusts (84.7%), hurricane size (81.5%), tornadoes (58%), falling trees (72.1%), storm surge (61.1%), rainfall (66.9%), mudslides (3.4%), and power outages (83.6%).

Evacuation Decisions, Aids, and Barriers

Across both hurricanes, more than half of the survey respondents “*strongly agreed*” that they made the correct evacuation choice (Helene: 57.5%; Milton: 57.4%). Furthermore, a quarter of respondents evacuated to a hotel or the home of a friend or family member, though this behavior was more common during Milton (43.2%) than during Helene (25.7%). A larger share of respondents chose to remain at home during Helene (67.5%) compared to Milton (28.8%), while shelter use remained low for both storms (0.4% during Helene and 1.8% during Milton). Among respondents aged 65 years and older, the percentage who stayed home during Hurricane Helene (62.9%) was nearly twice that observed during Hurricane Milton (30.8%), indicating a substantial decrease in sheltering-in-place among older adults. However, a slightly smaller share evacuated to a hotel during Helene (11.2%) compared to Milton (12.1%), suggesting that evacuation behaviors among older adults may have varied based on storm characteristics or perceived risk.

When comparing the two storms, respondents identified similar primary concerns related to storm severity and official warnings, which ranked highest for both Hurricane Helene (n = 768) and Hurricane Milton (n = 715). Concerns about pets were also prominent across both events (Helene: n = 506; Milton: n

= 493), indicating consistent consideration for household animals during evacuation planning. However, Helene respondents cited traffic congestion (n = 311) and the availability of shelters or hotels (n = 203) more frequently, along with uncertainty about where to go (n = 174). In contrast, Milton respondents emphasized traffic issues (n = 305) and home security (n = 164) as their next most significant concerns, suggesting that while both storms prompted similar apprehensions about mobility and safety, Milton raised heightened worry over protecting property, whereas Helene generated more concern about logistical aspects of evacuation.

Size of the Cone and area outside of the cone

The National Hurricane Center (NHC) explains that the hurricane forecast cone illustrates the probable path of a hurricane's center, based on historical forecast accuracy, and does not represent the storm's physical size or the full area that may experience hazardous conditions (National Hurricane Center [NHC], 2025). Because winds, rainfall, and storm surge can extend well beyond the forecast cone, the NHC has implemented updates to its graphics to improve communication of both coastal and inland threats (NHC, 2024). Misunderstandings, however, remain common among many people who continue to believe that areas outside the cone are not at risk of impacts, despite repeated public education efforts (The Weather Channel, 2024).

Survey results from Hurricanes Helene and Milton revealed that while many respondents demonstrated an accurate understanding of hurricane forecast graphics, some misconceptions persist. When asked whether the size of the cone represents the size of the storm, nearly half of the respondents (48%) for both Helene and Milton *strongly disagreed*, and roughly one-third (31%) *disagreed*, suggesting that most understood the cone does not depict the physical size of the storm. Similarly, when asked whether areas outside the cone are not at risk of hurricane impacts, a majority *strongly disagreed* (53.5% for Helene; 53.3% for Milton) or *disagreed* (38% for Helene; 38.2% for Milton), indicating a sound understanding that hazards such as wind, rain, and storm surge can extend beyond the forecast cone. However, a small percentage of respondents remained *neutral* or *agreed* with the statements, showing that while awareness is improving, some uncertainty still exists regarding the interpretation of hurricane forecast graphics.

Risk Communication

The majority of respondents (88.5%) *agreed* that they received timely information to make an informed evacuation decision during the 2024 hurricane season, with 66.4% *strongly agreeing* and 22.2% *somewhat agreeing*, while only 6.1% *disagreed* and 5.4% remained *neutral*. Furthermore, 62.8% of individuals stated, “*definitely yes*” when asked whether they took flooding into account when deciding to evacuate or not, with 13.4% stating “*probably yes.*” To identify which communication channels most strongly guided evacuation behavior, respondents rated their reliance on each information source from 0

(“*Not relied on at all*”) to 4 (“*Relied on the most*”). The analysis shows that residents overwhelmingly turned to local media (86.2%), followed by electronic media (57.1%), County/City Emergency Management preparedness websites (49.9%), mobile weather apps (49.6%), and government officials (44.5%) as their most trusted and frequently relied-upon sources.

Future Evacuation Intentions

About a quarter (31.5%) of respondents indicated that it was “*extremely likely*” that they would evacuate their homes in the case of a major hurricane in the future, with 24.9% indicating that it was “*somewhat likely*.” More than half of respondents (52.9%) identified evacuating only during a major hurricane—categorized as a Category 3 or above—posing a concern, as some lower-category hurricanes, or even tropical storms, can cause life-threatening storm surge and inland flooding. For example, Hurricane Sandy made landfall in New Jersey on 29 October 2012 with sustained winds of 80 mph. Although it was classified as a post-tropical cyclone at the time of landfall, the storm caused more than \$50 billion in damage and resulted in over 100 deaths in the United States (PlaNYC, 2013). Due to flaws of the Saffir Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale, especially with lower category storms, efforts are underway to reconsider communication with the public using this current scale, and alternative scales have been proposed. For example, Bloemendaal et al. (2021) consider a proposed scale which takes into account wind speed, storm surge, and rainfall, and their team published an article (Mol et al., 2025) which showed how the public perceived this proposed scale in comparison to the current Saffir Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale.

Residents Who Stayed Home Despite Mandatory Evacuation Orders

Across both Hurricanes Helene and Milton, a number of Pinellas County residents residing in mandatory evacuation zones chose to shelter in place rather than evacuate. During Hurricane Helene, 25.9% (n = 219) of those who stayed home reported living in a mandatory evacuation zone (Zone A or a mobile home), while a similar percent (26.2%; n = 91) did so during Hurricane Milton. Despite clear evacuation directives, many residents cited a combination of confidence, risk perception, and practical considerations in their decisions. Among respondents in mandatory evacuation zones, it was indicated that they would only leave for a Category 3 storm or higher (Helene: 53.5%; Milton: 60.4%), reflecting a relatively high threshold for taking action to evacuate, and people either ignoring the dangers of rain and/or storm surge flooding or not understanding the current scale with their evacuation decision.

a. Demographic Characteristics of Residents Who Stayed Home

Demographic patterns were consistent across both events. Those who remained home were predominantly older adults classified as age 65 or older (Helene: 56.2%; Milton: 57.1%), Florida residents living in the state for ≥ 10 years (62–65%), and homeowners (82–86%), with a large percent holding a

bachelor's degree or higher (Helene: 71.7%; Milton: 74.7%). Among residents in mandatory evacuation zones who did not evacuate, the percentage of households with children under 18 was similar for Hurricane Helene (27.9%) and Hurricane Milton (29.7%), indicating that family composition alone did not appear to differ across storms among those who stayed. Most respondents trusted local authorities to guide their decisions (Helene: 59.7%; Milton: 67.8%) but still opted to stay, suggesting that trust alone may not translate into compliance when personal risk assessments differ.

b. Risk Perception and Protective Actions of Residents in Evacuation Zones Who Stayed Home

Risk perception appeared to play a decisive role for those who decided to stay. Before Helene, only 22.4% of residents in evacuation zones believed the storm would be extremely or very serious for their community, compared with 59.3% in Milton, demonstrating a shift toward higher perceived risk with the later storm. Similarly, confidence in evacuation ability declined from 56.6% (Helene) to 44.4% (Milton), possibly reflecting increased awareness of barriers such as traffic congestion, cost, or logistical challenges. Despite these challenges, preparedness measures improved modestly from Helene to Milton. The percent of residents with seven days' worth of supplies increased from 43.4% to 63.7%, and those reporting a household evacuation plan rose slightly (from 69.4% to 71.4%). However, the majority of those who decided to stay home despite being in a mandatory evacuation zone continued to forgo physical mitigation measures, such as sandbags (Helene: 67.0%; Milton: 73.6%) or window coverings (Helene: 74.0%; Milton: 62.6%).

c. Social and Experiential Influences on Decision-Making

Social and experiential factors also influenced the decisions of residents who decided to stay home despite being in a mandatory evacuation zone. For Helene, 67.6% reported that neighbors did not influence their evacuation decision, while 52.2% said the same for Milton—suggesting that peer influence may have modestly increased after repeated storm experience. Among those who stayed home during Hurricane Helene, only 15.1% of those also remained home for Milton. That means 84.9% evacuated during Milton, who did not evacuate for Helene, showing a substantial behavioral shift toward greater evacuation compliance.

Regret after Hurricane Helene was widespread, with many describing unexpected surge and traumatic flooding events that reshaped their future evacuation intentions. Several residents stated they “*wish we would have evacuated*” or that “*our house flooded 4 feet, and we were trapped...it was terrifying.*” illustrating how flood impacts fundamentally changed perceptions of risk. A significant number reported that their experience during Helene directly influenced their decision to evacuate for Milton, with one respondent noting, “*After Helene, I realized it was too close of a call...I took Milton a lot more seriously.*” Nonetheless, 43.8% of those who stayed home during Milton indicated that they would be unlikely to

evacuate in future storms, underscoring the persistence of evacuation reluctance among a subset of residents. Findings reveal that experience with multiple storms increased perceived risk and preparedness but did not fully overcome entrenched behavioral, logistical, or confidence barriers that influence evacuation decisions.

d. Barriers to Evacuation for Those Who Stayed Home Despite Being in a Mandatory Evacuation Zone

Among residents who remained home, several key themes emerged that shaped their decision-making. The most commonly cited reasons included pet-related constraints, limited availability of pet-friendly shelters or hotels that are both pet-friendly and affordable, and concerns about traffic congestion and inadequate evacuation routes, particularly on barrier islands. Respondents cited financial barriers, work obligations (“*our workplaces did not close until the day of the storm*”), limited or poor sheltering options (“*I slept on the hard floor... never again*”), and uncertainty about where to go or how to evacuate safely also played a significant role.

e. Structural and Place-Based Factors that Influenced Evacuation Decisions

Many respondents that stayed despite indicating that they were located in a mandatory evacuation zone felt their homes were structurally secure, elevated, or historically safe from flooding, which contributed to a low perceived risk—“*There was no reason to leave...our home is 10' above sea level with hurricane windows*” (Evacuation Zone A Resident)—highlighting how structural self-efficacy contributed to decisions to stay. Others emphasized the need to protect their property, wanting to remain close to family members with medical or mobility challenges, or avoid potential delays in returning home after bridge closures. Participants expressed frustration with evacuation outcomes, including evacuating into worse conditions or enduring prolonged re-entry delays. For example, one respondent shared, “*We did different things and got it wrong both times,*” while another expressed that “*residents who evacuated during Helene were kept from Treasure Island for days.*” These experiences show that evacuation quality—and post-storm access—strongly influence decision-making.

f. Pre-Hurricane Messaging

When asked whether any messaging they had heard, read, or seen before Hurricanes Helene and Milton influenced their evacuation decisions, respondents consistently highlighted that the most powerful and persuasive messages emphasized extreme storm surge risk, particularly for Hurricane Milton. Many participants cited warnings of “*10–15 feet of storm surge*” or “*15–18 ft storm surge at home*” as the primary factor prompting them to leave for Milton, even though they did not leave for Hurricane Helene. Messaging that framed Milton as a potential direct hit or a storm capable of reaching Category 4 or 5 intensity also played a major role in motivating evacuation. Numerous respondents cited local sources—especially Denis Phillips and Mike’s Weather Page—as their most trusted sources of information, explaining, for example,

“If Denis Phillips says go, you go,” and “I watch Mike’s Weather Page—he was clear it could be a direct hit.” County and municipal alerts, including Alert Pinellas, were frequently referenced, with some noting that *“the city was very good about sending updates”* or that *“the sheriff ordered evacuation over loudspeaker.”*

Importantly, many residents reported that their experience during Hurricane Helene made them take Milton’s warnings far more seriously, often noting that Helene’s storm surge had been underestimated. As one participant wrote, *“Helene flooded my car—I wasn’t taking that chance again,”* while another added, *“After Helene, the messaging felt much more serious.”* Messaging that emphasized severity, storm track certainty, and life-threatening surge potential was most influential in shaping evacuation behavior prior to Hurricane Milton (see Appendix B for full qualitative responses).

Next Steps

Future publications and reports will be produced, representing the data obtained from the Hurricanes Helene and Milton evacuation research. As of September 2025, a total of 2,966 survey responses were collected from across the state of Florida. If you are in the field of emergency management and planning, feel free to email Dr. Jennifer Collins (collinsjm@usf.edu) and Elizabeth Dunn (eadunn2@usf.edu) with any requests for additional statistics or data from our survey that could be relevant to your planning for future hurricane seasons. Our team can conduct similar analyses for other hurricane-prone areas and is currently seeking funding to expand upon this research.

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the Pinellas County Office of Emergency Management for the support and dedication toward disseminating the survey across Pinellas County to collect data about hurricane risk perception and evacuation behaviors. Additionally, we acknowledge our extensive stakeholder team for their efforts in assisting with reviewing and providing feedback on survey questions, pilot testing the survey instrument, and assisting with distribution across communities impacted by Hurricane Helene and Milton. We would also like to acknowledge our core research team, including Elizabeth Dunn, Dr. Jennifer Collins, Rashida Jones, Maria Paula Ibarcena Woll, Cassandra O’Connor, Brooke Page, and Dr. Laura Myers, who assisted with the IRB proposal, reviewing recent literature, survey development, piloting the survey, Spanish translation, marketing the survey, data collection, and/or cleaning.

References

- Beven II, J. L., Alaka, L., & Fritz, C. (2025, March 31). *National Hurricane Center tropical cyclone report: Hurricane Milton (AL142024), 5-10 October 2024*. National Weather Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL142024_Milton.pdf
- Bloemendaal, N., de Moel, H., Mol, J. M., Bosma, P., Polen, A. N. & Collins, J. M. (2021). Adequately reflecting the potential impact of tropical cyclones using the new Tropical Cyclone Severity Scale. *Environmental Research Letter*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/abd131>
- Collins, J., Polen, A., McSweeney, K., Colon-Burgos, D., & Jernigan, I. (2021a). Hurricane risk perceptions and evacuation decision-making in the age of COVID-19. *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society*, 102(4), E836–E848. <https://doi.org/10.1175/BAMS-D-20-0229.1>
- Collins, J., Polen, A., Dunn, E., Welford, M., McSweeney, K., & Jernigan, I. (2021b). Hurricane decision making in the age of COVID-19: A study focused on those impacted by hurricanes in the continental U.S. <https://bit.ly/2021PreliminaryReportStates>
- Collins, J., Polen, A., Dunn, E., Maas, Leslie; Ackerson, Erik; Valmond, Janis; Morales, Ernesto, Colon-Burgos, D. (2021c). COVID-19 and hurricane evacuations in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. *DesignSafe*. <https://doi.org/10.17603/ds2-7czq-en54>
- Collins, J., Polen, A., Dunn, E., Jernigan, I., McSweeney, K., Welford, M., Lackovic, M., Colon-Burgos, D., & Zhu, Yi-Jie. (2022). Hurricanes Laura and Sally: A case study of evacuation decision-making in the age of COVID-19. *Weather, Climate, and Society*, 14(4), 1231–1245. <https://doi.org/10.1175/WCAS-D-21-0160.1>
- Hagen, A. B., Congialosi, J. P., Chenard, M., Alaka, L., & Delgado, S. (2025, April 8). *National Hurricane Center tropical cyclone report: Hurricane Helene (AL092024), 24–27 September 2024*. National Weather Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL092024_Helene.pdf
- Mol, J., Bloemendaal, N., de Moel, H., Amasino, D., & Collins, J. M. (2025). An experimental test of risk perceptions under a new hurricane classification system. *Scientific Reports*, 15(30320). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-14170-1>
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (2026, January 21). *Fast facts: Hurricane costs*. <https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/hurricane-costs.html>
- National Centers for Environmental Information. (2025). *U.S. billion-dollar weather and climate disasters*. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/>
- National Hurricane Center. (2025). *Definition of the NHC track forecast cone*. National Oceanic

- Atmospheric Administration. <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutcone.shtml>
- National Hurricane Center. (2024, February 6). *National Hurricane Center experimental tropical cyclone forecast cone graphic*. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/pdf/NHC_Cone_Graphic_Change_Announcement.pdf
- National Weather Service, Tallahassee Weather Forecast Office. (2024, September 27). *Hurricane Helene 2024: Florida Big Bend*. U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. <https://www.weather.gov/tae/helene2024>
- Paul, G. (2024, October 2). *Early readings show the Tampa Bay region sustained record storm surge*. WUSF Public Media. <https://www.wusf.org/weather/2024-10-02/early-readings-show-the-tampa-bay-region-sustained-record-storm-surge>
- PlaNYC. (2013). *A stronger, more resilient New York*. City of New York Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency. http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/sirr/SIRR_singles_Lo_res.pdf
- Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners. (2024, October 1). Emergency Board of County Commissioners meeting [video]. https://pinellas.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=1&clip_id=2620
- Pinellas County Emergency Management. (2024a). *2024 hurricane season summary*. <https://pinellas.gov/2024-hurricane-season-summary/>
- Pinellas County Emergency Management. (2024b, October 7). Order extending the state of local emergency for Hurricane Helene and adding Hurricane Milton to the State of Local Emergency Resolution No. 24-70. <https://pinellas.gov/executive-orders/order-extending-the-state-of-local-emergency-for-hurricane-helene-and-adding-hurricane-milton-to-the-state-of-local-emergency-resolution-no-24-70/>
- Polen, A., Collins, J., Dunn, E., Murphy, S., Jernigan, I., & McSweeney, K. (2022). The effect of COVID-19 vaccination on evacuation behavior during Hurricane Ida. *Natural Hazards Center, University of Colorado Boulder*. <https://hazards.colorado.edu/quick-response-report/the-effect-of-covid-19-vaccination-on-evacuation-behavior-during-hurricane-ida>
- The Weather Channel. (2025, September 26). *Forecast cone of uncertainty: Facts and myths*. <https://weather.com/safety/hurricane/news/2024-05-31-hurricane-forecast-path-cone-facts-myths>
- United States Census Bureau. (2023). Quick facts: Pinellas County, Florida. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/pinellascountyflorida>

Appendix A: Summary of Responses for Hurricane Helene and Hurricane Milton

The data in this appendix presents key survey responses for Hurricanes Helene and Milton, including categorical and ordinal data from questions with sufficient respondents for analysis. Tables summarize respondent reliance on information sources, evacuation decision factors, and perceptions of communication timeliness. The data support findings discussed in the main report.

What city are you a resident of during Hurricane Helene and/or Milton?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
St. Petersburg	399	31.95%	409	31.9%
Clearwater	143	11.45%	156	12.2%
Largo	94	7.53%	105	8.2%
Palm Harbor	74	5.92%	77	6.0%
Seminole	62	4.96%	66	5.1%
Dunedin	52	4.16%	55	4.3%
St. Pete Beach	48	3.84%	45	3.5%
Tarpon Springs	48	3.84%	50	3.9%
Gulfport	47	3.76%	46	3.6%
Treasure Island	41	3.28%	40	3.1%
Pinellas Park	36	2.88%	42	3.3%
Oldsmar	31	2.48%	30	2.3%
Redington Shores	31	2.48%	29	2.3%
South Pasadena	26	2.08%	21	1.6%
Safety Harbor	21	1.68%	24	1.9%
Other	96	7.69%	87	6.8%
Grand Total	1249	100.00%	1282	100.00%

Note: Other cities in Pinellas County represented for Hurricane Helene and Milton that had less than 20 participants include Madeira Beach, Clearwater Beach, Indian Rocks Beach, Redington Beach, Tierra Verde, North Redington Beach, Crystal Beach, Kenneth City, Belleair, Belleair Beach, Indian Shores, Lealman, Belleair Bluffs, East Lake, Feather Sound, Gandy, and Redington.

How long had you lived in your state before September 2024?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	35	2.79%	36	2.78%
1-3 years	118	9.41%	125	9.64%
4-6 years	144	11.48%	149	11.49%
7-10 years	151	12.04%	156	12.03%
More than 10 years	806	64.27%	831	67.51%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1297	100.00%

For Hurricanes Helene and Milton, what evacuation choice did you make?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Stayed at home	842	67.52%	373	28.80%
Evacuated my home but did not go to a shelter (stayed with a friend/coworker/family, stayed in my vehicle/RV, vacation rental site such as Airbnb)	204	16.36%	377	29.11%
Went to a hotel/motel	117	9.38%	182	14.05%
Evacuated out of the county/state	79	6.34%	340	26.25%
Went to a shelter	5	0.40%	23	1.78%
Grand Total	1247	100.00%	1295	100.00%

What evacuation zone is your home in?

	Frequency	Percent
A	521	41.98%
B	107	8.62%
C	112	9.02%
D	109	8.78%
E	65	5.24%
Not in an evacuation zone	301	24.25%
Do not know	26	2.10%
Grand Total	1241	100.00%

Were you under a mandatory evacuation order for Hurricanes Helene and/or Milton?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	630	50.24%	554	42.71%
Yes	563	44.90%	689	53.12%
Don't know	61	4.86%	54	4.16%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1297	100.00%

Were you located in a flood zone at the time of Hurricane Helene?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	594	47.37%
No	477	38.04%
Close to a flood zone	154	12.28%
Other	13	1.04%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%

Did you take flooding into account when deciding whether to evacuate?

	Frequency	Percent
Definitely not	132	10.64%
Definitely yes	779	62.77%
May or May Not Have	64	5.16%
Probably not	100	8.06%
Probably yes	166	13.38%
Grand Total	1241	100.00%

Before Hurricane Helene, did you experience any of the following situations during a hurricane evacuation order?

	Frequency	Percent
Evacuated my home but did not go to a shelter (went to a hotel, stayed with a friend/coworker/ family, stayed in vehicle/RV, vacation rental site)	641	44.86%
I have not experienced a hurricane evacuation order before	389	27.22%
Stayed at home during an evacuation order	371	25.96%
Went to a public shelter and stayed in a shared space with other evacuees	28	1.96%
Grand Total	1429	100.00%

Note: Respondents could select all that apply.

After Hurricane Helene and/or Hurricane Milton made landfall, did you have to leave the place where you stayed during the storm due to reasons such as flooding, power loss, or structural damage?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	1109	88.51%	1120	86.49%
Yes	144	11.49%	175	13.51%
Grand Total	1253	100.00%	1295	100.00%

Rate how concerned you were about the following hazards at your residence.

	Extremely Concerned		Very Concerned		Concerned		Somewhat Concerned		Not Concerned	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Wind gusts	512	39.5	307	23.7	281	21.7	156	12.0	43	3.3
Storm surge	440	34.0	187	14.4	162	12.5	207	16.0	296	22.9
Tornadoes	190	14.7	220	17.0	341	26.3	380	29.3	163	12.6
Actual storm size	358	27.6	356	27.5	341	26.3	156	12.0	84	6.5
Wind speed	463	35.8	367	28.3	282	21.8	156	12.0	28	2.2
Intensity (category)	679	52.4	382	29.5	180	13.9	43	3.3	11	0.8
Falling trees	407	31.4	278	21.5	246	19.0	216	16.7	145	11.2
Rainfall / flooding	263	20.3	286	22.1	318	24.6	286	22.1	144	11.1
Mudslides	11	0.8	5	0.4	25	1.9	85	6.6	1063	82.1
Power outages	540	41.7	254	19.6	289	22.3	148	11.4	64	4.9

Note: N represents the frequency.

If you were to evacuate, what is the lowest category hurricane you would evacuate for?

	Frequency	Percent
Category 1	62	5.00%
Category 2	137	11.04%
Category 3	357	28.77%
Category 4	232	18.69%
Category 5	68	5.48%
The category of a storm does not impact my decision to evacuate	385	31.02%
Grand Total	1241	100.00%

Before the hurricane, how confident were you in your ability to evacuate safely during Hurricane Helene and then for Hurricane Milton?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Extremely confident	324	25.96%	384	29.72%
Moderately confident	289	23.16%	339	26.24%
Not confident at all	89	7.13%	290	22.45%
Slightly confident	92	7.37%	142	10.99%
Very confident	454	36.38%	137	10.60%
Grand Total	1248	100.00%	1292	100.00%

Before the hurricane, how serious did you believe each hurricane could be for your community?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Extremely Serious	127	10.15%	477	36.83%
Moderately Serious	490	39.17%	213	16.45%
Not serious at all	64	5.12%	7	0.54%
Slightly Serious	275	21.98%	57	4.40%
Very Serious	295	23.58%	541	41.78%
Grand Total	1251	100.00%	1295	100.00%

Did you get sandbags to protect your home from flooding?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	894	71.41%	958	74.03%
Yes	358	28.59%	336	25.97%
Grand Total	1252	100.00%	1294	100.00%

Did you cover your windows (e.g., shutters, plywood) before each Hurricane?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
No	912	72.73%	787	60.73%
Yes	342	27.27%	509	39.27%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1296	100.00%

Did you have emergency supplies (food, water, flashlight, batteries, etc.) for each Hurricane?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes, I had three days' worth of supplies	614	48.96%	577	44.49%
Yes, I had seven days' worth of supplies	561	44.74%	634	48.88%
No	63	5.02%	74	5.71%
Unsure	16	1.28%	12	0.93%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1297	100.00%

Did you own a generator before Hurricanes Helene or Milton?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	442	35.25%	479	37.1%
No	812	64.75%	812	62.9%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1291	100.0%

Before Hurricanes Helene and/or Milton, did you have a disaster evacuation plan?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	888	70.81%	980	75.9%
No	366	29.19%	311	24.1%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1291	100.0%

Before the 2024 hurricane season, how fearful were you about a hurricane's impact on your community?

	Frequency	Percent
Extremely afraid	73	5.59%
Very afraid	125	9.57%
Moderately afraid	519	39.74%
Somewhat afraid	414	31.70%
Not afraid at all	175	13.40%
Grand Total	1306	100.00%

How much did you trust local authorities to guide your evacuation decision?

	Frequency	Percent
Fully trusted	329	25.19%
Mostly trusted	622	47.63%
Neutral	174	13.32%
Slightly trusted	137	10.49%
Did not trust at all	44	3.37%
Grand Total	1306	100.00%

Main factors that influenced their decision to evacuate or stay for Hurricane Helene:

	Frequency	Percent
The severity of the storm and warnings	768	24.10%
Having pets	506	15.88%
Traffic issues	311	9.76%
Availability of shelters or hotels	203	6.37%
No difficulties	180	5.65%
Knowing where to go	174	5.46%
Family or dependents needing care	146	4.58%
Work schedule	142	4.46%
Home security	140	4.39%
Financial concerns	117	3.67%
Poor evacuation routes/roads	101	3.17%
Medical/mobility issues	79	2.48%
Problems with transportation	52	1.63%
School cancellations	46	1.44%
Lack of information	25	0.78%
Not affected by Hurricane Milton	10	0.31%
Do not know	5	0.16%
Other	182	5.71%
Grand Total	3187	100.00%

Note: Respondents could select all that apply.

Did your neighbors' actions influence your evacuation decision?

	Frequency	Percent
Very strongly influenced	31	2.37%
Strongly influenced	75	5.74%
Moderately influenced	198	15.15%
Slightly influenced	284	21.73%
Did not influence at all	719	55.01%
Grand Total	1307	100.00%

Do you have support (friends, family, or neighbors) to rely on during an evacuation?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	520	39.85%
Agree	443	33.95%
Neither agree or disagree	154	11.80%
Disagree	97	7.43%
Strongly disagree	91	6.97%
Grand Total	1305	100.00%

Main factors that influenced their decision to evacuate or stay for Hurricane Milton:

	Frequency	Percent
The severity of the storm and warnings	715	23.57%
Having pets	493	16.25%
Traffic issues	305	10.05%
No difficulties	230	7.58%
Home security	164	5.41%
Work schedule	157	5.17%
Knowing where to go	149	4.91%
Financial concerns	135	4.45%
Availability of shelters or hotels	127	4.19%
Family or dependents needing care	117	3.86%
Poor evacuation routes/roads	98	3.23%
Medical/mobility issues	65	2.14%
Lack of information	37	1.22%
Problems with transportation	34	1.12%
School cancellations	30	0.99%
Do not know	8	0.26%
Other	170	5.60%
Grand Total	3034	100.00%

Note: Respondents could select all that apply.

During the 2024 hurricane season, did you receive timely information to make an informed evacuation decision?

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	872	66.36%
Somewhat agree	291	22.15%
Neither agree or disagree	71	5.40%
Somewhat disagree	55	4.19%
Strongly disagree	25	1.90%
Grand Total	1314	100.00%

On a scale of 0-4, with 0 being "Not relied on at all" and 4 being "relied on the MOST", please rate the following hurricane information sources on how much you RELIED on it to inform your decision to evacuate.

	Not relied on at all		Relied on the Most							
	0		1		2		3		4	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
National media	324	25.4	248	19.5	262	20.5	222	17.4	219	17.2
Local media	40	3.1	46	3.6	90	7.1	223	17.5	876	68.7
Mobile weather apps	186	17.6	176	13.8	280	22.0	282	22.1	351	27.5
Electronic media	146	11.5	134	10.5	267	20.9	305	23.9	423	33.2
Print media	1050	82.4	139	10.9	45	3.5	25	2.0	16	1.3
Radio broadcasts	800	62.7	184	14.4	111	8.7	117	9.2	63	4.9
Government officials	241	18.9	203	15.9	263	20.6	260	20.4	308	24.2
Family and Friends, nearby (less than 50 miles away)	542	42.5	246	19.3	246	19.3	136	10.7	105	8.2
Family and Friends, a distance away (50 or more miles away)	867	68.0	201	15.8	88	6.9	56	4.4	63	4.9
Neighbors	609	47.8	222	17.4	245	19.2	136	10.7	63	4.9
Social media	630	49.4	159	12.5	157	12.3	139	10.9	190	14.9
County / City Emergency Preparedness websites	229	18.0	165	12.9	245	19.2	289	22.7	347	27.2
NOAA Weather Radio Broadcasts	607	47.6	129	10.1	126	9.9	161	12.6	252	19.8
Other	1136	89.1	11	0.9	17	1.3	10	0.8	101	7.9

Note: N represents frequency. Values shown in bold red indicate the five information sources with the highest frequencies of respondents that selected 0 ("Not relied on at all") and that selected 4 ("Relied on the most") on the reliance scale, representing the least and most relied-upon sources.

Ranking of Hurricane Information Sources Based on Reliance (Scores of 3–4)

Rank	Source of Information	3		4		Relied on the Most	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Local media	223	17.5	876	68.7	1099	86.2
2	Electronic media	305	23.9	423	33.2	728	57.1
3	County / City Emergency Preparedness websites	289	22.7	347	27.2	636	49.9
4	Mobile weather apps	282	22.1	351	27.5	633	49.6
5	Government officials	260	20.4	308	24.2	568	44.5
6	National media	222	17.4	219	17.2	441	34.6
7	NOAA Weather Radio Broadcasts	161	12.6	252	19.8	413	32.4
8	Social media	139	10.9	190	14.9	329	25.8
9	Family and Friends, nearby (less than 50 miles away)	136	10.7	105	8.2	241	18.9
10	Neighbors	136	10.7	63	4.9	199	15.6
11	Radio broadcasts	117	9.2	63	4.9	180	14.1
12	Family and Friends, a distance away (50 or more miles away)	56	4.4	63	4.9	119	9.3
13	Other	10	0.8	101	7.9	111	8.7
14	Print media	25	2.0	16	1.3	41	3.2

Note: Information sources are ranked from most to least relied upon based on the percentage of respondents who selected reliance scores of 3 (“Relied on”) or 4 (“Relied on the most”) on a 0–4 scale. Higher ranks indicate greater reliance on the information source.

The size of the cone represents the size of the storm.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	35	2.67%
Agree	125	9.53%
Neither agree or disagree	114	8.70%
Disagree	414	31.58%
Strongly disagree	623	47.52%
Grand Total	1311	100.00%

Areas outside of the cone are not at risk to hurricane impacts.

	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	9	0.69%
Agree	49	3.74%
Neither agree or disagree	57	4.35%
Disagree	503	38.37%
Strongly disagree	693	52.86%
Grand Total	1311	100.00%

Did your home sustain any damage from Hurricane Helene and/or Hurricane Milton?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
None or Minimal	853	68.02%	968	74.6%
Damaged (habitable)	188	14.99%	281	21.7%
Damaged (uninhabitable)	165	13.16%	39	3.0%
Destroyed	20	1.59%	9	0.7%
Other	28	2.23%	0	0%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1297	100.0%

Looking back, do you think evacuating was the right decision?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly agree	521	57.51%	537	57.43%
Agree	265	29.25%	275	29.41%
Neither agree or disagree	62	6.84%	64	6.84%
Disagree	49	5.41%	51	5.45%
Strongly disagree	9	0.99%	8	0.86%
Grand Total	906	100.00%	935	100.00%

Based on your experience during the 2024 hurricane season, how likely are you to evacuate in the future?

	Frequency	Percent
Extremely likely	412	32.81%
Somewhat likely	330	26.00%
Neither likely nor unlikely	248	19.27%
Somewhat unlikely	147	11.71%
Extremely unlikely	135	10.22%
Grand Total	1204	100.00%

Household Statistics of Survey Participants

How many people, including yourself, live in your household?

	Frequency	Percent
1	278	21.01%
2	676	51.10%
3	182	13.76%
4	136	10.28%
5	30	2.27%
6	11	0.83%
7+	10	0.76%
Grand Total	1323	100.00%

How many members of your household are 17 years of age or younger?

	Frequency	Percent
0	744	71.20%
1	129	12.34%
2	132	12.63%
3	33	3.16%
4	5	0.48%
5	2	0.19%
Grand Total	1045	100.00%

How many members of your household are 65 years of age or older?

	Frequency	Percent
0	815	61.60%
1	260	19.65%
2	240	18.14%
3	6	0.45%
4	1	0.08%
5	1	0.08%
Grand Total	1323	100.00%

What is your annual household income?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Greater than \$150,000	360	28.71%	358	27.60%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	275	21.93%	279	21.51%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	329	26.24%	341	26.29%
Less than \$20,000 - \$49,999	119	9.49%	137	10.56%
Prefer not to answer	171	13.64%	182	14.03%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1297	100.00%

Did you own or rent your home at the time of Hurricane Helene?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Homeowner	1066	85.28%	1072	83.29%
Renter	167	13.36%	174	13.52%
Living with Family	14	1.12%	16	1.24%
Houseless	0	0.00%	21	1.63%
Other	3	0.24%	4	0.31%
Grand Total	1250	100.00%	1287	100.00%

What type of structure is the home you were living in at the time of the hurricanes?

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Block construction	752	62.15%	757	60.46%
Block and Wood Frame	243	20.08%	259	20.69%
Wood frame	143	11.82%	150	11.98%
Mobile home/Manufactured	40	3.31%	52	4.15%
Other (Please specify)	32	2.64%	34	2.72%
Grand Total	1210	100.00%	1252	100.00%

Demographics of Survey Participants

Race:

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
White	1152	91.87%	1192	92.05%
Black or African American	14	1.12%	16	1.24%
American Indian/Alaska Native	6	0.48%	6	0.46%
Asian	4	0.32%	0	0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	0.08%	1	0.08%
More than one race	23	1.83%	25	1.93%
Prefer not to answer	54	4.31%	55	4.25%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1295	100.00%

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin

	Frequency	Percent
No	1217	91.99%
Yes	59	4.46%
Prefer not to answer	47	3.55%
Grand Total	1323	100.00%

Age:

What is your age?	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
18-24	13	1.04%	14	1.08%
25-34	106	8.45%	113	8.71%
35-44	194	15.47%	203	15.65%
45-54	261	20.81%	265	20.43%
55-64	318	25.36%	321	24.75%
65 and above	362	28.87%	381	29.38%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1297	100.00%

Gender:

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Woman	958	76.46%	986	76.02%
Man	258	20.59%	271	20.89%
Non-Binary	7	0.56%	8	0.62%
Do not wish to disclose	30	2.39%	32	2.47%
Grand Total	1253	100%	1297	100%

Highest level of education completed:

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	490	39.07%	500	38.55%
Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)	299	23.84%	309	23.82%
Some college, no degree	178	14.19%	190	14.65%
Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)	103	8.21%	108	8.33%
Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)	67	5.34%	65	5.01%
High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)	51	4.07%	59	4.55%
Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)	46	3.67%	45	3.47%
Less than a high school diploma	3	0.24%	4	0.31%
Prefer not to answer	17	1.36%	17	1.31%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1297	100.00%

Marital Status:

	<u>Hurricane Helene</u>		<u>Hurricane Milton</u>	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Married	759	60.53%	779	60.06%
Single	180	14.35%	193	14.88%
Divorced	142	11.32%	147	11.33%
Domestic partner	92	7.34%	92	7.09%
Widowed	55	4.39%	60	4.63%
Married, separated	10	0.80%	9	0.69%
Prefer not to answer	16	1.28%	17	1.31%
Grand Total	1254	100.00%	1297	100.00%

Did your employment status change due to the 2024 hurricane season?

	Frequency	Percent
No	1232	94.99%
Yes	65	5.01%
Grand Total	1297	100.00%

Appendix B: Summary of Additional Comments from Survey

Q1. Was there any messaging that you heard/read/saw before Hurricane Helene that influenced your evacuation decision?

- 15-foot storm surge possible
- 150 miles off the coast, not heading our way, and barely a Cat 1
- 6" Storm surge
- 70 MPH winds and surge of 8 feet. We knew we were going to be ok on the 2nd floor
- A lot of media and HAM radio
- A zone always makes sense to evacuate
- Access to FL OEM intel/weather tracks
- All indications and messaging supported evacuation
- All information told us to evacuate, we couldn't
- All media was in agreement, which is a red flag to me
- All news, family friends
- All the info on the local weather. We knew we were ok where we were at.
- All the warnings about storm surge
- Bad flooding possible & we live in a flood zone
- Bay News 9 keeping us informed 24 hours
- Because it was so far off the coast, I didn't think it would have the impacts it did
- Before we bought the condo, we agreed that we would leave if order was issued
- Being in a no evac, no flood zone and Helene's strength, we felt we were safe to stay and expected power outages
- Better storm surge advisory and maps
- Category 5 potential 10-foot surge
- Channel 9 News
- City announced no wastewater
- Closing of bridges to get off the island the next day was our concern
- Common neighbors, Floridians said, we shouldn't worry
- Communication and information via media and Emergency Management was excellent; and we relied on our neighbor regarding the flooding piece
- Communication was excellent by county and news
- County said to evac and common sense about weather projections
- Course change and flood level warnings
- Daily NWS storm updates from Ruskin station
- Decided not to evacuate because I did not know how bad flooding would be. I stayed updated on the news, the best I could
- Decided to leave when I saw the projected storm surge, just in case, even though my neighbors who have lived in this building for 30+ years said it has never flooded here
- Decided to stay because we could board up our windows
- Did not evacuate because storm was 100 miles offshore
- Did not think it would be severe enough to leave
- Did not believe the devastation would be so bad
- Didn't expect the surge to be so problematic, it wasn't to our Clearwater condo on Edgewater Drive, but adversely affected many of our north, south & west neighbors (Island Estates, Clearwater Beach, Dunedin, & Northwest Clearwater)
- Didn't evacuate due to ineffective routes & ability to return

A few people mentioned Alert Pinellas, Ready Pinellas, Pinellas County App, or text messages...

- Alert Pinellas; Alert Pinellas; Alert Pinellas and the news; County emergency services; County's weather warning messages; Kept up with TV weather reports and Alert Pinellas warnings; Government warnings; City and county phone alerts; Ready Pinellas app; Phone alerts; Phone and EBS; Pinellas County alert system; Pinellas County Alert System; Pinellas County messages; Pinellas County storm information; Ready Pinellas; Ready Pinellas; Ready Pinellas app; Ready Pinellas app; Ready Pinellas warnings; Plenty of notifications from Ready Pinellas to keep me and my family updated; Text alerts; Text message from county and emails from county; Updates from Alert Pinellas; Updates from Pinellas County Emergency Services; From Pinellas County Alerts
- Direction of storm showed us that we should be ok
- Distance from FL, non-evac zone. Told if not in evac zone, don't clog up the roads
- Don't live in a flood zone and the storm was expected to have lower wind speeds but higher chance of flood
- Email from our Board of Directors to evacuate
- Emergency broadcast messages, weather channel
- EOC warnings and News
- Evac order for fz C (left side and back yards) house itself feels like fz D. I understand that the flood maps are pretty much based on above sea level, which is why where I live is near the lip of a bowl-shaped hollow at fz E

- Extensive forecasting and reporting by National Weather Service and other sources
- Expected it to be more of a water event than wind event and we live on 2nd floor, only the foyer and garage are ground level.
- Flood impacts were communicated as the significant danger, and my home is above the elevation reported at risk
- Follow all of the news reports closely as I work for management company on Clearwater Beach
- Followed the models
- Forecasted storm surge and wind speed on LOCAL news stations
- Forecasted wind speeds
- Friends - they called and harassed me until I gave in and evaluated
- Glad to receive multiple warnings on my phone, but purposely chose area to live due to evacuation zone being in the E zone
- Got a text message that said if you want to get off the barrier island, do it now because you will be unable to shortly. At that point, I looked outside and saw how quickly the water was rising, so we grabbed what we could and evacuated
- Great communication, personal decisions
- Having weathered many hurricanes, the path tracking and storm intensity, and having been luckily missed by decades of hurricanes, motivated me to evacuate the barrier islands
- Helene in my area would be a storm surge and rain event, not a serious wind event
- Helene was a very large storm, and as hard as weather personnel try, the path of storms are still a bit unpredictable
- Helene was not expected to directly hit my area. The flooding destroyed the majority of it despite not even being directly hit
- Helene was not expected to make landfall on the West Coast of Florida but rather just skim us
- High storm surge, but we are 50 ft above sea level in a non-evac zone so water wasn't an issue for us, and the wind wasn't supposed to be entirely bad
- Highway congestion and lack of hotel rooms within a reasonable distance
- Hurricane tracking led us to believe that surge impact would not be that significant

Numerous respondents mentioned evacuation orders...

- County mandatory evacuation; Evacuation order; Evacuation order by Pinellas County; Evacuation orders; Evacuation orders; Evacuation orders from TV, social media, news coverage, Mike's Weather Page; Evacuation routes at a standstill and no gas available after you ran out of your first tank; Evacuation warnings - Evacuation orders - Storm forecasts and warnings; Evacuation was mandatory and since I'm on a barrier island, I had no problem understanding the need to get off the island; I received local & national messages telling me to evacuate; Evacuation was not mandatory for our zone; Evacuation zones affected; Mandatory evac; Mandatory evac order; Mandatory evacuating; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuation for mobile homes; Mandatory evacuation for Zone A; Mandatory evacuation of barrier islands; Mandatory evacuation order; Mandatory evacuation order; Mandatory evacuation order; Mandatory evacuation was issued; Mandatory evacuation Zone A; Was in a mandatory evac zone, I did not have a choice to stay; Notifications from City/County to evacuate; Pinellas County evacuation order; Mandatory evacuation was ordered; Evacuation order
- I live in a modern home 19 feet above sea level
- I monitor the NOAA surge tide charts myself for any impending storm. I trust the NOAA tide forecasts more than local government to make preparation and evacuation decisions for my home and high-risk community
- I monitor the NOAA updates & based on that information we felt that Helene would not directly impact us
- I provide emergency work in support of the storms, and my home is in an area that has limited threats
- I follow a lot of meteorologists on twitter that are usually pretty good about predicting severity
- I saw on all weather reports how it was coming in and knew it was going to be horrendous.
- I was aware storm surge is a problem. I was here in Elena. I take every storm seriously.
- I wish the forecasters would have stressed that we will definitely flood
- I work for Pinellas County, so I was aware of all of the emergency alerts that went out. I feel that's important to note, as I'm not necessarily just a regular citizen
- I'm not technically in an evac zone, so that makes it confusing to me if I should stay or go. I have no threat of water flooding, Helene didn't concern me

- *I always take hurricane info seriously after more than 20 years as a responder*
- *I am not in an evacuation zone - I didn't feel messages were aimed at me*
- *I do resilience planning and my husband is a wave modeler. We don't wait for local government to finally make evacuation orders (which they do too late for hotels)*
- *I don't believe the news portrayed the storm to be as bad as they thought until it was too late!*
- *I felt that it would skirt the coastline and not make direct landfall here*
- *I follow two weather experts and their advice*
- *I have lived in Pinellas & beaches for 70 years...I watch the barometer & wind. I had food & supplies for many days*
- *I keep a close look at the eye tracks. Helene was going to stay offshore and head north. This was a big part of my decision to stay*
- *I've lived in Florida in the beach community for 54yrs and know that the storms are getting bigger & stronger and sea level has risen*
- *If I recall it wasn't until very late that it was said the hurricane was coming right at Tampa*
- *Information provided by local meteorologists, the NOAA, and the National Weather Service*
- *Information that if you lived in a non-evacuation zone, and a no flood zone that it's better to stay home, stay off the roads and not take up hotel or other bedspace for people that live in an evacuation and flood zone*

Large number of responses indicated Denis Phillips was a trusted source...

- *Anything Denis Phillips says; Denis Philips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips (weather man) - we trust his forecast; Denis Phillips was very accurate and gave sound recommendations; Denis Phillips – Honest ongoing, information without sensationalism; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips ABC; Denis Phillips and news of significant storm surge; Denis Phillips and one other weatherman; Denis Phillips is who we pay attention to; Denis Phillips reports; Denis Phillips updates; Denis Phillips ABC meteorologist; Dennis Philips; Dennis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Dennis Philips weatherman; Dennis Phillips saying it will be a water and surge event; Dennis Phillips weather forecast; Dennis Phillips Facebook page; Just Denis Phillips Facebook posts; Listened to Denis Phillips regarding surge; Local warnings, Denis Phillips; Meteorologist Denis Phillips had his family evacuate; Just followed Denis Phillips closely; Denis Phillips; Weather reports and Dennis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Weather/storm prediction on news (Dennis Phillips); Denis Philips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips forecasts; Denis Phillips; Rule #7; Saw warnings from local trusted meteorologist (i.e., Dennis Phillips); We used Denis Phillips and NWS; Updates from Denis Philips; I tend to trust Dennis Phillips; Watch Denis Phillips for updates on storm; We follow Denis Philips weatherman who lives near us and take his lead; We trust Denis Phillips and use his coverage on the news and on social media to drive our decision making; Denis Philips and the weather crew at ABC Action news information along with the Weather station information*
- *Denis Phillips the meteorologist, helped make it clear that the impacts from Helene could be very serious*
- *Denis Phillips and police down my street with loud horns; Denis Phillips is my go-to*
- *Denis Phillips is our go to weather guy - is report of the amount of surge was our reason to evacuate*
- *Denis Philips advising that if you're not in an evacuation zone, don't evacuate. Instead, prepare*
- *Denis Phillips and NHC site - the flow indicated surge, so I knew I had to go*
- *Denis Phillips on FB and livestream gave me the info I needed - he is the only one I trust*
- *Denis Philips on ABC & Mike's Weather Page on Facebook*
- *Dennis Phillips and Palm Harbor Fire Rescue said that it would be better for people not in evacuation zones to stay put so that others could evacuate safely. I also remember the nightmare traffic after Irma*
- *Mike's weather page stressed storm surge warning, to take seriously as it would cause flooding in areas not usually getting water. Neighbor who stayed said we were surrounded by water.*
- *Per ABC Action News Denis Phillips, the biggest concern with Helene for our area was going to be storm surge. I was not in a flood zone, so felt it unnecessary to leave*
- *Increasing danger of the storm from weather reports*
- *It appeared the storm was far enough away that that flooding would be minor*
- *It wasn't supposed to be bad*
- *It appeared to be mostly a flooding event, and we were not likely to flood*

Individuals are also turning to Mike's Weather Page as a source of information...

- *Mikes Weather Page; Mikes Weather Page; Mikes weather page showing flood mapping; Mike's Weather Page; Mike's Weather Page; Updates from Mike's Weather Page; followed Mike's Weather page closely; Prior storm experience as well as monitoring NOAA and Mikes Weather Page; Mike the weather man came out and emphasized the surge warning which helped me prepare the night before more than what I prepared for*
- *If I recall it wasn't until very late that it was said the hurricane was coming right at Tampa*
- *Increasing danger of the storm from weather reports*
- *Information provided by local meteorologists, the NOAA, and the National Weather Service*
- *Information that if you lived in a non-evacuation zone, and a no flood zone that it's better to stay home, stay off the roads and not take up hotel or other bedspace for people that live in an evacuation and flood zone*
- *It appeared the storm was far enough away that that flooding would be minor*
- *It wasn't supposed to be bad*
- *It appeared to be mostly a flooding event, and we were not likely to flood*
- *It just sounded like all of the other warnings we've received, and nothing ever happened, so why leave for no reason?*
- *It was forecast to be a Category 1 and I'm in a non-evacuation zone with really good elevation above sea level. We have been repeatedly warned about storm surge that has not transpired in the 30 years I have lived in Pinellas County. Yes, we were warned, but we always hear the same thing.*
- *It was not going to be a wind event storm. We do not live in an area prone to flooding*
- *It was predicted to miss us considerably, so I didn't feel the need to*
- *It was stated a surge for our area, but did not evacuate because not coming directly to St. Pete and the year before Idalia had the same warning in our neighborhood and we didn't have any damage*
- *Just kept up with forecast*
- *Just knowing that Helene was more of a surge event than a wind/rain one. I knew surge would affect down the street, but not my house personally.*
- *Just that it was a TS when it went by the Tampa area*
- *Just that the hurricane would do to hit further northerners, and the impact to our area was expected to be primarily from surges from the coastal. It's all from Mexico, being on the seventeenth floor, I felt safe in my concrete structure*
- *Kept an eye on it, did not think it was a threat at 100+ miles out and we're at 10 ft elevation*
- *Just the storm path*
- *Just watching the track on NOAA*
- *Kept continuous watch of the news of the storms predicted path and warnings*
- *Knowing we weren't in flood zone A and did not expect to have flooding*
- *Lifelong Floridians. Did not evacuate.*
- *Listen to the experts and follow the orders put in place for citizen's safety*
- *Local meteorologists indicated that flooding would be the biggest concern with Helene. We are in Zone E and felt we'd be safe here in a non-flood zone.*
- *Local meteorologists seemed to downplay the severity*
- *Local news outlets such as ABC and Fox 13. Also, FDOT messaging boards*
- *Local news stations saying worst of Helene would pass by us offshore*
- *Local TV weather person(s); speaking with neighbors who have lived in our neighborhood for many years and experienced hurricane situations here.*
- *Long time neighbors said this area had never flooded before*
- *Lots of natives leaving that had never left before for other hurricanes*
- *Mandatory evacuation. At a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) meeting that week, the prediction was for biggest storm surge in recent history*
- *Messaging on TV from St. Pete Mayor Welch*
- *Minimal effect to area*
- *Monitored predictions*
- *Monitored the news, received updates from work*
- *Monitored weather, was safely inland, no major trees on property. We are told "run from water, hide from wind" so we stayed put.*
- *Monitoring storm path and storm surge predictions*
- *Mr Weatherman YouTube channel and Zello mobile app monitoring with weather radio as well*
- *My husband refused to leave our home*
- *My power went out*
- *My property was in the cone and then it was no longer in the cone*
- *Neighbors and school closures*

Numerous survey respondents mentioned flooding and storm surge as a messaging factor...

- *Expected storm surge under ten feet; Expected surge height; Expected surge levels; Extreme flooding; High tide and flood estimates; High storm surge warnings; Flood potential; Flood warning and 2022 Ft Myers; Flooding was anticipated; Predicted storm surge; Predicted storm surge convinced us to leave; Predictions of 6 to 8 feet of storm surge in my area - very consistent messaging; Reports of predicted storm surge prompted me to leave; Significant flooding issues; Severity of storm; Size of storm; Storm path; Storm projections did not seem too bad for my area; Storm strength and path; Storm surge; Storm surge; Storm surge; Storm surge 5-7 ft for my zone and condo area; Storm surge and category of the storm; Storm surge expectations; Storm surge expected was smaller; Storm surge forecast; Storm surge forecasts; Storm surge info seemed to be manageable for our specific area - that really was our only worry; Storm Surge maps on county website; Storm surge potential; Storm surge predictions; Storm surge predictions; Storm surge predictions; Storm surge predictions; Storm surge predictions; Storm surge predictions; Storm surge predictions; Storm surge predictions; Storm surge predictions; Storm surge projections; Storm Surge Warning; Storm surge warning; Storm surge warning; Storm surge warning; Storm Surge warnings; Storm surge warnings are very effective for me; Storm surge, winds, direction of hurricane; Storm track; Storm track and storm surge predictions; Storm track and surge predictions; Storm tracking offshore; Surge forecast; Surge predicted; Surge prediction amount solidified our decision to evacuate; Surge, flooding; Surge, intensity, and track predictions; Reading the anticipated storm surge; Projected flood surge maps; Projection on surge and wind; Tidal surge; Tide/surge predictions; Tide levels; The flood risk; The flooding further south of us while storm was still far out in the gulf; The news was really emphasizing the severity of flooding; The projected flooding; Warnings about storm surge; Yes the water surge height*

- *Neighbors told me the neighborhood had never flooded. Family said the area had never sustained damage from previous storms.*
- *News and Pinellas County warnings/alerts via email, text, and phone calls. Didn't want to die.*
- *News reports of the severity and direction of the hurricane influenced when to leave.*
- *News reports saying flooding was the problem- and we have an elevated home*
- *News said the hurricane would stay in the gulf. Since we are away from the gulf we did not leave*
- *Neighbors had told me they never had water in their homes here and that was the primary factor in deciding to stay*
- *No evac order for my area, evac E zone*
- *No gas in evacuation routes*
- *No, just overall evaluating strength of storm. Cost and ability to find a hotel that takes pets and the fact we have a 2-story home that we could go up if we had minor flooding*
- *No mandatory evacuation for flood Zone B*
- *No other storm to compare it too*
- *No, as a lifelong FL resident, I specifically purchased a home in a non-evac zone*
- *I heard the storm surge potential, but perhaps it was downplayed and/or not taken seriously because of how far offshore the center was to our area*
- *No, I knew I was taking a chance*
- *Been on the barrier Island for 35 years on the water*
- *Never dreamed it would damage our area so badly*
- *None. It was the water that started flooding the road*

- *Not alerted to vacate - guess water was rising at midnight, not shared to move my car to higher ground, car was under 8 feet of water - heartbreaking because it was paid off. Need to know if we have to move cars to higher ground and where is higher ground?!?*
- *Once the evacuation order is given, I leave my home*
- *Online that it moved less in the direct path of the Tampa Bay Area*
- *Other areas were being evacuated much sooner than my area*
- *Our buildings have never flooded, I'm on 6th floor*
- *Our generator was running low in fuel & driver couldn't bring more*
- *Our home was built in 1980 and never flooded*
- *Our neighbors said that our condo complex had never experienced flooding in 40 years*
- *Our power stayed on, so we felt informed. Great feedback and updates thru tv, radio*
- *Our area has NEVER flooded before and we didn't expect sewers to overflow*
- *Pinellas County and City of Dunedin messaging on Facebook and text notifications.*
- *Potential impact on area*
- *Potential storm surge was of concern but didn't understand the true risk of flooding in our home*
- *Predicted path with associated wind directions as storm moved past us*
- *Predictions underestimated threat to Pinellas County*
- *Primarily a surge event with no effects in my neighborhood is most impacted by rain flooding*

- *Prior experiences with hurricanes made us believe we weren't in danger*
- *Proximity to home in forecast and severity of storm*
- *Reports on storm strength*
- *Roads were too crowded*
- *Run from water hide from rain*
- *Severe storm surge in St. Petersburg influenced my decision to tell family in the area to stay with me and lack of threat to Palm Harbor let me stay*
- *Severe winds could cause trees to come through roof. No services and other life-threatening damage.*
- *Sheriff pleading for us to evacuate. Could not help if needed help.*
- *Sheriff telling us they would not help if we stayed*
- *Since it was staying offshore, a lot of people weren't taking it as seriously as they needed despite news saying there would be significant flooding. I was on the 'ride out' team for Clearwater Marine Aquarium*
- *Some of those zoomed in flood maps from NOAA were terrifying for my neighborhood*
- *Spoke to neighbors who influenced me to stay*
- *Storm surge report convinced me to evacuate to a friends house on higher ground*
- *Storm surge warnings. We live on the intracoastal waterway*
- *Spectrum 9 and The Weather Channel and our family's insistence*
- *Storm surge! I remember how bad Ian was*
- *Storm surge predictions would not reach the level of our second-floor apartment. We parked our vehicle on higher ground before the storm surge*
- *Storm surge was expected to be less than the elevation of my home*
- *Storm surge was going to be primary issue with Helene. We believed in Evacuation Zone C we would be safe from flooding.*
- *Storm surge, our house is on the water and knowing we were looking at possibly 15 feet surge we knew we had to leave*
- *Storm surge, rain an issue - not in flood zone*
- *Storm surge. I knew our house could sustain the winds, but if there was an 8' storm surge, which was predicted as the highest amount (we got 8') then there would be 2' of water in my house, which there was.*
- *Surge and wind info, along with my evac and non-flood zones, dictated my decision to stay*
- *Storm was to remain offshore and not hit my area directly*
- *Storm was 100 miles offshore*
- *Tampa General Hospital had installed flood barrier around entire building*
- *Text Alerts from weather services and Facebook*
- *Thank you, Denis Phillips, NOAA & Michael Lowry. We monitored the NOAA observed water level gauges from afar to understand the storm. Very helpful, booked flight as water was rising over our door threshold*
- *That it wasn't going to hit us and that it was only going to graze by at a Cat 3*
- *That it was far out into the gulf from us*
- *That it was mainly a rain event (Denis Phillips) - surge was mainly the issue we were told and that proved true. Given where we live, if we flood, Pinellas is gone*
- *That it wasn't too serious of a storm, would mostly impact the beaches*
- *That it would be less of a threat to my area*
- *That it would mostly be flooding and that wasn't a threat for me*
- *That the primary concern during Helene would likely be the water and storm surge. I do not live that close to water and am in Zone E*
- *That we would not get a direct hit*
- *The advice from weatherman 'run from water'*
- *The amount of possible storm surge is what ultimately led me to evacuate*
- *The constant text alerts definitely raised anxiety before the storm*
- *The emphasis of reporting on flooding in the Big Bend region and specific flood zones in the Tampa Bay region influenced me to stay. I reside in the high point of Pinellas County, not in an evacuation zone. In a relatively new build with little risk of flooding, it made more sense to stay based on the reporting on Helene's path and potential impact.*
- *The expected surge in the local news would not have caused flooding on my area*
- *The fact that the hurricane might be large*
- *The flood forecast on the Tampa river gauge showing seriously high storm surge incoming*
- *The forecast surge was way lower than the actual forecast*
- *The hurricane was skirting the coast toward the panhandle not a direct threat*
- *The impact of traffic in a large cone of impact with the uncertainty made my decision to stay out. There was a great area and demand for hotels that wasn't worth it in my opinion*
- *The map showed the storm heading in a different direction - not toward us*
- *The news and neighbors*
- *The NOAA hurricane map*

- *The news said if you live in a non-evac zone (we do) that it was safer to hunker down at home*
- *The news stated Zone A was mandatory evacuation with a shorter notice than usual*
- *The path is the biggest influencer. Determining which side of the hurricane would hit us.*
- *the potential for a direct hit*
- *The predictions for how strong Helene was between winds and flooding.*
- *The primary impact from Helene was expected to be storm surge, which is not usually a significant problem at our location.*
- *The Ready Pinellas app is my primary source, I also use the NHC/NOAA website.*
- *The severity & possible impact of the storm*
- *The Sheriff telling us to leave on Bay News 9*
- *The Slosh models from NOAA. These were terrifying. We had flooded with Hurricanes Idalia and Eta, so I knew we were flooding with this one*
- *The storm stayed in the Gulf of America. We humans are on land. High Ground messaging. Trust spaghettimodels.com*
- *The storm surge warnings and visualizations of storm surge effects on TWC and CNN*
- *Storm surge was underestimated for our area*
- *The storm was offshore*
- *The surge level would come over the seawall but the building was on higher ground - I was on the 3rd floor*
- *The track was staying offshore, so I believed we would be alright*
- *The two sets of storm surge maps published by federal agencies (NWS & NOAA?)*
- *The weather channel explaining storm surge while Helene was 90 miles off the coast and due West of Redington Shores, FL. They explained how the water was going to be pushed up onto us in-land. I still did not think it would be as bad as it was*
 - *There were solid information about the possible severity of tidal flooding*
 - *They said it would be comparable to Idalia. I evacuated for Idalia. My neighbors on property didn't & water didn't get really close to the house.*
 - *This storm would be similar to Idalia the year before, and we did not take on water in our home during Idalia*
 - *Thought we would lose power*
 - *Track of storm was far enough west off of coast to not impact me as far as floods. I live on a hill.*
 - *Tracking of storm keeping it 100 miles offshore and living in a no surge/flood area*
 - *Trouble getting gas if evacuating*
- *Valued the national hurricane predictions and excellent local meteorologists*
- *Wanted to be home to save as much of my stuff as water moved in. I did relocate my car to higher ground the night before thankfully or that would have been totaled*
- *Was not predicted to hit Pinellas County, it did not*
- *Was staying offshore*
- *Wasn't going to be a direct hit*
- *Watched Denis Phillips religiously. Also read text warnings from local authorities*
- *Watched news and all outlets to keep up to date on the storm. Took in the information, made a decision to stay*
- *Watched Weather. No one said our are will flood, since storm was far away from our area*
- *Water coming into my house. We were going to stay because Helene was similar to Debby's path and intensity, we saw no damage from Debby*
- *We based the flooding of our street off of what the past 3 storms that hit us were. Those had never come anywhere near the house, so we calculated that even at the worst of the storm surge for Helene, worst we would see was water in the garage. We were unfortunately very wrong. We had 9 inches in the house, 13 inches in the garage.*
- *We decided to go when mandatory evacuation orders were issued.*
- *We did not evacuate due to our daughter having an exam at USF & they waited til last minute to make a decision. We weren't going to evacuate without her*
- *We did not evacuate for Helene. But the storm surge caught us by surprise.*
- *We did not expect so much flooding.*
- *We did not think we would experience flooding and we have hurricane impact windows so we thought we'd be fine*
- *We didn't expect it to be as severe as it was due to previous experience with hurricanes/surge predictions*
- *We were informed about what was happening, but it did not influence us*
- *We decided the morning of the storm to evacuate due to the water over our seawall BEFORE high tide hit*
- *We stayed because we had never flooded before and thought it would not get past the front step*
- *We always have evacuated but I almost didn't this time as Helene was not going to be a direct hit the closest it got was 100 miles of the coast no one thought this would happen. I have lived in the same home since 1977 and never saw anything like it. We had never been flooded or any damage from any storm before for 48 years!*

- *We evacuate for all likely mandatory evac orders*
- *We evaluated the likelihood of being affected by storm surge based on NOAA and meteorological reporting and decided that storm surge and wind damage were low risks*
- *We heard about the storm surge but honestly didn't really understand how it worked. I've heard this from many people. Didn't leave island watched storm on 3rd floor of condo across from gulf*
- *We housed people along the coastline due to the impending storm surge.*
- *We knew it would be higher than level one and had decided to leave because of that*
- *We know we are not in a flood or evacuation zone based on publicly available information.*
- *We live far enough from the beach we weren't overly concerned for our personal safety, just friends who lived closer.*
- *We live in a two-story house on a hill. We have shutters and a generator so felt safest at home*
- *We may have left had we heard the surge info earlier but that was hard to predict still*
- *We never flooded before and the storm was far offshore*
- *We only called evacuation zone a, that gave everyone a sense it was smaller than others we had faced*
- *We previously had a boat and watched the tidal waves projected, which were broadcasted on ABC news, but not on Spectrum Bay news 9. In essence, we understood the beaches would flood based on tidal experience.*
- *We used the projected storm surge from Hurricane Idalia the year before as our benchmark for decision-making. For Helene the projected surge was six inches more than we experienced in Idalia and I knew if that proved true, we would not be flooded. I hadn't taken on consideration the actual size of Helene, although the news was remarking throughout that it was huge. However, we had heard that rhetoric before and we took it as "crying wolf" again.*
- *We wanted to leave due to the warnings and severity of projected storm surge. We did not feel we had enough time to evacuate safely due to work schedules and traffic close to the storm impacts.*
- *WE watch Dennis Phillips and Paul Dellagato, the best meteorologists, calm, thorough, and usually spot on. They are a valuable resource for citizens of Pinellas County and everywhere else as well. Our town also puts out many messages really starting before June 1, about preparing. To us there is a lot of info and very informing. The emergency texts and alarms on the phone are as well.*
- *We watch the forecast closely and since it was not hitting here, we didn't think it would be as serious as it turned out to be for the area.*
- *We watched news and closely followed path.*
- *We watched the course of the hurricane*
- *We were going to be safe with the predicted tide.*
- *We were not concerned about Helene. We do not mind getting "stranded" in our home. We can go without electricity and internet.*
- *We were not in evacuation zone and projected damage was limited to flooding.*
- *We were not under an evacuation order and didn't want to clog roads*
- *We were not under mandatory evacuation until 1 day prior to the storm. By that time we decided to stay. Our island has never flooded and the hurricane appeared very far offshore.*
- *Weather Channel, local news weather, and trusted chaser social media reports*
- *Weather maps, charts, trusted sites*
- *Weather reports showing flooding outside of my direct area*
- *Weather reports, government reports and warnings*
- *Weather stations saying it was going to be severe*
- *When the live in Ranger Tom on Egmont Key said he was worried I knew it would be bad*
- *Wind levels, storm surge warnings, direction of storm.*
- *Wind wouldn't be in our area, just storm surge, we're no where near a flood zone*
- *With the storm staying far enough offshore, even with the storm surge warnings, we felt comfortable staying at home*
- *Yea, followed the coordinates, listened to the news, read the hurricane center updates, received text messages*
- *Yes - given the projected surge of the storm, my home was not in danger at that level or even several feet higher than the projected surge.*
- *We had info. At work and texts from FEMA*
- *Yes I religiously watch both Mike's weather page and Denis Phillips and they discuss the potential severity of the storm and its impacts we leave.*
- *Yes the news channel we watched made it seem that it wasn't going to be that bad*
- *Yes the weather forecast that it was staying off the coast*
- *Yes we received multiple text warnings as well as police driving by with loudspeakers*
- *Yes when Mike at Mike's weather page and Denis Phillips says the surge or wind will destroy the home we go we don't wait for the city or county to issue orders*
- *Yes, alert Pinellas, Weather Channel, social media*

- *Yes, between town and county messages, they all advised leaving.*
- *Yes, but stayed due to direction of storm.*
- *Yes, didn't seem necessary to leave*
- *Yes, flooding predictions and forecasted path of storm along with intensity.*
- *Yes, heard lots of warnings*
- *Yes, I closely follow Dennis Phillips, Mike's weather page, Noah, and other meteorologists tracking the tropics*
- *Yes, I follow local meteorologist Denis Phillips, Mike's Weather, NOAA, etc.*
- *Yes, I followed all emergency updates and road conditions and decided to shelter in place.*
- *Yes, I get Pinellas City emergency alerts but I'm a weather nerd so I was very concerned for evac zones. I kept telling people near the water to get out. Meteorologists stressing the insane surge even though it was 100 miles or so offshore. Sigh. I even offered my home as shelter.*
- *I was watching the county emergency alerts*
- *Yes, I watched the projected path of Helene carefully and realize that it was not going to come close enough to Safety Harbor that I would have to evacuate. I definitely follow instructions if I am asked to evacuate. If my local government thinks that we need to be out of an area for a storm, and they say you're a mandatory evacuated, I am leaving. We really need Congress to step up and refund and away and the other Weather resources to help us all stay safe.*
- *Yes kept up to date using NOAA. Made decision to stay.*
- *Low category storm, 140 miles offshore, 4-6 feet of flooding expected*
- *Yes, many...on tv and through government warning systems. Mostly from local tv broadcasts..*
- *Yes, not expected to have high enough winds that I would be worried about falling trees*
- *Yes, our daughter works for law enforcement, told us to evacuate early*
- *Yes, that it was not gonna directly hit the area*
- *Yes, the confidence in the track. Also, the elevation of our property.*
- *Yes, the predicted level of flooding, which was much less than actually occurred.*
- *Yes, tv, radio, condo warnings from property management company*
- *Yes, we invited the kids and grandkids to come over to stay safe*
- *Yes. Hurricane was 100 miles offshore so I didn't think it would be so bad.*
- *Yes. I have the Ready Pinellas and Red Cross Apps on my phone as well as AccuWeather and Max Tracker*
- *Siren's blasting and sheriffs with megaphones*
- *Yes. Surge was not supposed to be 8ft in Madeira Beach. They were calling for Eta or Idalia levels*
- *Yes. Sheriff would tell you when you could come back*
- *Yes. Work stated when we were to go in 24 x & as opposed to just 12 hr. shifts*
- *Zone B was not called to evacuate at that time*
- *Yes, forecast leading up to the time the storm hit confirmed our belief that the storm severity was not a major threat*

Individuals indicated they followed local and national news reports...

- *All media; Just stay tuned to the weather; Local news reports; Local TV meteorologists; Local weather forecasters; Local news; Local weather news; Local tv weatherman; Local weather station; Local meteorologists, county messages; Kept listening to reports; Meteorologist; News warnings; News, weather forecast; News/ livestreams; News; NHC and local weather TV; News broadcasting; News weather reports; National Hurricane Center; National Hurricane Center; National Hurricane website and common sense; National Weather Service; National Weather Service and local government stations; News & weather forecast/predictions; NOAA alerts; NOAA Hurricane Center; NOAA Ruskin reports; NOAA Storm surge warnings; NOAA updates; NOAA website, Local news; NOAA and NHC bulletins; NWS announcements via Facebook and news/TV; Only from the TV weathermen; News on TV; Pinellas County and local news stations; Spectrum 9 and Tampa channel 8 kept us informed also National weather service; Television; Television and county warning; Television and on-line; Television meteorologists; NHC; TV; TV and online sites; TV news; Text/TV notifications; Through Spectrum News for our area; The Weather channel on TV; The news, weather reports; The forecasts and warnings; Watched weather reports on tv; We watched the news on Several channels; Watch several local weather forecasters; Weather forecast; weather forecasts; Weather forecasts; Weather forecasts and storm track projections; Weather reports; Weather reports; Weather reports; Weather reports; Weather reports and mandatory evac orders; Weather reports; Weather updates; Weather reports*

Q2. Was there any messaging that you heard/read/saw before Hurricane Milton that influenced your evacuation decision?

- 100-year storm
- A direct hit hurricane with high force winds
- A policeman drove around our condo community telling us to evacuate.
- A second hurricane
- A townhall meeting stipulating we would only leave this independent living center if there was a Cat 4! yeah right!
- ABC Action News and Advice from CIC Pinellas County
- ABC Action News predicted a category 4, so I left the area
- ABC Action News, NOAA
- Absence of evacuation order for my zone
- After Helene the messaging was much more serious
- Again constant text messaging
- Again, as a Pinellas County employee I was well aware of all County emergency alerts that went out to residents.
- Again, because we live in a non-evacuation zone, the news messaging was that we were safer hunkering down at home.
- Weather channel and local news
- All of it saying that a five was gonna take a direct impact on Tampa Bay and after seeing what happened during Ian, we figured we should go.
- All the debris that was still laying around from Helene could cause major problems in addition to the wind
- All the forecasts, tracks and warnings
- All the junk still on Clearwater beach
- anticipated path of the storm
- As with Helene, we follow Dennis Phillips and Paul Dellagato, they are knowledgeable, thorough, and above all calm in their weather presentations. Especially Dennis, I don't think he even sleeps during hurricane season. The alerts on our phone were on point. The city of Dunedin does a great job keeping info come all hurricane season long. AS does Pinellas County.
- Asked everyone to evacuate as Milton was headed right for us, and if you decided to stay there might be no one to help rescue you
- Asked the kids & grandkids to come over to be safe
- Authorities called Zone B to evacuate; Hurricane and evacuate; Just evacuation orders
- Aware of the severity upon landfall and did not want to be at risk for flooding and power loss

A few people mentioned Alert Pinellas, Ready Pinellas, Pinellas County App, or text messages...

- Alert Pinellas updates; Alert Pinellas; Alert Pinellas; Alert Pinellas; Alert Pinellas and news; Alert Pinellas messages and weather stations stressing the severity; Alert Pinellas news; Alert Pinellas; County and City notifications; County emergency services; County Warnings via app; County website; Emergency alerts; Emergency alerts on my phone and local media; EOC warning and News; From government apps and media news; From the county; I have the Ready Pinellas app; Information from the EOC and NOAA; Ready Pinellas; Pinellas County warnings; Phone texts; Pinellas City Weather Warning System; Pinellas Alert text message; Pinellas County; Pinellas County Alert System; Pinellas County Alerts; Pinellas County and News before lost power; Pinellas County Emergency Services; Pinellas County storm warning system; Pinellas county warnings; Pinellas ready; Ready Pinellas; Ready Pinellas alerts; Ready Pinellas; Ready Pinellas app; Ready Pinellas app; Ready Pinellas notifications; Ready Pinellas; Ready Pinellas; Ready Pinellas app; Updates from Alert Pinellas; Text alerts; Text alerts; Text message alerts; Text warnings; Text, emails and phone alerts;
- Bay News 9 forecast, Mike's Weather Page, NOAA hurricane center.
- BayNews 9 keeping us informed.
- By the time we knew it was going to be serious, my area was out of gas. The roads were gridlocked. I didn't believe it would be safe to be stuck in traffic with no guarantee of gas
- CAT 5 to CAT 4 with high surge amounts for our area. If we stayed, all routes out would've been flooded, so we'd be unable to leave 'last minute'
- Category and predicted tracks for the storm
- City notified us that the sewer would be preemptively shut down and would stay down
- City was very good about sending updates
- Communication by City, County & news was excellent
- Cone projection
- constant weather updates
- Continues weather warning messages
- County mandatory evacuation
- Daily NWS Ruskin updates
- Damage already done during Helene validated our decisions to evacuate inland. We follow and believe in science and meteorologist.

- *Daughter that works for law enforcement told us to evacuate early.*
- *Direction of storm*
- *Direction of storm and intensity.*
- *Don't mess with these storms*
- *Downgrade to category 3*
- *Email to leave from our Board of Directors.*
- *Emergency vehicles went through with a loudspeaker telling us to evacuate*
- *Evacuation routes at a standstill with traffic. No gas available once you are able to reach a major road.*
- *Evacuation warnings, evacuation orders, storm forecasts & warnings*
- *Evacuation zone maps,*
- *Experts asked people not in flood zones to shelter in place. Roads were already packed and other people needed to get out*
- *Extensive forecasting and reporting by the National Weather Service and other sources.*
- *Fatigue from previous hurricane*
- *FEMA and county texts and their apps*
- *FDOT messaging board, City of St. Pete text notifications*
- *First time we were under an evacuation order*
- *FL OEM intel/weather tracks*
- *Flood impact warnings were about 6' higher than Helene, which flooded our living room 18".*
- *Followed weather forecast*
- *Forecast*
- *Forecast to take a direct hit and storm surge warnings, wind and flood event*
- *Forecasted direction*
- *Forecasted to be over Cat 3*
- *Forecasted wind speeds*
- *Forecasts*
- *Forecasts kept showing landfall getting closer and closer to Pinellas*
- *Get the hell out of dodge*
- *God brought me through the storm.*
- *Growing confidence in models about landfall to our South*
- *Heard and saw messaging. Not influenced because of structure and location of home*
- *Heard this was more powerful storm and lots of debris outside from Helene*
- *Height of flooding; strength of winds*
- *Helene was really bad for our area and didn't even hit us straight on, Milton was shown to hit straight on. Also Milton turned to a category 5 hurricane in the Gulf.*
- *High wind and strength of the development of the storm made me decide to evacuate*
- *High wind, heavy rain, resources stretched due to Helene response.*
- *Hit further south so we stayed*
- *How intense the storm was going to be*
- *How quickly Milton formed into a cat 5*
- *Hunkered down cause that's just what I do*
- *Hurricane information from NHC*
- *Hurricane Milton was forecast to make a direct hit in our area.*
- *Hurricane path, people in non-evac zones told to shelter in place and not clog up roads for those who had to evac.*
- *Hurricane track and strength projections*
- *Hurricane warning and path*
- *Hurricane watches and warnings issued by the NWS are very effective. Especially if coupled with the mere anticipation of an evacuation order, I would never remain in the area.*
- *Hype that it would hit Tampa Bay as a Category 5 and destroy everything*

Numerous respondents mentioned evacuation orders...

- *Evacuate; Evacuation necessary; Evacuation of various zones and being in the trajectory; Evacuation order; Evacuation order; Evacuation was mandatory for our zone; Evacuation orders; Just that we were in an evacuation zone; Mandatory evacuation; Pinellas County and City of Treasure Island had mandatory evacuation; Mandatory; Mandatory evac notice, storm severity predictions; Mandatory evac order; Mandatory evacs for most of the county; Mandatory evacuating; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuation for mobile homes; Mandatory evacuation for our area; Mandatory evacuation order; Mandatory evacuation orders; Mandatory Evacuation orders; Mandatory evacuation orders; Mandatory evacuation orders; Mandatory evacuation was issued; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuation; Mandatory evacuations; Mandatory order; Orders by City/County to evacuate; evacuation requirements; Orders to evacuate; There was mandatory evacuation; Warnings and govt advice; We were under a mandatory evac*

Many people mentioned Hurricane Helene and not wanting to go through that again...

- *After Helene I did not want to go through another hurricane; After seeing flooding from Helene, we chose to evacuate for Milton. Fear of the unknown; Did not want to go through another hurricane; Helene; Helene experience; Helene impact; Hurricane Helene; Hurricane Helene impact; Damage from Helene; Damage to the area from previous hurricane Helene was a factor; Home damage by Helene. We were displaced by Helene; House uninhabitable from Helene; Major impact projected immediately following Helene; Seemed it would be worse than Helene; PTSD from Helene made me choose wisely; Seeing what Helene did, it increased the anxiety about Milton; Saw the damage and flooding by Helene; Seeing damage in places nearby; Severity of Helene; Storm surge warning, and seeing what Helene did to my workplace was horrific; Strength of Category 5 offshore and coming 10 days after Helene; Storm predicted more wind damage than Helene; Two weeks after Helene decided never to stay through another; Took it more serious after seeing Helene*
- *I always take hurricane messaging seriously*
- *I decided not to evacuate when I saw on the media the FDOT cameras of the amount of cars on the road. It was very congested and people were driving in the emergency lanes. Also, I heard a person in authority say that they may have to close Pinellas County And that I may not be able to get back in. I worried that what if my car broke down on the road, that would be worse than staying home.*
- *I did not want to sit through Milton by myself so I went to family's house to be with people.*
- *I didn't think we needed to evacuate because we are in a No Flood zone. However, the wind was tremendous and caused huge amount of damage to my home. It was also terrifying and if we had known where we could go with 4 dogs, we would have evacuated*
- *I evacuated because the severity and unpredictability of Helene was a concern and I took that into consideration when deciding to evacuate for Milton.*
- *I followed tracking and traffic reports closely then decided to stay because I am not in an evacuation zone.*
- *I heard that the flood levels would be high so I did not want to be away and not able to come back immediately*
- *I listened this time and left*
- *I monitor the NOAA bulletins and the information provided influenced my decision to evacuate.*
- *I recall hearing messages that hurricane Milton was projected to be close to a direct hit to R community and my home*
- *I think people took the severity more seriously after how bad Helene was*
- *I understood the possible risks of the storm due to my job*
- *I was much more concerned with Milton being a more direct hit. Because I'm 5 miles inland I could only pray for the best. My condo community was flooded, in some units up to 3-4 feet of water - I was blessed, no water in my unit*
- *I was very concerned about the path of the storm as well as the storm surge warnings. I was worried that I would be caught in a high level of storm surge.*
- *I work for PSTA and they advised me to get a hotel*
- *If my evacuation zone (E) is called there is likely going to be no way out. My best bet will always be to shelter in place.*
- *If we lived in a flood zone or older home we would have left*
- *If you can leave, do it now*
- *I'm in a non-flood zone and in a solid block home so we stayed and boarded up our windows.*
- *I'm in a non-flood/non-evac zone but didn't want to be alone*
- *I'm in non-evacuation zone and message seemed to be best place to stay was in my home*
- *Impact of Helene, weather reports*
- *Information is always excellent and well-detailed. We thought it supported our decision to evacuate inland.*
- *Intensity and storm track*
- *Intensity and track of the hurricane*
- *Intensity of the wind was definitely a factor and also the poor infrastructure to handle high rain volume. We also have 2 large trees that were a safety concern due to predictions of the wind. Plus, Pinellas is in line for a potential direct hit. We also have the option to leave earlier than many so we avoided the bumper-to-bumper traffic by leaving 4 days ahead.*
- *Intensity was projected to be higher than Helene and Helene did a lot of damage in the area*
- *It looked like it was going to make landfall where I lived.*
- *It seemed to be a very serious, dangerous storm headed right for our area of Florida.*
- *It was a Cat 5 and aimed right us and we were right in the bullseye at the time*
- *It was forecasted to be a Cat 5 with >10' of flooding*

- *It was going to be bad. I needed to leave.*
- *It was going to be super destructive.*
- *It was going to worsen the Helene damage*
- *It was gonna be a direct hit and major category storm*
- *It was only supposed to be rain. At the last minute it became like a Cat 4 heading directly at us*
- *It was projected to hit as a cat 4 and went directly over my home*
- *It was supposed to hit Tampa area, but jogged south. I didn't want a direct hit. Couldn't live in the house from Helene anyway.*
- *It's always you will die if you stay been here for 49 years*
- *It's strength and predicted path*
- *I've live in the Florida beach commission for 54 yrs and know that the sea level is rising and storms are getting bigger and stronger*
- *Jane Castor - leave or die*
- *Jim Cantore was staying.*
- *Just all the warnings that we could get a direct cat 4 or 5 to the Tampa Bay area that was all over the news outlets*
- *Just that it would be more of a wind event*
- *Just the storm coming right at us*
- *Just wasn't getting in the way of a potential Cat 5*
- *Just watched the path and predictions for wind/flooding*
- *Just watching weather channel and local news following the projected path and strength.*
- *Knowing our flood plain; paying attention to storm strength, wind speeds and projected path/what side of storm we'd end up on.*
- *La categoria de la tormenta*
- *Landfall predicted in Pinellas County*
- *Landfall prediction for our area & storm intensity*
- *Landfall proximity*
- *Large swaths of traffic reported on really deterred my household from evacuating. We were/are not in a flood zone and in a relatively new build built to withstand storms.*
- *Listening to our local trusted weather guy, Denis Phillips, and understanding the seriousness of hurricanes.*
- *Local and national broadcasts listing the storm as a powerful Category 5*
- *Livestreams*

Large number of responses indicated Denis Phillips was a trusted source...

- *ABC Action News; ABC Action News Weather Crew with Denis Phillips and The Weather Station; Always followed Denis Phillips; ABC Action News - Denis Phillips, Meteorologist; ABC News; Dennis Phillips ABC Action News; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips, weatherman; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips is the go to for hurricanes; Denis Phillips Channel 11 news; Denis Phillips news reports; Denis Phillips reports; Denis Phillips Updates; Denis Phillips; Watched Denis Phillips and read text messages from local authorities; Denis Phillips, this man is a gem; Dennis Phillips; Dennis Phillips. He's very valuable; Dennis Phillips/ABC Action news; Dennis Phillips; Dennis Phillips; Dennis Phillips; Dennis Phillips ABC news; Dennis Phillips Facebook page; Dennis Phillips updates; Dennis Phillips weather; Dennis Phillips weather forecast; Dennis weather man on Facebook; Local weather with Denis Phillips; Rule #7; Denis Phillips; Dennis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips - advised to go south or north in the state; Denis Phillips; Denis Phillips on FB and livestream - he is the ONLY source I trust; Followed Meteorologist Denis Phillips and the NOAA; NHC and Denis Phillips; NHC and Denis Phillips; No just followed Denis Phillips closely; Weather reports and Dennis Phillips!*
- *Local meteorologists, county messaging*
- *Local news forecast and explanation of the difference between Milton and Helene.*
- *Local news reports showing possible path of eye going right over my house.*
- *Local news said the possibility of making landfall near my home*
- *Local Sheriff ordered evacuation*
- *Local weather forecasters predicted it would be a severe storm*
- *Local weather, warnings, previous history with storm evac*
- *Looked like it was headed our way*
- *Lots of news and social media posts*
- *Lots of news updates on how serious the storm was going to be (was supposed to be a direct hit where I lived, although it turned at the last minute)*
- *Lots of warning about how serious it would be so we decided last minute to evacuate*
- *I watched Denis Phillips & Mike the weather guy, & made decisions based on the information I received*

- *If Denis Philips says go, you go. Helene was so awful I knew we had to leave for Milton*
- *News about forecasts. Dennis Phillips and Mike's Weather page*
- *Local meteorologist, like Dennis Phillips, Mike's weather page, and other meteorologists on social media tracking the tropics*
- *Local meteorologists such as Denis Phillips. Mike's Weather Page and NOAA*
- *Social media, Dennis Phillips, Mike's weather page, Paul Delgarto*
- *Mike from Mike's weather page and Denis Phillips are my resources & when they say to leave, we leave*
- *During Helene, Denis Phillips talked about how he usually makes reservations at hotels at the two extremes (north/south or east/west) of the projected storm path far in advance so that his family has options if & when the decision to evacuate happens*
- *Denis Phillips - it was going to be a direct hit, or likely to be. Backed up by the NWS and other local metrologists.*
- *Denis Phillips & team, NOAA websites, Michael Lowry*
- *Denis Phillips ABC and Mike's Weather Page on Facebook*
- *Denis Phillips and Mike's weather page*
- *Excellent reporting by Fox News Channel, Mike's Weather Page. Plus WHPT 102.5FM The Bone*
- *Denis Phillips weatherman saying to take this one seriously & concern of debris still around from Helene*
- *Denis Phillips made the potential impacts very clear with Milton, just as he did with Helene.*
- *Denis Phillips news broadcasts. When he said he evacuated his family, I knew we should go.*
- *Denis Phillips was especially grim, and my husband works for a utility and was privy to wind speed and projected electrical grid destruction projections*
- *Dennis Phillips and Palm Harbor Fire Rescue said to stay put if not in an evacuation zone to help keep roads clear and hotels available. Hide from the wind, run from the water*
- *Rely on Mike's weather page and Denis Phillips*
- *Mandatory evac. Write your social security number on your arm if you don't evac.*

Individuals are also turning to Mike's Weather Page as a source of information...

- *I watch Mikes weather page; Mike's Weather Page; Mike's Weather Page; Mikes Weather Page; Mikes weather page; Mikes Weather Page; Mikes weather page; Mike's weather page; Mike's Weather Page; Mike's Weather page; Mikes weather page kept me informed; Mike's Weather Page. He called the severity of it before even Denis Phillips did; MWP; Watched Mikes Weather page*
- *Mandatory evacuation of is always out signal to leave. Even though we were living in an AirBnb and it was not under the order, we still leave.*
- *Many messages from the Pinellas County app*
- *Map showed very intense storm headed our direction*
- *NOAA tide charts*
- *Maps showing possible flooding for my area*
- *Media, warning sirens, police with megaphones*
- *Messaging no - reading weather radar, forecasts*
- *Meteorologist forecast on local news*
- *Meteorologists expected the center to hit south of us*
- *Might have considered evacuation but our circumstances did not allow for it*
- *Milton looked bad and I will take warnings more seriously after loosing everything to Helene*
- *Milton was a Category 4 Hurricane with damaging high winds and*
- *Milton was forecast to go nearly directly over my parent's home, so there was no special messaging required.*
- *Milton was forecast to hit my city*
- *More serious weather system*
- *Milton was going to be primarily a wind event. My home was boarded up and ready to withstand the wind*
- *Monitored on local news weather broadcasts and they kept saying that it would most likely continue to potentially miss our area, as well as it would continue to decrease in strength. We continued to monitor very closely, but ended up evacuating the day before it was scheduled to reach our area because there had not been a downgrade in the category - it was still a 4. So we made the decision to evacuate to be on the safe side, because we knew we would be too scared to sit through a cat 4 hurricane in our home (being in cat 2 Irma was terrifying enough)*
- *Morning of landfall that it was tracking further south so we would not be at center of landfall.*
- *Most direct hit in the area ever*
- *Mr. Weatherman YouTube local channels mostly useless. To many commercials and fluff reporting. They really did not take this serious enough*
- *My friends encouraged me to evacuate*
- *My home was uninhabitable after Helene*

- *My husband is a wave modeler and works for USGS coastal hazards groups. We knew exactly how bad it would be and informed neighbors to take it seriously*
- *Neighbors evacuated and others said to go*
- *My property was in the direct path my husband had cardiac bypass a few weeks earlier and we wanted him to be comfortable during the storm*
- *News about traffic being backed up for hours*
- *News channels described rapid intensification and the high probability of it occurring with this storm.*
- *News conferences by public officials in my area*
- *News on severity of winds and target of storm*
- *News reports & Pinellas County warnings on seriousness of storm surge*
- *News & previous hurricane damage in the area*
- *News reports of rapid intensification of the storm*
- *News reports of serious damage possibilities*
- *News reports on it's track and strength. Often looked at the NOAA Hurricane Center Website*
- *News reports, weather reports, NOAA predictions. We followed all sources*
- *News services & authorities stressed the danger*
- *News stating how serious it would be*
- *News stressed the dangers after underestimating Helene, in my opinion.*
- *News was saying it would be a 4 or 5.*
- *News was pretty doom & gloom about Milton destroying Tampa Bay*
- *News showed the madness on the roads & at gas stations*
- *News was calling for a very strong storm, possibly a direct hit, we are not in a flood zone, but are surrounded by flood zones*
- *News was uncertain about if we'd be directly hit, seemed to be hitting us or close to us.*
- *News was very doom and gloom about the storm and their warnings on social media convinced me to leave*
- *News, Alerts, Social Media, previous experience, employer*
- *No message at all not alerted how serious it would be. Helaine flooded my car was not warned at all about a storm surge that would touch my area in Feather Sound. We are not educated enough about storm surges. If we were, we would've moved our cars.*
- *No news just live at beach and dunes were no longer on beach they were all over the island from Helene*
- *No place to stay*
- *No, basically still shell shocked from cleaning up after Helene*
- *No, but after the devastation of Helene we weren't taking any chances.*
- *NOAA model depicting the route of the hurricane was a major factor in my decision to leave. Once I saw that it had escalated to a Category 5 and the eye was supposed to go right through my apartment, I decided it would be best to leave Pinellas County*
- *NOAA NHC maps and forecasts. Levi Cowan Tropical Tidbits. I ignore all pleas and emotional messaging and focus only on data-based factual information.*
- *Not knowing precise track of hurricane, likely that would evacuate to an area also impacted by hurricane*
- *Nothing I saw really influenced me. I stayed because my significant other can't leave due to his job. If it's a really serious storm I would leave.*
- *NWS maps, state and county alerts, Denis Phillips*
- *Online weather reports*
- *Our area appeared to in the path of a possible Cat 4 or 5 hurricane*
- *Our family was also going to evacuate*
- *Path, surge, and intensity predictions on top of the level of flooding with Helene.*
- *People evacuating interstate showing it at a standstill*
- *Plenty of messaging, personal decision to stay*
- *Police on a loud speaker telling people to leave*

Many people mentioned the storm being a direct hit, referenced the category of the storm, storm track, wind speed, or severity of the storm...

- *Believed it to be the first direct hit to Pinellas County in 100 yrs; Cat 5 direct hit, definitely leaving!; Cat 5 and we were in the cone; Cat 5 heading directly for Tampa Bay; Cat 5 heading our way; Cat 5 in the gulf heading towards me; Calling it a category 4+; Cat 3 or higher I will leave; Cat 5; Cat 5 quickly escalating; Category of storm; Cat 5 warning; Cat 5 with 10-15 feet storm surge made us leave: scared to leave 10' pile of debris unattended; Cat 5 direct hit to St. Pete; Catastrophic direct impact; Category and likelihood of direct hit to our area; Coming right at us; Concerns about a near or direct hit, the winds and expected rainfall; Could be a direct hit; Direct hit; Direct hit; Direct hit; Direct hit path was to hit Tampa bay; Direct hit to the Tampa Bayh region; Direct hit. Cat 5; Expected strength of hurricane and path;*

Expecting a direct hit from an extremely intense storm; Expecting it to make landfall in Pinellas county, did not want to be there; High winds; High winds; High winds; High winds; High winds 100+; High winds and heavy rain; High winds, possible extreme surge; Higher storm category, landfall area; High winds and what was forecasted to be a direct hit; Hurricane wind levels; Intense hurricane that had potential to be a direct hit on Pinellas; It appeared possible that we may have gotten a direct hit; It was forecasted to be very close landfall or even a direct hit; It would impact my area; It was going to hit close to area; It was going to be a direct hit; It was projected to be a Category 5 and a direct hit; Direct hit to Tampa Bay was predicted; More likely to hit the region; Predictions for a Cat 5; Radar track of hurricane; Report on storm strength; Reports of hurricane Category; Path and intensity of the storm; Path of storm; Path projection and intensity of the storm was the main factor on making the decision to stay home for this storm; Possibility of a direct hit to area; Possibility of a direct hit to the Tampa Bay Region; Possibility of it hitting directly; Possible direct Category 4 hit; Possible direct landfall to our home; Potential direct hit; Potential direct impact; Possible severity of the storm was made very clear; Predicted direct hit; Predicted landfall; Prediction of direct hit & severity of storm; Predicted level and path of the storm; Predicted path; Predicted to be at or near direct hit; Prediction of a direct hit by a Cat 3; Radar showed direct hit and Category 5; Straight on hit storm surge potential; Saw it was coming straight for us potentially; Strength and direction of the storm; Storm category went from 3-4; Storm track; Storm track and strength; Storm track and wind speed; Storm tracking; Storm warnings and the path of the hurricane; Strength of storm; Strength of storm; Strength of the storm; Strength of the storm, size and landfall; Strong winds; Severity made us leave; Severity of storm; Severity of storm, path of storm; Severity of storm; Severe Weather; Severity and possible area which it would impact; Size and strength of the storm; Severity of storm - in direct path; Serious warnings about the strength; Saw the size of the storm and the wind velocity; That it could be a direct hit to our area; That it was going to be a destructive hurricane; The category and path; The category of the storm; That it was the first direct hit to the Tampa Bay area in 100 years; Track; Track of storm posed a direct hit in Pinellas County; Track updates and tide level; Trajectory; Various storm forecasts; Warnings of the severity; Warnings about very severe weather and damage; Warnings on tv of potential direct landfall; We were in direct path; We were in the direct path of a Cat 5; Wind; Wind factor; Wind speed; Wind speed; Wind speeds; Wind warning

- *One of the insurance agents told me when he came and did their inspection from Helene that nothing will be left here and to get everything I can out . I didn't have much left but that is when I realized we were going to lose it all.*
- *Phone and EBS*
- *Possibility of it becoming a Cat 5 made me decide to take my daughter out of state to my Dad's house*
- *Post Helene we were not sure our home could sustain a second impact*
- *Post horrible storm to hit the area in 100 years*
- *Potential direct hit and flooding after observing the flooding from Helene*
- *Potential for a lot of rain + high winds and my property has trees that could fall on the house*
- *Potential storm surge and knowing water would probably be turned off similar to Helene.*
- *Predictions regarding severity of storm & direction of storm*
- *Project Phoenix made its rounds again after Helene and it was bone chilling*
- *Projected path and predicted strength*
- *Projected path could have been catastrophic for my home.*
- *Projected path of the storm, it's intensity and flooding possibility to my home. The fact that my home already suffered minor damage from the storm 2 weeks prior.*
- *Proximity to the landfall of the storm. The hotel where we were staying was evacuated.*
- *Radar showing the eye of the storm and the strength of the winds with regard to the center plus the anticipated path. I measured the radius and considered the path which led to my decision to leave*
- *Rain lots of rain, not sitting in traffic with no gas*
- *Rapid intensification reports of Milton developing into a Category 5 and the trauma of my house being recently flooded by Helene.*
- *NOAA postings on Facebook about impact of incoming storm.*
- *Realization of damage caused by Helene*
- *Reported as a CAT5 in the Gulf, 2 days before landfall*
- *Reports from local meteorologists and national weather services influenced my decision to evacuate during Milton.*

- Reports of storm severity prompted me to leave
- Reports of where the cone was
- Reports said headed for the Tampa Bay area
- Run from the water, hide from the wind.
- Same as before information overload. Annoying to have to parse through all of the hysterics of some TV stations and news outlets. I rely on the sanity of Dennis Phillips.
- Seeing the path go right over the Howard Franklin bridge
- Several communications sent out
- Severe damage to condo and area possible. Life threatening. Loss of services
- Severity of the hurricane. Was forecast to be a potential direct landfall as a cat 5 in my neighborhood.
- Severity of the storm and messaging from Denis Phillips influenced our decision to evacuate
- Severity of the storm and possibly a direct hit to the community
- Severity of the storm, potential for large area of damage
- Sheriff telling us we would die
- Sheriff's office
- Shortage of gasoline & bumper to bumper traffic
- Sirens, text messages
- Size and wind speeds - along with the previous storm leaving home in our area damaged. Worried about more debris to fly around and just how strong the storm will get
- Size of storm and direct path for Tampa area
- Size of the hurricane and the direction.
- Smaller hurricane so reduced wind field, no direct hit
- So many people were evacuating and there was no where to go
- Social media
- SPC/NOAA, multiple media outlets, neighbors
- Spectrum News Bay News 9
- St. Pete saying they were shutting down sewer plant
- Status of I-4 and that emergency should was open for extra lane of traffic
- Stay home if you're in a no flood & no evacuation zone
- Stay if you have a stable block construction home not in an evacuation zone
- Stayed because it made a hard Eastern turn which took our community out of the direct path and away from the Southern side.
- Storm category, location of eye relative to my position and wind speed dictated my decision to remain
- Storm looked severe and our house was destroyed so with the models showing a strong storm and the fact that we were now living in a temporary mobile home situation, we evacuated.
- Storm projections indicated it could be a severe impact in my area
- Storm surge impacting such a large are in the Tampa Bay area and the widespread devastation and loss of services for days
- Storm surge potential and knowing the height of surge that made it to our house from Helene. It's hard to understand how far a surge of 6 ft can travel. It has always seemed like a threat for the properties on the beach when it comes to storm surge. This house has been in my family for about 40 years and with all the hurricanes that have come close, it has never flooded.
- Storm surge warnings and visualizations of effects on TWC and CNN

Numerous survey respondents mentioned flooding and storm surge as a messaging factor...

- 10-15 foot surge; 15' storm surge; 15-18 ft storm surge warning at home; 20 feet of flood water from bay warning; 20 ft storm surge in coastal communities and Cat 5 winds; 9-15' storm surge after Helene had given us a smaller amount; Calling for 15' surge; Degree of surge; Expected water surge in excess of 15 feet; Flood warnings; Flooding; Flooding - My community took a big hit with Helene; Higher surge was expected; Potential for more flooding; Potential severity of flooding after just having flooded with Helene; Potential storm surge; Projected storm surge; Saw the storm surge predictions for our area; Severe flooding possible; Severity and storm surge; Severity of the flooding projections; Severity of the storm; Severity of the storm; Severity of the storm and forecast track; Storm path and severity; Storm path and speed; Storm surge 10-15 feet; Storm surge and wind forecasts; Storm surge estimates; Possible storm surge; Potential devastating storm surge; Storm surge map; Storm surge maps on county website; Storm surge potential higher than Helene; Storm surge predicted to be 15+ feet; Storm surge prediction of 10-15 feet; Storm surge warnings; Storm surge wind impact; Storm surge, flooding, winds; Storm surge/wind warnings and possible direct hit on our area; Strength of storm and the predicted repeat storm surge; Strong winds Surge predictions; Surge warning; Wind event plus surge 12-15 feet

- Storm tracking on Internet (NOAA)
- Storm was predicted to hit close to our city
- Storm was said to be so strong it could move home from foundation
- Storm was wobbling too much to know if it was headed right for St Petersburg or if it would go north or south, and with us being toward the center of the cone of uncertainty, we knew we had to leave
- Strength and track day before landfall
- Strength of the storm made for concern that structure or trees might not stand in this storm
- Strongest storm in the gulf and variable track
- Tampa Mayor, BayCare messaging to employees
- That it was to be taken very seriously.
- That storm came into the Gulf Coast on a different path, much more dangerous than most hurricanes that hit this area
- That the storm may hit closer to us than originally thought
- That we were not in a flood zone, since it hadn't flooded during Helene.
- The biggest concern was storm surge and highly encouraged those affected to heed the warnings.
- The storm debris from Helene still piled outside
- The fact that it took an unknown path & it was a cat 5
- The fact that storm surge south of where Milton made landfall would be really bad and I live on ocean side. Didn't want to experience storm surge again
- The only thing I knew to do was to stay indoors to stay safe.
- The way the weather stations showed the path and how we were on the rainy side
- The whole state was going to be affected
- There was extreme hype for Milton. More so than Helene. It got to the point where I could no longer follow the news and needed to spend my time preparing
- There was much talk that the projected winds and surge would displace all the rubble from the hurricane Helene clean-up and there was a good chance poison would enter the waterways along with everything becoming a projectile.
- They said it could be worse than Helene so was worried so choose to evacuate
- They said it was going to be the worst hurricane to hit Tampa Bay in 100 years
- This was set to be a direct hit
- Thought that storm surge may be worse than Helene and we already had storm damage and had moved our stuff so no reason to stay and protect
- Timing of winds arriving in our area
- Too much traffic to get out in time
- Traffic and shelter/hotel/etc. availability
- Traffic delays. Didn't want to be stuck in traffic with the lack of gas available
- Traffic time terrible questioned timing of leaving
- Trajectory of the storm and NOAA forecasts and comms from meteorologist Denis Phillips influenced my decision to evacuate.
- Trouble people had evacuating
- Trusted weather people sites
- Trusted weather reporters meteorologist giving possible path of Cat 5 hitting our beach.
- TV was predicting direct landfall at Tampa Bay, and I was already evacuated to a safe location
- TV weather. It was going to be more of a wind maker.
- TV, Facebook, condo association news alerts.
- Two days out it was meant to hit square on St. Pete so I was like I am outa here
- Typical evac plan is if it is anything stronger than a Cat 1, we're out
- Uncertainty of the path, severity of the storm and possibility of landing close by
- Unless I'm 100 guaranteed safety I'm safer at home
- Various media and HAM radio.
- Warnings about storm surge again, category of hurricane
- Was expected to be a very strong storm. Had minor roof damage from Helene that wasn't able to be fixed before Milton arrived. Decided to evacuate due to roofing concerns.
- Watched news again I was no longer in Pinellas county due to losing my home in Helene
- Watched Denis Phillips throughout both hurricanes, as information on Milton became more severe talked with neighbor who had been here since 99
- Watched the news and other outlets. Was worried for our home so I started evacuating the house early to a safer location. My family and dogs left the night before once the house was emptied of our personal and expedite belongings.
- Watched the track on NOAA and decided it would not affect us badly
- Watched weather reports very closely, hunkered down
- Watching the news & tracking the storm on the internet
- We agreed before buying condo we would leave if ordered
- We are in a zone "No Evacuation". All of our families homes are in evacuation zones. Everyone evacuated to our home.
- We decided to stay and hunker down because two days ahead of the storm the roads were packed with traffic, gas sold out, and hotels full. It was a better decision for us to shelter in place.
- We followed information consistently

- *We had no home so stayed at friends house in Tampa.*
- *We have decided to leave if it was higher than level one*
- *We have Ready Pinellas, Red Cross and several weather Apps that we rely on for information.*
- *We heard information, but it did not influence our decision.*
- *We made our decision to drive to a hotel 4 hours away when it became a Cat 5 with 180 mph winds offshore.*
- *We watched the news and the fact that Milton was a Cat 5 24 hours out, we evacuated.*
- *We were already displaced in a well built hotel.*
- *We were living in hotels due to losing our house in Helene*
- *We were near downtown St Pete at 40' elevation with protection from wind*
- *We would have stayed had the city not warned that the sewer system was being shut down*
- *Weakened government support structure list Helene*
- *Weather channel, local television, NOAA website*
- *Weather channels had Milton as heading right at us*
- *Weather forecasts, local government warnings, mandatory evacuation notices.*
- *Weather report, hurricane's path as well as hurricane tracking app.*
- *Weather reports and mandatory evac order*
- *Weather reports of predicted high winds and flooding convinced us to leave*
- *Weather reports, especially Denis Phillips*
- *Weathermen said run from the rain hide from the wind. We hid. We are not in an evacuation or flood zone based on publicly available information.*
- *Weren't certain on landfall location. We evacuated to Bradenton for Helene, then evacuated again to Gainesville for Milton.*
- *What the experts were saying*
- *When a sheriff tells you to write next of kin on your arm if you're in a mandatory evacuation area, its pretty solid evidence you should leave*
- *When Dennis Phillips says it's going to be bad, you should leave and leave SOON!*
- *When I saw that people who were instrumental in offering relief in my community after Helene were evacuating, I felt pressure to do so, too. Also, fears that all the debris from Helene made for easy projectiles and Milton was predicted to be a wind storm for us was terrifying.*
- *When it was a Cat 5 and told my parents in Dunedin to go to a shelter*
- *When it was a cat 5 with 180 mph winds in the gulf, with a track zeroed in on my area for at least 2 days, we decided to evacuate across the state.*
- *When it was going to be a possible 3 or greater many of the neighbors got together to discuss and decided to evacuate. It was a mandatory evacuation*
- *When Jane Castor, Mayor of Tampa, went in the news and strongly urged people to evacuate. Plus my place was already uninhabitable from Helene.*

Individuals indicated they followed local and national news reports...

- *Information from TV weatherman; Just local news reports; Just was watching the weather; National Hurricane Center; National Hurricane Center; National Hurricane Center; National Hurricane Center Internet; National Weather Service; News and government; News and neighbors; News and Pinellas County; news and warnings; News and weather reports; News broadcasting; News broadcasts; News hype; News reports; News indicating the potential path of Milton; New; News; News; News; News; News; News; News; News Weather reports; News, hurricane center, text messages; News weather broadcasts; News weather reports; News weather reports emergency management; News, weather channel; News, weather forecast / predictions; Media; News reports on TV; Messages from NWS; News, State warnings; NHC; NHC reports; NOAA; NOAA; NOAA; NOAA; NOAA alerts; NWS updates via FB, tv/news; NOAA and meteorologist reports; NOAA; NOAA cone and surge protections; NOAA Hurricane map; NOAA data; NOAA Hurricane Center; NOAA Ruskin reports; NOAA weather; NOAA weather prediction; NOAA website, local news; NOAA, NHC bulletins; NHC/NOAA website; News, TV warnings; Local news meteorologist; Local news weather reports; Local news/FEMA; Local News; Local weather and NOAA; Local weather forecasts; Local news outlets, Television; Radio and television; Television and county warnings; Television and online; Television meteorologists; TV; TV and internet news; TV; TV and national weather service; TV news; TV news; TV news; TV weather updates; Warning on new; Weather reports; Weather channel; Weather Channel; Weather updates; Weather forecast; Weather forecasts; Weather forecasts; Weather forecasts and county warnings for wind & storm surge; Weather info on TV; Weather news; Weather reports; Weather reports; Weather reports; Weather reports; Weather reports; Weather reports; Weather reports of the severity of the storm; Weather reports on TV; Weather reports showing possible storm path; Weather reports that would not directly impact home; Weather Channel, local news weather, and trusted chaser social media reports;*

- *When mets said this could be a "vegetation" event. Nope. We left.*
- *When the local weathermen are evacuating their own families then I know it's time to go as well. We stayed for Helene but not Milton.*
- *When they said it was going to be wind driven rather than water I didn't want to risk staying*
- *When we thought it was coming ashore in Pinellas County I tried finding hotels in Jacksonville but no availability. Having a 93 year old dad who lives with me I decided it would be best to stay put and not panic.*
- *When we were ordered to evacuate my area, I follow directions. I had to transport one of my two pets to Estero the morning of Monday because I couldn't fly with two pets only one. I drove to Sarasota and relayed with my brother-in-law to take one of my two dogs. When I got back to Safety Harbor, I had a funny feeling and followed my gut and drove directly to the airport with my second dog and presented myself at the Southwest Airlines counter and said, I don't have a flight out until 9 AM tomorrow morning, but I'm here a day early because I'd rather leave early versus later and not have a problem. And they responded by saying, you don't know this yet, but your 9 AM flight is already been canceled. I ended up on four standby list and ended up purchasing the very last seat on a flight into New Haven Connecticut that night for over \$700 plus \$125 pet fee. It was exceedingly expensive but sometimes you have to spend the money.*
- *Where the storm was heading and flood surge*
- *Wind predictions given my house is surrounded by large trees. Wasn't sure I wanted to put myself through the stress of staying and being scared didn't want to stay home alone during the storm*
- *Wind, flooding, potential for great loss of life*
- *With Milton forecasted to make landfall south of us, we decided it'd be safest and least stressful for us and our dogs if we stayed home and hunkered down.*
- *Work emails telling what shifts to attend*
- *Work info, FEMA texts, the TV coverage*
- *Worse then Helene, storm surge above 15ft*
- *Yes, but we couldn't afford to leave*
- *Yes, the locals. When the long time locals are freaking out then time to get out of there. Denis Phillips made major cover as well*
- *You may die if you don't evacuate*
- *You waited too long to mandatory evacuate. It takes time to prep the house and pack up and a mandatory evac goes a long way with time off from work.*
- *Zone C under mandatory evacuation*

Q3. Do you have any additional comments you would like to mention about your experience with Hurricanes Helene and Milton?

Across the full set of open-ended survey comments, Pinellas County residents portray Hurricanes Helene and Milton as consequential events that recalibrated household risk perception, disrupted long-held assumptions about local hazard exposure, and exposed persistent constraints within evacuation and recovery systems. Collectively, respondents describe a marked shift from routine seasonal vigilance toward heightened concern about the plausibility of severe future impacts across the broader Tampa Bay region, even among those who experienced limited direct damage. Many participants explicitly characterize the 2024 season as a “wake-up call” that altered their tolerance for uncertainty and increased their motivation to adjust future protective actions (e.g., earlier evacuation, purchasing flood insurance, upgrading home hardening measures, acquiring generators or portable power systems), and in some cases, residents mention relocating out of evacuation or flood-prone zones.

A central narrative across comments is the perceived primacy of water-related hazards. Respondents repeatedly frame storm surge and flooding—rather than wind—as the most decisive and psychologically salient threat, emphasizing that both Helene and Milton produced impacts that exceeded expectations and extended beyond areas believed to be at risk. Multiple accounts reference flooding in neighborhoods that “*never flooded before*,” including locations outside mapped flood zones or on comparatively higher ground, reinforcing perceptions that existing risk delineations do not align with lived experience under increasingly extreme conditions. Residents describe rainfall-driven flooding and cascading failures in drainage and pump systems, with repeated attributions to infrastructure deficits (e.g., clogged canals and storm drains, inadequate pump capacity, retention pond problems) and to land-use and development patterns that are perceived to reduce stormwater absorption and exacerbate runoff. These observations contribute to a broader sentiment that localized flooding dynamics—both coastal surge and inland stormwater—require more explicit, nuanced communication and mitigation planning.

Furthermore, evacuation decision-making is depicted as both consequential and structurally constrained. While many respondents report following mandatory evacuation orders, especially those residing in Zone A or those with prior hurricane experience, the comments indicate that decisions are often “*rule-based*” and shaped by thresholds such as storm category, projected track, anticipated surge, home elevation, and housing type. At the same time, numerous households describe a decision environment characterized by uncertainty and tradeoffs: evacuating “*too early*” risks unnecessary cost and displacement if the forecast changes, while evacuating “*too late*” exposes residents to severe traffic congestion, fuel scarcity, and limited lodging availability. Barriers cited consistently include traffic gridlock, gasoline shortages, high hotel prices, scarcity of pet-friendly lodging, and limited shelter acceptability (including concerns about cleanliness, privacy, security, and pet separation). These constraints are especially acute for working households and essential personnel (e.g., hospital workers, public safety, school staff) whose professional obligations delay departure and compress preparation time. Comments further highlight the compounded complexity faced by households with disability, mobility limitations, medical equipment needs (e.g., oxygen), cognitive impairment, or fragility of older adults, with several respondents indicating difficulty obtaining timely, accessible information about evacuation transportation and in-shelter support—often describing reliance on self-navigation rather than coordinated assistance.

Information environments and trust emerge as a distinct and influential theme. Many residents describe relying on local meteorologists, county alerts, and NOAA products, often contrasting these sources with national media they perceive as sensationalized or inconsistent. However, the same respondents acknowledge that trusted sources can be wrong, and some express concern that low engagement with credible information (“*low-information consumers*”) undermines public compliance and increases responder risk. Participants also call for

messaging improvements that better convey storm impacts beyond the forecast “cone,” differentiate risk by hazard type (surge, rainfall flooding, wind, tornadoes), and translate risk into actionable guidance (e.g., when to cut power at the main breaker, lithium-ion battery precautions, and where vehicles can be moved to protected parking). A subset of residents also pointed out communication equity concerns, warning that digital-only approaches may miss older adults or residents without robust connectivity, and advocating for redundant non-digital outreach.

Post-storm recovery experiences strongly shape attitudes toward future evacuation compliance and institutional legitimacy. Respondents describe prolonged and uneven recovery marked by slow debris removal, extensive utility disruptions (electricity, potable water, sewer), delayed re-entry to barrier islands, and highly burdensome permitting processes for repairs and rebuilding. Several narratives portray permitting delays and re-entry restrictions as compounding losses by delaying remediation and increasing mold risk, while also generating secondary concerns about property security and looting. Insurance and federal assistance are described variably, but the dominant tenor reflects frustration with administrative complexity, perceived inconsistency, and the financial precarity of rebuilding—often framed as “*red tape*” that is more daunting than the storm itself. This experience contributes to documented intentions to leave the county or state, to seasonally relocate during peak months, or to shift toward “*shelter-in-place*” strategies predicated on enhanced home hardening and self-sufficiency when evacuation is perceived as infeasible.

When given a platform to share their thoughts, residents simultaneously illustrate community capacity and psychosocial strain. Many respondents report neighbor-to-neighbor assistance, local business support, and informal coordination (e.g., neighborhood groups) that helped fill gaps when formal systems were overstretched. Yet the emotional toll is persistent and pronounced, with residents describing trauma, prolonged displacement, grief, and anxiety about the upcoming season. The open feedback provided in these qualitative responses depicts a population recalibrating protective action decisions after experiencing atypical and compounding impacts from Hurricanes Helene and Milton, while identifying enduring system gaps—especially in evacuation timing and feasibility, flood and utility infrastructure performance, and recovery governance—that materially influence risk tolerance, trust, and future compliance.

Below are the verbatim survey responses provided by Pinellas County residents when asked: “***Do you have any additional comments you would like to mention about your experience with Hurricanes Helene and Milton?***” Comments displayed in red denote respondents who were living in a mandatory evacuation zone or a mobile home during Hurricane Helene and/or Hurricane Milton and did not evacuate for one or both storms.

- *A lot of people stayed for Helene, and I believe they'll never make the same mistake again.*
- *A member of my household is newly disabled. We had a difficult time getting information about evacuation transportation and in-shelter support for people with severe mobility issues. Ultimately, we had to figure things out on our own. The government (state and local) seems to be doing the bare minimum for people with disabilities in order to meet ADA requirements. The decision of whether to evacuate or not is very complicated when you have a disabled person in your household. Early and timely information is crucial, and this was not our experience.*
- *A serious media account needs to continue, we still have neighbors living in trailers in the driveway. Permit process is too long. FEMA should not have a say in build back, this responsibility belongs to the state not the federal government.*
- *A trusted source (local meteorologist) said during a pre-storm forecast, that Helene was not our storm. So, even trusted sources can be dead wrong. The decision to evacuate, or not, is deeply personal and inherently risky. If Helene and Milton failed to alter the risk tolerance of coastal residents, we are in big trouble going forward. The low information consumer of news poses a huge problem for emergency management.*

- *A very elderly relative made leaving more important, especially considering the potential lack of services after the storm. We now have impact windows thanks to My Safe Florida Home program. I am still very fearful of a large unstable oak tree above our house. My house now feels relatively safe other than the large tree which I cannot afford to have removed.*
- *After Milton, we purchased a portable power station with solar panels for charging since we were without power for 6 days. My husband uses oxygen at night so this was an absolute necessity.*
- *Again, I cannot stress enough that during Milton they closed the TPA airport way too early. Our evacuation methods are limited and forcing everyone to drive to evacuate is a huge mistake. I realize many folks who work at the airport also need to prepare, but often they don't know exactly what will happen until a few days ahead. To close the airport three days ahead of time was dangerous. Also, the response after the storm was ridiculous. Anyone affected substantially by the storm in Pinellas County was let down by our county. We will likely move out of this county because of that response.*
- *Again, quite sorry. My answers for Helene should be for Milton and vice versa. Perhaps you could clarify which one was which before the survey starts.*
- *All drainage canals must be maintained yearly in Pinellas County. Overgrowth limits proper drainage. Needs to have a higher priority than grass cutting.*
- *All homes/living quarters in evac zone A should be required to be on stilts or be 2+ stories.*
- *Allowing free access to public garages to move cars from homes in low lying areas would have likely saved the insurance companies a lot of money.*
- *Already mentioned earlier but our biggest learning last year was that our house can flood even though we aren't in a flood zone. We sustained serious damage and were out of the house for 3+ months due to repairs. Now that we know this, we will always evacuate for future storms. We have since bought flood insurance in case this happens again.*
- *Although relatively new to FL, I have had a lot of experience in the Pacific with typhoons and cyclones, I grew up in IN with regular tornado activity. The most accurate information is so helpful.*
- *Always run from water.*
- *Am in the process of moving from Clearwater to Orlando to be closer to our evac spot at our daughter's place. One great thing about it is that we will no longer have to evac via I-4. The trip for Milton took 5 hours each way -- typical time is just 2 hours.*
- *Areas that are in non-evacuation zones need to get more attention regarding upgrading our storm water systems. Many people who were on high ground were flooded unnecessarily.*
- *As a County employee I have an emergency job and cannot evacuate. With retirement around the corner, I will evacuate early to avoid last minute evacuees.*
- *As a hospital worker I cannot evacuate.*
- *As a Jehovah's Witness all my outlooks are influenced by the Bible. Romans 13:1 tells us to obey the government authorities, as long as it doesn't conflict with God's commands. Evacuation doesn't conflict. So since I live in evacuation zone A, we always leave when told to by local and state authorities.*
- *As long as we don't lose power, we'll mostly be ok where we are. Milton was more terrible because we had no power for a week. As a result, we are more prepared for the 2025 storm season.*
- *Be sure to talk to your neighbors, especially those who've lived in that neighborhood for more than 3 years. Ask how many times they've decided to evacuate during that time, previous flooding and where in the neighborhood homes AND streets that flood. Based on what you learn from them, are you yourself willing to experience the days/weeks/months of staying in a home or neighborhood that has experienced previous extreme flooding damage and will likely occur again.*
- *Because I don't live in an evacuation zone, and I saw all the traffic evacuating. I felt that it would be irresponsible and dangerous of me to get on the road and add to the problem of other people that actually had to evacuate.*
- *Because of the permit process made it so difficult to get back in our home we had to live in a trailer for 7 months when enough was enough went to the township they said it could be another 3-4 months I told them you are leaving us very vulnerable for this hurricane season so we decided to sell our family home of 48 years as is and we bought a home in a non-flood zone inland in the county.*
- *Before this season, I was more concerned with the surge rather than the wind itself. This concern was affirmed with this past year. Helene hit us hard from the surge, whereas Milton, a wind event, confirmed that our home is wind hardened well and we will continue to monitor the storm surge more so than the wind. Funny thing is*

that we pay through the nose for wind damage insurance disproportionately to the flood insurance. That will likely change this year.

- *Being activated for work makes it hard to prepare for evacuation.*
- *Being in evacuation A area we always evacuate and go to hotel or unaffected friend/relative's home due to 2 reasons. #1 We want to be out of the way of emergency personnel and law enforcement officials so they can do their jobs. #2 Weather situations can change so fast that there may not be time to evacuate as conditions deteriorate and we don't want to be in that situation and burden emergency services.*
- *Being in zone A, we get evac orders early. This isn't feasible for people who work or have kids in school. I get why they do it, but sometimes it is too early to determine if it is necessary.*
- *Being with family greatly reduced the stress. It was nearly impossible to comprehend the severity of this storm. So many others had come without doing anywhere near this much damage. We would have done more to prepare if we had known or believed how bad it would be. Life will never be quite the same.*
- *Both storms showed the power of AI in the right hands, as the Euro-AI models had both Helene and Milton make landfall within 15 miles of where projected even over a week out. That is extremely important for future forecasting, and I will be taking that model the most seriously going forward.*
- *Both storms validated our decisions to always leave Pinellas County when under the threat of a storm hitting our area either direct or indirect. We will always keep our family safe when told my officials. County officials closing schools should be made sooner so that jobs will allow people off work to evacuate sooner. Some corporate employers refused to allow their employees time off to evacuate which put us evacuating at the last minute, almost too late.*
- *Bought generator after Milton, got professional elevation certificate.*
- *Building up barrier islands and lands close to water isn't such a good idea. Physics will show that flooding is worse for all. Drop a gold ball into a glass of water and the water rises. Building up needs to stop, mitigation is now what is needed.*
- *Can't say enough about the city of Clearwater workers. I was amazed how quickly they turned this disaster around with cleanup, I thanked every one of them that I encountered. Great job.*
- *Can't say enough about the NOAA information updates, county emergency system, and Denis Phillips' calm forecasting and reporting.*
- *Caring for a severely cognitively impaired adult child affected my decisions tremendously. Special needs shelters are not an option due to noise and congestion of people. Additionally, as a public school teacher, I didn't feel it was proper for me to take off before schools were closed, which I would've needed to do to evac anywhere that I deemed best local, which was out of state and up north further than projected path and outlier storm effects. Additionally, I have a special health needs dog who probably would have died from heart problems with over excitement at any shelter we could've gone to. My cat was the most adaptable to any relocation. Finally, money was an issue as well.*
- *Cinderblock houses hold up remarkably well against hurricanes, but that may have just been us since we had so many trees, some of our trees took the hit instead of the house.*
- *Cities lack of infrastructure drainage and roads.*
- *City and county officials actions will get people killed in the future. None of the barrier islands were allowed to return how for multiple days with no communication on potential timing. I live in a newer construction elevated so I will now be unlikely to leave due to the city and counties previous actions. I can't be the only one.*
- *City needs better drainage.*
- *Cleanup/ navigating roads after the storm Milton due to debris was very challenging in Pinellas County.*
- *Clearly Coastal Cities were not prepared for severe impact of the flooding. Research should be done on Resilience and like it or not government needs to create tougher code on homeowners to bring properties up to hurricane code requirements.*
- *CNN is not trusted nationally, so including it in your written example for "National media (e.g., Weather Channel, CNN, etc.)" is a glaring mistake. Your language choices in the prompts focus on emotion instead of logical, rational thought. This will sway your participants into answering more dramatically than otherwise.*
- *Coming from California I'm always prepared for disasters and I feel like people who are from here o don't take the storms seriously enough. don't evacuate. After Helene people are taking it more seriously and That's a good thing. I just hope they don't forget and they actually evacuate. Worrying about friends in flood zones who decided to stay was stressful. Also figuring out a plan as information comes in is probably the hardest part. Everything changes so quickly. You have to always be prepared to stay or to go and decide based on the information at that*

- moment. With earthquakes you have no decision to make so you plan and respond. That's easier than with hurricanes. You never know if your choice is the right one until after the fact.
- Comments about potential death tolls prior to storm from community leaders is not helpful. I evacuated but was terrified for those that stayed because of those comments.
 - *Community bylaws changed to encourage all members in park to evacuate or pay penalties. It is a financial call more than a safety call.*
 - Concern that this is a trend for future storm seasons and whether remaining in Pinellas County is a good decision. We love our community and the idea of leaving presents its own challenges.
 - Concern that homes still haven't covered from 2024.
 - *Concerned about flooding in our neighborhood that we have never had before. New paving and new construction along with new US 19 seems to be causing flooding on our street. Cause for concerns as timing of hurricanes at the same time.*
 - Concerned about funding cuts and loss of critical scientists in NOAA for future storms. I was surprised that Tampa Bay seemed less prepared for the storm aftermath than I would have expected (debris removal in particular, communication plans) given its potential for hurricanes. We had several neighbors that rode out Helene & had to be rescued (at risk to the rescuers). No one in the neighborhood stayed during Milton. We hope it was a wakeup call but with neighborhood turnover after the damage, it may be short lived sadly.
 - Concerned about how there can be policies in place to avoid price hikes from hotels during storm evacuations. Also having set up of portable showers, laundry, food at the shelters the way they were available after the hurricanes - that would make decision to go to a shelter easier.
 - County and federal communications were great on apps also local weather people and their websites.
 - Currently looking for a new home. Absolutely will not buy in a flood zone.
 - Denis Phillips is a hero.
 - Denis Phillips was a HUGE HELP! Kudos to that man!!!
 - *Denis Phillips and Mike's Weather Page are the primary sources my family trusts when it comes to Weather and hurricane reporting. CNN, FOX, Weather Channel and other National News outlets tend to hype and fear monger. Denis and Mike are straight shooters who are fact-based and don't hype. Both keep me calm.*
 - Denis Phillips, Greg Dee, and Paul Dellegatto deserve every possible metrology award for their work informing Bay area residents during hurricane season. We are so incredibly lucky to have them here.
 - Despite living 0.25 miles from the edge of Tropicana Field's lot, our townhome did not experience a single extended power outage during Milton, which absolutely shocked us. Thankfully for us the most difficult part of that storm was the loss of water limiting showers and toilet usage. Milton's wind produced the most horrible, howling sounds I've ever heard as a nearly lifelong Floridian. My biggest takeaway from both storms: Knowing your zone is imperative to how you approach evacuating. I think newer Floridians should be more astute in their assessments before clogging the roads and buying up resources (gas, water). If you're in a well-built home and not at risk of flooding, it may be best for your community and household to stay put. But if you're in a flood zone, you absolutely must heed orders to evacuate seriously.
 - Did not expect or plan adequately for city utilities including electricity, sewer system and potable water to all be unavailable for 3+ days after Milton.
 - Difficult time post storm due to delay in allowance for owners to cross bridges to barrier islands to access their property and start mold remediation.
 - Disaster responders were very nice, but I hope no one has to go through disasters ever again.
 - Due to excessive rain fall my first floor condo slightly flooded. But was saved from water damage thanks to help of my neighbor in my building and some others nearby.
 - Due to overcrowding and development, and uneducated people with guns and lack of law enforcement never seen, and what happened with the looting, shootings, robbery's, and rape in New Orleans. I'm safer at home.
 - Due to these hurricanes and damage I sold my house and will move out of Florida.
 - During Milton we went to the Belair elementary school shelter and were very impressed with the organization and what was provided.
 - *During Milton, traffic was bumper to bumper. Gas and lodging were unavailable. I initially left with a neighbor. We turned around 7 hours later to return the 88 miles back home. Our homes were safer than being in my SUV on the road or in a parking lot without shelter.*
 - Dysfunctional permitting office for city of St Pete. STILL waiting for permit to repair home!!!!

- *During the hurricane I wish I had focused on what I could do for myself. Neighbors I knew were less prepared than I was. They took up all my thoughts and energy. It proved to be a waste of my time. After the hurricane, I have lost my rental home of 18 years and most of my personal property. I've been basically homeless for five months. Seven months after Milton my condo is still gutted. It's without floors, walls, counters, appliances, heat/AC. Almost all the neighbors are owner/snowbirds awaiting their condos to be repaired. It's like a ghost town. I live on Social Security. Only two months ago I found a mo-2-mo rental which is \$500 more per month than I paid before the hurricane. I have no furniture. I sleep on an air mattress. I cannot afford to buy all that I lost and am not able to start over. At 74 with no family help I will have a very difficult 2025 and beyond road ahead. I still believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior. He is the only reason I hang on. I hope you believe in Him too.*
- *Each storm is different. A category 1 moving slow can be as bad as a category 3 moving fast- combination of many factors but flooding we flee from.*
- *Each storm needs to be looked at on an individual basis to make an informed decision to stay or evacuate.*
- *Encourage companies with parking garages to allow anyone to park their cars avoid them getting flooded.*
- *Evacuated to the center of the state where we still lost power during Milton.*
- *Evacuating when storm surge became knee deep in 15 minutes was the scariest event of my life. Driving away from what was left of our home for hurricane Milton was almost freeing. We literally had nothing else to lose after Helene and had all that mattered. I had no idea what would come next. We've sold our home and moved out of the flood zone.*
- *Evacuation depends solely on the strength of the storm. We had hardened our home with a new metal roof, had our trees pruned for the storm, built wood shutters for the windows, and installed a generator prior to the storms. We have a hurricane stash to last 14 days at least. Hurricanes are a fact of life in Florida.*
- *Evacuation for me still depends on the strength of the storm and projected landing. Too often over the past 30 years, I've seen friends evacuate only to have the storm change and hit the safe locations. It's so unpredictable that it is extremely stressful.*
- *Evacuation really boils down to financial, transportation and availability at shelters.*
- *Evacuation routes are inadequate in Florida. Have lived in Florida all our lives. We are aware that a powerful hurricane can cross the state and affect a large population. Traffic congestion is unacceptable.*
- *Evacuation routes for Helene was horrible. We drove north on I 75 at 5 mph for 3 hours. We did appreciate the opening of the shoulder lanes for use to help move traffic, however, it didn't really impact the flow.*
- *Evacuation zones don't seem to take into account those of us on higher floors in hurricane-safe buildings. We would much rather sleep in our own bed and eat protein bars and shelf-stable snacks, without power, than go somewhere, where the power might also go out. Our power has never been out for more than 24 hours and we can handle that. Our Milton evacuation took 8.5 hours to drive what is normally 2. We were gone for 9 days when we hadn't expected to be gone. We'd rather not go through that again. We understand the city was concerned about the sewer system - it is problematic that we live somewhere where hurricanes are prevalent and our utility systems can't handle it.*
- *Evacuating with a pet is still extremely difficult. Due to back issues it's hard to go to a shelter and hotels still enforce their no pet policies. Then having experienced a hotel cancelling my reservation days before the storm left us wondering if we can rely on hotels to keep our reservation.*
- *Even though I evacuated for Hurricane Helene I expected to come back to a completely dry home. I could have prepared better by raising more items off the floor. Thank you for conducting this survey. I live on a barrier island. Very few of my neighbors evacuated for Helene. Many were scrambling for higher ground during the storm. After Helene most evacuated for Milton. Having 2 cats and evacuating by myself was difficult, but navigating storm surge for higher ground with 2 cats in tow as water entered my ground floor home would have been more difficult. That is a situation I never want to experience.*
- *Even though I KNOW the size of the cone does not represent the size of the storm, and I KNOW the impact of the storm can extend past the edge of the cone, I still underestimated the fact that REALLY SERIOUS IMPACTS could and would occur outside the cone. I wish the area of impact were shown instead of, or alongside, the cone, because that graphic still misleads my judgement, even though I know better.*
- *Even though we are in zone X, flooding occurred within a mile or so of our home. A stronger surge, we'd have had water, I believe. Biggest hindrance to evacuation other than too much traffic, not enough exit options, gas supply. By the time we decided to leave, 24 hours before the storm, gas supplies were exhausted at too many*

- stations. We had to wait days to head back home after the storm because we weren't sure we could find gas to complete the trip.
- Even though we don't have to evacuate I hope I never have to go through what happened in 2024 again. It was just horrible.
 - Even with no damage to our home, these storms take an incredible toll on mental health and family health. It took us weeks to recover emotionally.
 - Every storm is different, and they should be treated as such. We live where things can change in an instant. Just stay prepared and do what's best for you and your family.
 - Everyone is focused on dogs but if you have cats hotels won't let you stay due to allergies. Not going to a shelter.
 - Faster assistance required for those with extreme damage.
 - FEMA is useless.
 - FEMA response and County improvement in resources needed
 - *FEMA sucks.*
 - FEMA was awful and inconsistent with their \$\$ and knowledge
 - *FEMA was helpful. City was not.*
 - *Flood insurance is a complete waste of money*
 - *Flood waters are so devastating. Understanding risk of surge is helpful to better prepare*
 - *Flooding during hurricane Milton inspired us to add integrated (but removable) flood barriers our home. Had we done so earlier, I am confident we would have sustained much less damage.*
 - For Helene, we evacuated a day before ordered because of concern for hotel availability. Having some financial resources makes it possible to leave and find safe shelter. During Milton, as we were leaving the area, medical issues landed my husband in Morton Plant Hospital. It was a safe place to be in the storm but was not our intended destination. Also, insurance failed to cover damage from wind-driven rain and FEMA was slow to respond and of very limited help in covering damage that exceeded 100k and substantial rental costs. We expect to move away within a few years if the Trump administration climate-denial antics don't kill us before then.
 - For me, I prefer to sleep feeling safe. I don't need to be brave so I bounce.
 - For Milton I was already out of the country for a pre planned trip. But I had my cats evacuated.
 - For our home the biggest challenge was loss of power.
 - For people in evacuation zones, open shelters early. Stick to ONE EVACUATION TIME!!!!
 - *Forecast broadcast was incorrect and meteorologists knew both storms would follow a different track and bring effects to areas that were not being called out on the graphics or discussion. ALL weather data should be included in forecasting and info should be reflected in what is provided to the public.*
 - Forecasters repeat the philosophy of "run from the water, hide from the wind" with regard to evacuation. But this only refers to the time of the storm itself. Most folks do not apply the same thought process to the storm aftermath. If the storm is likely to cause widespread utility outages, people should consider running from the wind as well.
 - Fortunate both turned and Lealman didn't turn into Ft Myers beach. St Pete should separate from duke and run the electricity from within the municipality for better reliability and recovery post storm.
 - Found out how connected Oldsmar community was, in the aftermath of both storms. The city organized cleanup efforts, organized feeding people, later organized sharing resources, swap meets for Xmas.
 - Gas shortage after Milton.
 - Gas stations aren't prepared for last minute evacuees.
 - *Good planning can help save your life and your possessions.*
 - *Grateful for being spared.*
 - Had our windows not been boarded up with plywood, multiple windows would have broken. Helene broke our Mango tree in half - Milton pushed it almost sideways. We had over 18 inches of rain in less than 24 hours, trees almost uprooted, the house felt moist after. Luckily we stayed, the wind pushed rainwater THROUGH and underneath our door, we were able to put up a tarp to mitigate water damage. Lost power for 5 days, lost water for 7 days. Even though we are in a NO FLOOD ZONE, the amount of rain flooded our yard and garage with a few inches of water.
 - Had the cities/counties been up to date on their inspections of pumps and batteries and generators, I would not be in this situation. If they had not overbuilt the south of Gandy area, there would not have been such flooding damage. Had the mangroves not been removed we would have seen much less damage. This should have been part of their protocol.

- *Had to drive very far due to availability of affordable hotel.*
- *Having been in the same area for many years, it is not hard to recognize the climate is changing. Hopefully this area will have a gentler hurricane season in 2025.*
- *Having experienced several hurricanes over the years we knew what and when to do what we needed. Mike's Weather Page is extremely helpful. Yes, we know he's not a Meteorologist, but he's extremely knowledgeable. It also helps that his site is full of all the links to various government agencies and he explains what you're viewing.*
- *Having water supplies from FEMA was extremely helpful but I was concerned about safety of the water because I don't know the origins and was hoping they containers were not products of China.*
- *Helene caught a lot of people off guard with the storm surge. The power situation with Milton was insane. glad it is over looking forward to whatever fresh hell next season brings.*
- *Helene was not a direct impact but greatly affected the coast of Pinellas County and low lying areas. Places are still destroyed. Hurricane Milton brought widespread power outages, downed trees, and structural damage more inland as well as to my home. The wind was trying to rip my front door open and we had to hold it inwards with a rope tied to the handle for an hour and a half when the eye was just 20 miles south of me.*
- *Helene was not an issue to me as my home is 73 feet above sea level. The property slopes down from the home to all sides of the property and has excellent drainage. I was very concerned for Milton as I am only 1.5 miles from the coast and was worried about the winds.*
- *Helene was somewhat of a surprise in terms of the amount of flooding and surge. It would have been nice to understand that we could move vehicles to parking areas inland to avoid loss due to storm surge. The information before the storm was adequate, however we have lived through many storms with same warnings and had no problems. They predicted 8-12 ft storm surge and it was correct, just hard to comprehend and prepare for that.*
- *Helene was the first hurricane that changed my perspective on risk. We live in an elevated concrete home and have always felt very safe, and always plan to be self reliant for many days if needed. But Helene opened our eyes to risks and problems we had never considered prior to this hurricane. We had 14-18" in our lower 'non-living' space, which was the first time we ever had water breach the seawall, and had about 7-7.5' of water over mean low water.*
- *Helene was the worst. People need to take their pets and leave. We did. It is just stuff. Your life and the life of your pets is what matters.*
- *Helene wasn't near as scary as Milton. If ever a hurricane were to come that was much stronger than Milton, I would more than likely consider evacuating at that point only because I don't think Pinellas nor Hillsborough County can handle a stronger storm than that. Ian or something stronger than Milton would decimate Pinellas*
- *Hide from wind run from water. don't have to evacuate far to be out of harms way.*
- *Highways should reverse the traffic flow away from the evacuation area to help with traffic jam and delays. Expand the highway lanes to more lanes and only one line going to the evacuation area.*
- *Hopefully they were statistical outliers and will be fewer and farther between, and less intense. Being reasonably well informed only goes so far in dealing with disaster events.*
- *Hotels not having generators and telling you that you have to leave in the middle of the hurricane if they lose power with no other place to go.*
- *How previous storms like Ian didn't make huge impacts made people not take it as seriously as they should have. A lot of inland cities had no idea what damage Helene actually caused to coastal cities. It really was night and day after you cross the causeways or bridges to the barrier islands. Milton people took very seriously.*
- *Hurricane Helene was 100 miles away from the Pinellas County coastline, and yet its storm surge devastated the entire 25 miles strip from Fort DeSoto north beyond Clearwater. Historically, when has this ever happened before? Most people may have been lulled into thinking it was offshore so far, they didn't need to worry. We were out of state and not returning until 10/16, so we were safe but very surprised at the extent of the damage. We live in a condo with no dwellings on the ground floor. Our garage was inundated and our car totaled after being filled with saltwater and sand, which took 2 days to dig out. Our condo grounds were destroyed. Our entire Sand Key Island was devastated and will take years to recover.*
- *Hurricane Helene was the first time not evacuating. Will NEVER not evacuate, the risks are too great.*
- *Hurricane Milton was the first storm to cause damage to my home. My roof leaked so badly that I lost ceilings on both the first and second floors. So much water came in where the wall meets the ceiling on the second floor the carpet was drenched and a day or so later I saw part of my first floor ceiling coming down. The roof was less than 2 years old. I blame that on the condo association going for cheapest bidder. We only got the roof*

- repaired a few months ago! I'm waiting for heavy rain to decide if the roof is really fixed and I can repair the ceilings and 2nd floor hallway.
- Hurricanes are less scary when other people are around. I would rather evacuate somewhere than be alone at home.
 - I am 83 years old with no car. I have two parrots, I cannot take them to a shelter so I will not evacuate.
 - I am more cautious/anxious than most, but I do consider myself fairly well-informed and able to assess risk properly.
 - I am on my emergency response team for work and coordinate with city officials
 - I am required to work during emergencies, so this factored into decisions to evacuate my family.
 - I am still unlikely to evacuate for anything under a 4. With a safe house its safer to stay home and leave the resources for the most vulnerable.
 - I am very well-versed with WX dangers and was a long time Skywarn spotter in Minnesota
 - *I am writing to express my concerns regarding the evacuation process on October 7 at 1 PM. When we attempted to evacuate from Saint Petersburg with our truck and RV, we decided to head north towards Perry. However, while driving on US 19, we encountered severe traffic congestion and a lack of traffic light coordination, which caused us to travel only 25 miles in almost 4 hours. The only city on US 19 that had a coordinated effort was the city of Chiefland. They had mass amounts of law-enforcement on the streets and they were rushing people through their city. I found that very interesting that a small city like that could do something and Pinellas County did nothing. I believe Pinellas County and Pasco County should have coordinated together on how to get people out of here much quicker and get them to the north as fast as possible. I understand this takes a lot of coordination. But we feel there was a major lack of this. I hope that this feedback will be taken into consideration for future evacuation planning.*
 - I believe the city said our zone, A, had to evacuate at least a full day prior to the storm. I don't understand that logic. Everyone is trying to prepare and do things in their house so no one's going to leave that early.
 - I can't evacuate with 4 dogs and an adult daughter with a disability. You never asked if we are scared going into 2025 season. Very!
 - I could use some hands on help gathering the supplies, clothing, bedding, etc. to prepare for an evacuation.
 - I did my best to answer. Was not in FL for Helene but was there immediately after. Homeowner but snowbird in PA for Helene.
 - I did not evacuate during Helene as I'm in Zone E. Milton was a direct path that I knew could be catastrophic so we did evacuate for Milton.
 - *I did not go to the shelter at Largo High School because I tried to go there once during the 2023 storm season. It was dirty, disorganized, unprepared, and scary. I do NOT trust the Largo area Emergency Management team AT ALL. I find them vapid and unprepared. I have a background in Emergency Management and am extremely disappointed in Pinellas County, St. Pete, and Largo's response before and after. I felt safer in my mobile home that I did at a shelter.*
 - I do not have cable so was relying on social media, online information but really believe there should be a free, user friendly channel that gave local information. I am lucky enough to be mobile to evacuate but many in the community did not have assistance, community should provide assistance.
 - I do not regret leaving for Milton even though I'm in a non-evac zone. Our power was back on by the time we got back. We had fence and soffit damage but the house held. I'm glad we moved off the beach in 2018 to higher elevation. We knew it was just a matter of time. I will not stay for a cat 3 or higher.
 - I do think that if there's a potential, in the future, we had major water concerns with Helene but when Milton came that was less of a concern. I think that was a really important distinction that the media did a good job of detailing ahead of the storms. It's important to realize that not all storms are the same and not all will have the same major effects.
 - I don't evacuate because it takes too long to get back in.
 - I don't ever want to go thru back to back hurricanes again. The stress level was off the charts.
 - *I don't think anyone predicted the amount of flooding that St. Pete would be from Helene. No one's fault per se, but it certainly opened up a lot of (native) people's eyes.*
 - *I don't think storm surge was talked about enough. Everyone talks about where the storm is hitting, but outside of that, areas are highly affected with storm surge. That needs to be talked about more because it causes massive damage, including inland areas.*
 - I feel very fortunate and I really hope that St. Pete and Tampa do not get a direct hit this year.

- *I feel we (the county) didn't think the hurricanes were going to do as much damage as they did. And for what It's worth, FEMA is a joke. Some people in my park had minimal damage and got tons of money. Others like me who lost everything, house and contents got the bare minimum. Filed an extension last November. I'm still getting no where. It's pathetic.*
- *I felt very informed by using Mike's Weather Page and Daily Blasts. He lives in my town so It's like having my own personal, knowledgeable weather monitor.*
- *I follow the updates, and I hate the warnings. My intent is to preserve my life in the lives of my animals. No excuses.*
- *I greatly appreciate all the information available during Hurricane season so I can make an informed decision about staying or evacuating.*
- *I have a problem with the media treating It's reporting on approaching storm as entertainment and meteorologists behaving like celebrities and not weather men.*
- *I have a stilt home but we have to get cars out of the flood zone. All of our downstairs storage and shed equipment was ruined. It took 3 days for water to recede and a week for power to be restored, several weeks for cable/internet.*
- *I have a very healthy respect for the damage hurricanes can do after these.*
- *I have a whole house generator.*
- *I have followed wind mitigation guidance: I have door/window coverings, a reinforced and braced garage door, braced gable ends, strengthened soffit, updated roofing to current code (nailed down decking, secondary peel n stick membrane, had metal roof installed), I have solar power with a battery backup, and also a gas powered generator. I am not in a flood zone, but I am very close to one. I am only a few houses west of houses that are not in an evacuation zone.*
- *I have some experience working storms as a mandatory staff over my career so I rely heavily on what I learned over the years.*
- *I hope this shows people to PREVENT and not PREPARE now because of the severity and timeline of the storms it was a historical event and we as humans should never be too comfortable with the earth and Mother Nature*
- *I learned that my home can sustain a 7 foot storm surge.*
- *I learned that my property is not susceptible to flooding and is capable of enduring high winds. My biggest concern is a tree falling onto my house.*
- *I live across the street from where Dunedin had their temporary FEMA debris site- so there was a field of hurricane projectiles across from my house when Milton was heading for us- just a little more insight about our Milton evacuation situation.*
- *I live in a 55+ community with many frail neighbors. Their fear and my inexperience with hurricanes unduly influenced me to evacuate at great financial expense. I will not leave again.*
- *I live in an extremely stable building and I am not in a flood zone. I expect to lose power after a storm. But I was really shocked to lose water and particularly sewer services.*
- *I live in an older part of Pinellas County. After Irma, a few years ago, our power was out for more than a week. We stayed at home for 4 days but moved to a hotel after that. Since then, we bought a generator. After Milton, our power was out but our generator made things much easier. As did the portable AC unit we bought for the bedroom.*
- *I lived in Miami during Hurricane Andrew and did not evacuate. I will always evacuate for a Category 4 or higher.*
- *I never really understood why the news always recommended having drinking water. However, our tree broke our water main and we were then without water for 3 days. The same thing happened to another friend, and they were without water even longer. In the future, I will have more bottled water on hand. I think we may be more likely to evacuate in the future after going through hurricane Milton.*
- *I never want to be as close as we were to Milton.*
- *I never want to go through this again (only 2 feet of flooding) and am considering selling my first floor condo once prices (hopefully) come up again in a few years. Praying that the next few years we are spared.*
- *I purchased my home in 6/24 based on its location 70 above sea level. The house I sold was 6 above sea level and was flooded.*
- *I relied on Dennis Phillips with ABC news for honest communication and I appreciate the county and emergency notifications and updates, I am grateful to the Largo Public Library for the public charging stations they set up as I was without power for several days after Milton. I wish that emergency management services could handle*

the majority of staffing at shelters so the burden doesn't fall on school district employees; the district provides the shelters, but it's a lot to tell people to risk their lives in a disaster and if they don't, then they are fired - especially when they didn't sign up for emergency management - we aren't first responders.

- *I relied the most on local weather broadcasts. The storm surge magnitude and probability were not communicated correctly. Either they were misinformed by their sources, or they just flat out communicated it incorrectly.*
- *I replaced my windows and cut down trees that were broken or damaged.*
- *I saw many people take unnecessary risks with their safety and their property by not evacuating. This was due to non belief or laziness. Loss of property could have been reduced. I have always planned and expected the worse. I owned a condo in a non evac area that I purchased a couple of years before. It was a wise choice and allowed me to have a temporary home until I was able to purchase a new home, which is also in a non evac area. I wish to never experience flooding again!!!*
- *I sold my house this year and am moving out of state. Too stressful as a single homeowner here to prep, maintain, repair a home in these weather conditions.*
- *I strongly recommend that all new residents be required to take a hurricane preparation course within 3 months of moving here. People who have never experienced one or have never seen the impact often do not prepare.*
- *I think a lot of people underestimated Hurricane Helene b/c it was 100 or so miles out in the Gulf; we have had storms like that previously with no great effects to the Clearwater area. Also, the storm surge predictions for Helene were high (which proved to be correct) but storm surges during previous storms had not been as high as predicted so any number of people discounted the predictions for Helene, sometimes with fatal results.*
- *I think it's extremely confusing for my friends or family that live out of state to understand evacuation orders. From my understating, these orders are mostly put into place for flooding events and not wind events. I am not in an evacuation zone so to hear the news saying "you will die if you don't leave" is very confusing as technically I would never be told to leave. I am a new homeowner so this was also my first season owning, so I had the uncertainty of how the house would handle storms.*
- *I think Largo leadership ensured we were informed will b4, during and awesome clean up. I feel safe here. At ties local TV was over the top and it caused you to disregard some of their message. Awesome survey. Good luck and thanks.*
- *I think news stations need to stop hyping stuff that isn't that bad so that people will take them more serious when it could be. Putting workers outside that don't need to be, standing people in puddles to scare people on flooding that doesn't come or covering the worse of areas that fall apart during normal rainstorms doesn't give people an accurate picture of the situation and causes people who take things serious, to start rethinking how they look at the situation or become more complacent in their approach.*
- *I think one area that needs to be improved upon is the speed at which debris was recovered after Helene. Our neighborhood experienced significant flooding damage in Milton due to the large amount of debris that was still blocking drainage. The large amount of rainfall ended up backing up and flooded several homes that aren't in flood zones.*
- *I think people didn't quite understand the impact of a storm surge. They said if you flooded during Ian you will flood with Helene but the amount of flooding was significantly different. Been through several floods that normally came from intracoastal but just didn't expect the amount of water we got from Helene. We watched the storm from third floor balcony and saw the power of the water as it flooded our entire community.*
- *I think the governor, state emergency manager, Pinellas County emergency site, and Pinellas County sheriff did a great job communicating appropriately for level of storms.*
- *I tried to get a generator, but all were sold out for miles. Also after, with no electricity the gas stations were so full, I even had friends that couldn't get gas for their generators. I work near downtown clearwater and the company was open. There were no orders to close down companies so I had to go to work and wasn't able to do that much on preparations. I couldn't afford to take time off.*
- *I was born in St. Pete and have lived here and experienced hurricanes for over 60 years, and nothing scared me until 2024! I am even more scared for the future, the increase from climate change and the lack of funding from our federal government.*
- *I was extremely lucky.*
- *I was hesitant to evacuate, know how long the sheriff's office keeps the island closed after an evacuation. Many of my neighbors who stayed didn't want to leave knowing we wouldn't be let back on the island for days and days.*

- *I was most shocked about the amount of flooding from Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Our home is located over 40' above sea level and we had water almost enter our home. This is the first time that I have seen a storm that has caused that much water to impact our location.*
- *I was not concerned about Helen prior, hindsight we should have evacuated due to losing power. I was very concerned about Milton and somewhat scared. I am nervous for the upcoming season.*
- *I was on vacay in another state for Helene.*
- *I was prepared, have hurricane windows, townhouse designed to hurricane standards and had food, water and generator. I will be improving my storm surge protection in future with barriers. I will evacuate if storm surge predictions exceed the capabilities of the house.*
- *I was shocked that the city had NO REBUILD PLAN WHATSOEVER.*
- *I will continue to not evacuate due to work requirements. However, my wife will evacuate if necessary.*
- *I will evacuate as long as I continue to live in an evacuation zone.*
- *I will evacuate if it is ordered.*
- *I will not do this again. If my home floods, I will walk away. I will not deal with the county, insurance, mortgage, contractors, and lack of materials ever again. I have PTSD from the aftermath, not the storm itself.*
- *I will reiterate how incredibly angry I was that Pinellas County dropped the ball so badly with Helene. I live less than half a mile from homes that had trees through the roof and three feet of water in them, and they did not issue even a recommended evacuation. I have always followed mandatory evacuation orders and take evacuation recommendations very seriously as well. I now know that I cannot depend on my county to keep me informed of the risks.*
- *I wish a comparison was made from Helene to Debby on Local/National news outlets. Helene was 100's of miles off the coast, yet caused so much damage. Milton we lost part of the fence and the storm drains backed up.*
- *I wish that the large hotel chains would offer discounted prices to people that are endangered. It would be easier for many people to get away from the danger.*
- *I work before, during, and after the storms and my household is prepared to be self-sufficient in response to a storm, but we have identified thresholds when my household should evacuate.*
- *I work for a local City Government so I'm considered an essential employee and had to return to work on the Thursday as Milton exited Florida while coming back from Orlando. I disagreed with my department's decision to bring staff in that early (9 am).*
- *I work for a municipality and am no longer permitted to go more than an hour away so evacuation is not much of an option.*
- *I work for Pinellas County, I will never work in a storm shelter as they are very unsafe. I have decided to find another job based on how the county responded to hurricane Milton.*
- *I work in a hospital and was on pre/post emergency response team, so I could not evacuate very far, we evacuated in town to a higher location. Otherwise, we likely would have evacuated to another state. In another year I may have been on the rideout team and my family would have evacuated without me.*
- *I work in healthcare and cannot evacuate due to being required to work through the hurricanes.*
- *I worry about being unable to get home when I need to for work if I evacuate. During Milton, debris that hadn't been cleared from Helene caused significant flooding on my street. This meant we couldn't leave in our cars for 3 days, and we didn't have full power for 7 days, partial after 5 days. I would love to shout out the Pinellas County library and rec centers for their support during that time.*
- *I would definitely evacuate if I still lived in a flood zone. I never want to experience rising water coming into my house immediately after the city released all that untreated sewage. It's all we could smell as we tried to extra secure plastic and sandbags at our front door to slow some water. It was disgusting, do not recommend staying if you're in Zone A.*
- *I would have stayed with Helene. If I was not out of town when it hit. The reentry time on our island controlled by local authorities is too long and those that stayed on the island in their homes had a great advantage to reducing damage by immediately cleaning up and drying out their flooded homes. The city takes too long to allow homeowners reentry many people chose to stay. We have special passes for residents but they never allow us on prior to the public so a program not worth the pass it's printed on. I'll only leave if it looks like a Cat four and above with a near landfall hit to my town.*
- *I would like for HOA organizations to allow residents of communities to be allowed to mitigate damage to their homes by taking preventive actions- hurricane shutters, flood barriers, mitigate water drainage systems in the*

communities, such as clean out storm drains and dredge ponds so water can drain and does not back up into homes as what happened during Helene.

- *I would move only if there was a place as strong as this one that was further from the water. The water did not come into our garage/parking area but did come close. I will probably move my car farther away next time.*
- *I would prefer that the news media try their best to not put the fear of God in everyone, just state the facts as you know it.*
- *I would say the information provided was very solid. I would say the decision to evacuate or depend upon a storm because every storm is different and what's expected. We live in a zone sea with brand new hurricane rated windows and a brick block building and repairs have been made where the water came in. What I would suggest is when it comes to evacuation that airlines and modes of transportation be added to a gouge list because we looked at New Jersey and they wanted \$3000 which makes it cost prohibitive to escape to save your life and that's ridiculous. People should not have to make those kind of decisions about if they can afford to leave or not.*
- *I would send my family away if a cat 4-5 hit near our area. I am required to work during hurricanes. I know many in the community complained of delayed evacuation notices because their work would not let them leave until they had a mandatory evacuation of their home. By the time it was called it was too late to prep, evacuate, or roads congested. Many in very low-lying areas thought for some reason flooding would not happen even though consistent forecast for days (better than usual). Need good messaging about moving EV cars, golf carts, bikes and scooters out of flood areas. There were many fires due to that. Need to let people know areas they can move their cars to park during the flooding. Coordinate with shopping centers and malls outside flood prone areas. During Helene many did not move their cars and they flooded. Milton shopping center parking lots off the coast were full. Municipal, state and county lots to park them at may be a good idea as well. Closed landfills might be a good option. Maybe need signs stating no liability of the host location. Persons insurance would cover any incurred damages.*
- *If I had been alone, as single woman, I probably wouldn't have evacuated. Having a relatively positive shelter experience (PHMS, Palm Harbor) with my partner, I may decide to go to a shelter solo.*
- *If I were still living in that house, I would evacuate next time. Now we live in an apartment, so it's mostly about moving our cars to higher ground.*
- *If there is even a chance of flooding, move vehicles to higher ground. Insurance is an absolute scam.*
- *I'll consider if a 4+ comes our way other than that we are good.*
- *I'm concerned about the impact of budget cuts and NOAA/NHS's ability to respond during this storm season.*
- *I'm not sure how people who can't afford to pay their rent or buy groceries are going to be able to evacuate. And add in the stress of having pets, this is its own disaster within a disaster.*
- *I'm now looking for a seasonal home outside FL and might leave the state altogether. My best friend died in Milton and I just don't want to do this dance anymore. Even if we "summer bird" elsewhere, it still leaves us with worry about the house we own in FL.*
- *I'm very concerned about the cuts to NOAA and the impacts to hurricane forecasting.*
- *IMHO, there is a ton of info out there, but as we saw in our own mobile home park, a significant number stayed, even after we lost a member of our own community during Milton. I do not know how you get through to them. We are an over 55 community, and many just do not want to leave property or pets. No coaxing done by myself or others sways them. It is a challenge for sure.*
- *Important to shut off power.*
- *In 2024 I was in a non-evac, non-flood zone. Due to financial reasons, I had to move in with family who are in Evac Zone B, and were the only house that did not flood AT ALL during Helene on our street. This changes my decision-making because I need to account for the differences in zones, but at the same time I have real concrete evidence of what is likely to happen in this area I moved to because of the previous storms.*
- *Information on status of evacuation routes (congestion and fuel availability) is too limited to make a sound decision. Determining a preferred direction of evacuation because of uncertainty in storm track is very difficult and there is little guidance given by forecasters or authorities on this.*
- *Infrastructure to support evacuations and people not having to evacuate was absolutely horrible. Our building has caused high issues for roads, water or electricity demands.*
- *Invest in Solar powered traffic signals at major intersections by cities.*
- *Ironically, our experiences with these storms made us more confident about our ability to weather future hurricanes. But that is because we live "high and dry" at 70 ft above sea level and have invested in house hardening, and these investments withstood the ultimate test. We did not even lose power or Internet and ended*

up hosting family members who lost power in the storms' aftermath. Others without our means were not so fortunate. I would like to see strengthened programs to help low and moderate income residents to harden their homes.

- It appeared that locally some of the potential impacts of Helene (i.e. it was so far off shore) were downplayed in local news and govt. It's why most of our friends stayed to their dismay.
- It feels to me, when people don't want to evacuate for hurricanes it's for one of four reasons. 1. They're relatively new to the experience and seem curious. They want to experience the drama first hand. 2. They think they can control the storm, that it "won't be that bad", or they can just "ride it out". 3. They think they can save their home, don't want to leave their home, or don't want to get a hotel. 4. Some people simply cannot afford to get a hotel or Airbnb, or they are essential workers and cannot leave. For me, there's never a choice. We always leave. I have been through too many storms and hurricanes to want to stay for a front row seat.
- It has changed our neighborhood.
- It is a very stressful decision to decide whether or not to evacuate during a hurricane when your home is in a non-evacuation zone. Evacuating to a hotel in another city adds an additional layer of complexity to the situation: not only coordinating the reservations/finding a place, but then dealing with the traffic and fuel scarcity. It makes you think - 'am I safer to stay put at home or should I risk it to go somewhere there will not be storm impacts'. It is also costly to evacuate and praying we do not have to deal with again in 2025.
- *It is better to be alive - listen to the news reports.*
- It is important for local government to start messaging early about the possibility of losing water and sewer. this was the first time in 10 years I lost both - preparing for a sewer outage is different than a water outage.
- It is making me reassess living in Florida after I retire in a few years. Thinking about my options because I don't think I could recover financially if I suffered damage like my neighbors did when I'm not working.
- It is not necessarily fear that you would not survive a storm it is whether or not you would want to live in the aftermath of the storm that drives decisions to evacuate.
- It is taking way too long to recover after the storm due to government interference, insurance not fully paying claims and poor FEMA support.
- It took a week for my power to come back on after Milton. We visited rec centers in St. Petersburg to charge up our cell phones and get some snacks and bags of ice.
- It only takes one storm to experience and see the effects of to make people realize the power of hurricanes and the damage they cause. Once you see this first hand you will see how important it is to follow evacuation orders and the preparation before a Hurricane arrives. Preparing is key to protect your property and evacuating yourself before a storm arrives to stay safe.
- It took us 7 hours on the "back roads" (US-19, US-98, US-27) to get to Tallahassee.
- It sucked but we were prepared. What we were not prepared for was how horribly the city of St. Petersburg would handle the permitting process for repairs. We still have not been able to make repairs. We thought our risk was some short term pain while we did repairs, not 7+ months of agony waiting for permission to do so.
- *It was a terrifying season. My husband is 80 and refused to leave our bottom floor condo until the water started coming in. We had to make it to the neighbors condo upstairs with the dog. When Milton was going to hit, there was no way we were staying.*
- It was a wake-up call! May consider evacuating in the future due to power outages.
- It was really difficult to evacuate with animals. I think if you don't evacuate, there should be some way to pair people with a neighbor in the community so people aren't alone.
- It was traumatizing and an extraordinary effort to recover the home and property. It was extremely expensive to rebuild and hire the professionals needed to rebuild a roof, interior damages, remove downed trees, etc...we stayed in our damaged home with a tree that came through the roof into the interior of the home and without power. It has taken six months to get back to any sense of normal. And now we are on the cusp of hurricane season 2025. With our president dismantling FEMA and social networks it feels very threatening.
- It was very helpful to have hints and recommendations from those who have experienced hurricanes prior, and having a checklist of those in addition to adding items from personal experience gave a sense of control and preparation that alleviated most of the stress.
- It was very stressful for us as a family and being new to Florida.
- It would be great if the state or federal government could help subsidize ways to survive the aftermath of a hurricane, suggest as heavy discounts on generators, portable a/c units, refrigerators, etc.

- *It would be helpful if the airport did something differently, like deciding ahead of earlier when they're going to close OR not scheduling flights after they were going to close. I've Lived here a long time and studied weather maps looking at when tropical force winds would be arriving, so I could predict when I thought the airport would close. I don't WANT TO LEAVE UNNECESSARILY. This time they really surprised me by closing so early before Milton.*
- *It would be helpful to see where tornadoes develop along path of a hurricane. Lots of focus on landfall. It would also be helpful to see flood zones on evacuation routes. More information on where to temporarily relocate a car. Hotels need to be better prepared for power outages. Our hotel lost power, we evacuated and the halls were dark with no emergency lighting.*
- *It's all about the flooding, you cannot run from it. That is the biggest risk.*
- *It's been 6 months and still feeling the trauma of Milton.*
- *It's difficult to make decisions until days before but then hotels are sold out or overpriced. I wish there was a better way for the government to control the hotel pricing during emergencies.*
- *I've live in Florida my whole life. I lived on the East Coast during the 04-05 hurricane season.*
- *I've lived in Florida my whole life and this was the most impacted I have ever been. I am fearful for the 2025 season. I know my structure is secure but the damage to St Pete was surreal.*
- *I've lived in my home for over 30 years and have had too many mandatory evacuation orders. My street has never flooded until Helene. There was no flooding from Milton. What was so different about Helene that caused this damage for the first time?*
- *Just had a hard time finding gas for the car and generator, part of my city where under water and tree damage.*
- *Just to clarify, we stayed during Helene due to the calculated expectation that we would be ok due to not being in a surge zone. For Milton it was a near direct hit and the winds were extreme. My husband stayed because the house was secured, he had supplies and a generator and could focus on the property and himself. I left with my daughter and dog to go inland expecting staying would mean power outages and potential wind damage. We were satisfied with our choices but also were lucky to have a property that was not in a flood zone and strong enough to be ok in the wind. We evaluate every approaching storm seriously.*
- *Just want to state again, no one should be at risk of their job over the safety of their lives. People died during those storms and my job was worried about making a pretty penny. Like I said, we sell chicken wings I was being threatened by not having my job if I evacuated. We didn't even get power back for a whole week so they would have never needed me.*
- *Ken Welch did a horrific job managing the city of St Pete dump prior to and after both storms. There must be a better plan for storm debris during hurricane season.*
- *Leave or risk the chance!*
- *Length of power outages were extreme.*
- *Let residents back onto the island to tend to their homes. Worst part.*
- *Lifting everything off the floor inside your house if you're concerned about flooding takes lots of time and prep but it is so worth it. Most of my neighbors didn't do that and laughed at me because I did. It saved me thousands of dollars in lost items due to flooding.*
- *Listen to the experts.*
- *Listening to the weather guys who have no \$\$\$ in the game is a better and wiser decision than listening to govt officials.*
- *Lived here 12 years and stayed for all mandatory evacuations. Would have been safe from anything besides a flood surge. Really scared about my dogs and wasn't really worried about me.*
- *Lived most of my life here in 33704 and never had the flooding before that we saw. Concerned with future increase of floods due to less green space and too much building allowed on residential lots.*
- *Living in a non evac zone, plus the minimal damage sustained in Milton gives me more confidence in sheltering in place.*
- *Living on the Gulf of Mexico is great, until it isn't.*
- *Local county and city Emergency management did a tremendous job with notifications through social media, broadcast news and text messaging. Local weather persons provided ongoing coverage throughout the events; prior, during and after. Communities rely heavily on FEMA and outside agencies after catastrophic events.*
- *Local government is unreliable there just the clueless elected people that somehow get elected.*
- *Local media needs to stop infotainment crap during hurricane. Open the damn lanes up sooner on evac highways. NO GAS AVAILABLE = NO EVACUATION I have a motorhome 55 gal on board. Still was a struggle.*

- *Local news and or government should provide updates on severity of traffic delays for evacuation as well as availability of fuel.*
- *Local websites were not kept in real time. Used other sources for decisions.*
- *Losing my car sucked.*
- *Luckily, we did not lose power during Helene. We lost power during Milton for 6 days. Relied heavily on the generator the whole time. Neighborhood had snapped power poles everywhere which Duke is currently replacing to steel poles.*
- *Made the decision to sell and move to a house outside of the flood zone and non-evacuation zone.*
- *Mandatory evacuation for Pinellas should be made further in advance- 48 to 72 hours if possible.*
- *Mandatory evacuation orders are helpful for people with pets.*
- *Many of my friends were traumatized by a storm that recently devastated the panhandle and urged me to evacuate so I wouldn't traumatize my kids. That gave me pause. I decided to stay because the firefighters and local weatherman said that it would be safer to stay in a non-evacuation zone than to drive a long distance to try to escape the storm. I'm glad I followed that advice.*
- *Many people do not have a lot of options. Shelters are scary, loud and not set up for families and pets. Hotels are extremely expensive and almost impossible to get when there is a hurricane coming.*
- *Many residents who lost everything agree that the magnitude of the storm was heavily underestimated by the media. Having had the exact opposite problem with so many previous storms, many didn't take Helene as seriously as they should have. Many news sources told us St Pete would be affected in ways similar to Hurricane Debby in terms of rain, winds, flooding, etc, so many people unfortunately underprepared because of this.*
- *Mental and physical feelings of despair after this hurricane season.*
- *Mikes Weather Page and Denis Phillips are the best. We were glued to their updates in the days leading up to Milton to help us make the best decision for our family. Wish we could get more last-minute emergency supplies, everything was sold out.*
- *Milton was a wakeup call. We sustained little damage and did not flood but many around us lost almost everything.*
- *Milton was very scary! Lost power for several days with both storms. Difficult to get communications on storm status then.*
- *Milton: We were prepared for some water in our basement; everything was up high (3+ feet). When some water started trickling in, we were keeping up with pumping that water out. Unfortunately, in the wall connecting our garage to the basement, a large hole developed in the drywall and water came pouring in which filled up the basement. I am happy that we stayed as it allowed us a short amount of time to remove some of the items from the basement.*
- *More dangerous to evacuate at our age.*
- *More inclined to not evacuate going forward. Spent thousands out of pocket and ZERO help from FEMA.*
- *Most media tries too hard to be everything to everyone (which they need to) and get ratings. There are areas and homes that are not everyone and everywhere. The HAM radio broadcasts were factual and helpful. It included the undramatized NOAA / Hurricane Center press releases and factual reports from the ground.*
- *Most of my upstairs neighbors stayed because they knew they wouldn't flood, but they all lost their cars. It would be helpful to be given info on where to park cars where they won't be towed.*
- *My apartment complex made me get renters insurance but never told me flooding from storms WAS NOT INCLUDED. I relied on it and got NOTHING. I LISTENED. EVERYTHING I OWN THAT I WORKED FOR ALL MY LIFE. Now I GOT NOTHING.*
- *My concern is the entire Tampa Bay Area. It seems with storms becoming more frequent and severe that it is a possibility that there will be a major hurricane directly affecting Tampa Bay in the future.*
- *My decision to evacuate is entirely dependent on the storm category & path. I would most likely not evacuate for a 1-3. I would likely evacuate for a category four because I've watched too many category fours in the gulf turned into fives overnight recently and I would not trust it not to do that even if they were not predicting that to happen, I would definitely evacuate if a category five was heading for my community.*
- *My decision to evacuate will depend on the storm size, track and mandatory evacuation orders.*
- *My experience may be skewed as I am a police officer. I tried to answer on the decisions we made for my wife.*
- *My family has lived in zone A for 15 years. We have always evacuated when the mandatory evacuation notices have been issued. We have always elevated our vehicles and prepared our home and have had supplies with us*

- at our evacuation spot. We have tried to set an example for our young kids and our dog that we take authorities seriously and remove yourself from a dangerous situation. There's never been a question to not evacuate.
- My family was lucky. Many of our friends lost homes and businesses.
 - *My home is flood Zone A and I am at 7ft elevation but due to the property features my home had no water intrusion. If I install a whole home generator I most likely won't evacuate this year.*
 - *My home is on a hill above a lake. When flood warnings exceed 18 feet, then I worry. But neither of these storms exceeded that height, or I would have evacuated.*
 - My home was supposed to be lifted. I waited 6 months for the city to give me a permit. My house would not have flooded 4 times, if the city would have done their job! We will keep flooding until the city dredges the canals!!!
 - My house is a stilt home so we were lucky that most of our everyday belongings were upstairs in the living areas. The storm surge was 5 feet in my house and we had never even seen flooding on our street before. This was like nothing we have ever seen in 23 years. Our garage door was completely bent in, cement wall surrounding our house was fallen over.
 - *My husband and I moved to Saint Petersburg from New Orleans. We are extremely familiar with hurricanes (including Katrina.) We feel confident to make the correct decision based on good weather reporting.*
 - My husband and I work for the school district and government respectively, and our offices were not closed until just before the storm. I wish we could be notified with a little more time to secure lodging for evacuation. Leaving was not an issue, but finding hotels out of the area was problematic.
 - My little town of Gulfport FL was hard hit by both hurricanes. The local business community was very supportive, providing food, water and much needed supplies. Our city government was stretched thin by all the needs so the local businesses and people stepped in and stepped up.
 - My main concern is timing of evacuation orders. May be too late to evacuate due to traffic and hotel availability.
 - *My neighborhood was decimated with Helene. It took over a month to get the debris picked up. Neighbors were helping neighbors until they couldn't take it to the dump anymore. The county needs to do better. I felt like I had no choice but to evacuate for Milton because of the danger of flying debris.*
 - My only wish is that they lock down how to get power restored to and gas delivered to local stations quicker after the storm. We were able to ration our gas after the storm for the generator, but we got close to running out, and that's not a great feeling. Granted, we were extremely fortunate that gas for the generator was our biggest problem.
 - *Need schools to make decisions faster so families can plan easier. Cone is pointless. Need to show entire storm and impacts of the whole storm. People see the track but That's just the eye not the storm*
 - *Need to improve on requirements for people in mandatory evacuation zones to evacuate earlier and have penalties if they don't. First responders should not have to take unnecessary risks to rescue people who don't adhere to "MANDATORY" orders.*
 - Neighbor needed assistance so I stayed instead of leaving when I could.
 - Neighbors have been in their house for 60 years and never experienced flooding like Helene.
 - No but thank you for any research you are doing.
 - *NOAA saved many lives and cuts to their funding will kill many people.*
 - None, thank you for taking the time to research these storms
 - Not really. I have a generator, didn't lose power during Helene. Lost power for 4 days during Milton. No damage during Helene. Milton only wind damage a few downed branches and 7 fence panels.
 - Not sure of the relevance of this for the survey, but I feel the local county officials and state of Florida have failed to adequately help expedite recovery efforts in some circumstances. For example, in Pinellas County and some localities, permitting for businesses and homeowners recovery efforts to damaged or flooded structures was, and remains slow, or at a standstill. Too many people were, and are still displaced, and unable to get the help or authorization needed to fix their homes so they are habitable. FEMA recovery efforts are also slow or nonexistent. In addition, the level of price gouging by local landscapers, tree removal companies, remodel companies, and such was distressing. While It's understandable that these companies were overwhelmed and overworked liked many of us, I feel too many of them blatantly took advantage of desperate people. With hurricane season starting again soon, I think a lot of people are fearful or anxious of what to expect on a national and local level for hurricane and severe storm reporting and recovery efforts with all the recent firings and cuts to the government.

- Official information was provided timely and clearly- many people did not listen to the warnings! The gas shortage and extended power outages after Helene and Milton gave me a different consideration in evacuation decisions- not just for personal safety but for gas/social impacts.
- Once in a hundred year storm surge which caused the unlikely flooding. Don't see it very likely in the future.
- One hundred percent Faith in Jesus Christ leaves no room for fear in any situation in my life.
- One of only about 3 houses in our neighborhood that did not flood. A very traumatic experience to go through.
- One of the big reasons I like staying at home during a hurricane was in the 15 years I lived in this neighborhood I never experienced flooding or risk of flooding until 2024. It seems the flood plain changed and now we are in a greater than 1% risk of flooding during major storms.
- Open the beach communities faster. Stop stranding people due to safety. Allow folks to rebuild without permits and keep Pinellas local!
- Only the local news should report what the tidal waves are expected to be on all local news channels. Spectrum Bay News 9 only showed where the water was as it came in, not what it was projected to be. ABC reported on what it is going to be. For Helene, we're intercoastal and heard the sirens going off at the beach for the mandatory evacuation there. If the news properly reported potential impacts on all channels, it may have encouraged those on ground level to evacuate at the beaches. I appreciate the Governor opening up side lanes on freeways for evacuations as well as waiving toll fees. Suggest having the news and government talk about turning electricity off at the main breaker and raising lithium-ion batteries up. The latter I did hear but some younger people are not or we're not aware there is a main power breaker.
- Our 185 unit neighborhood (single level 3 to 8 units per building) had lots of down branches, 3 large uprooted trees, one split tree leaning on building. some roof, gutter, fence damage. We lost power for about 2 days.
- Our City and County governments dropped the ball after Helene and Milton. When I called the City I was informed that FEMA specifically told them NOT to pick up debris. I hope FEMA is defunded! I hope city and county leaders that chose to follow FEMA regardless of what the citizens want, expect, and fund are removed!
- Our city needs to do more about rain and flooding mitigation. Saint Petersburg has experienced a significant increase in construction and population. As a result the rain seems to have no place to go.
- Our experience during Milton will shape our decisions going forward.
- Our home fared well with only minimal damage but will not make us confident that will be true in the future.
- Our home is in Zone A for flood; however, we are elevated 10 feet. Most around us were impacted. We are a block from Anclote River.
- Our home was flooded with 3+ feet of water. We remediated enough to live here until we can locate proper housing. We are currently buying a condo and hope to be moved into a safe environment before a hurricane arrives this season.
- Our insurance system scares me more than the storm. I was on a cot in Iraq for 14 months. The weather doesn't scare me. The loss of house or life do not scare me. Living and having to deal with insurance hell, mtg pmts on a broken home, and endless red tape are what scares me.
- Our local City Halls, should list where we can take cars to be away from flooding during storms so as not to be towed. Our streets flooded 2nd time in 100 years. So we never believed anyone. I'm afraid we do that every time now, and people will not believe anyone. Only call flooding when it is going to happen.
- Our local government was horrible!!
- Overall, Helene impacted us most. We felt caught off guard with the storm surge that occurred. We felt the predicted storm surge was severely off and were hit with double the storm surge.
- People in non-evac zones I talked to who stayed (including me) worried that if we evacuated, we might not be able to return, because the peninsula would be cut off, so we'd have no knowledge about damage at our homes.
- People in our complex said it has never flooded in our complex in over 50 years. Well, I cannot say that anymore. 222 first floor units flooded and hundreds of cars flooded.
- People were not driving on the shoulder. They should not because it is dangerous; to re-enter the traffic flow and slows the movement. It is also common for disabled cars to be on the shoulder. There are metal barriers to keep people from driving into cement railings. The shoulders are used for emergency vehicles. Georgia does not people driving on the shoulders.
- Permit process for rebuilding our home has been overwhelming and cumbersome through the Redington Shores Building Department.
- Pinellas County and St Petersburg elected officials are incompetent and useless in helping their communities recover.

- *Pinellas County and State of Florida did excellent press conferences. Duke Energy restored power amazingly quickly. Felt we had all information to make an informed decision. Knew we could look at FloridaDiaster.org for comprehensive information.*
- *Pinellas County did an awful job evacuating residents in a timely fashion prior to hurricane Helene. Most coastal counties evacuated two days prior but Pinellas issued evacuation notice only 24 hours before prior. The storm surge predictions had been reliably solid for days leading up to the delayed evacuation notice. Additionally, they did not evacuate early enough downtown Saint Petersburg in advance of Hurricane Milton given the risk associated with the cranes.*
- *Pinellas County did not issue evacuation notices sufficiently in advance of hurricane Helene. Evacuation notices were only issued 24 hours before landfall, not giving residents enough time to prepare nor really take it seriously. Other counties issued evacuation notices 48 days prior. The path was unwavering and consistently predicting storm search for our county.*
- *Pinellas County emergency management is outstanding. We lived in New Jersey where Superstorm Sandy hit and thought we'd never have to live through that again, but here we are. Pinellas County was SOOO much better at handling the aftermath than New Jersey was.*
- *Pinellas county officials did a poor job of timely information and the time they took to issue mandatory evacuations; they tend to wait until we are very close to the storms arrival.*
- *Pinellas County was grossly unprepared to respond to the needs of their constituents. There was no reason for my permit request to take 6 months for approval other than gross ineptitude within the county structure.*
- *Pinellas County was terrific offering me the chance well ahead to be on a list to consider evacuation ahead. I would seek and use the same ability to use PCFD if faced with possible cat 3 storm again locally. My experience sheltered in a county high school was although not exactly pleasant was very good safe realistic and served 850 people from all walks of life impacted by Milton in my area. We were encouraged on day five to return home if possible and neighborhoods from which we came were well identified. I went home without electricity for 2 and a half days but as a Floridian have bone through much longer outages in past storms. I had no generator nor won.*
- *Plan ahead.*
- *Planning to move to another state.*
- *Please don't use the term Flood Zone & Evac Zone interchangeably.*
- *Please just be ready with GAS!!! That was the toughest thing in the week after.*
- *Post hurricane impact is neglected.*
- *Pray it doesn't happen again.*
- *Prior to the 2024 season we had decided to evacuate for the entire hurricane season each year and implemented that plan prior to the 2024 hurricanes. Will now be gone from July through November every year.*
- *Prioritize evacuating inland. It was said but should be emphasized that it is safer to evacuate inland rather than out of state.*
- *Protecting our home and family is high priority. The cost of impact windows to protect the home is unheard of. The supply has large delays.*
- *Re an earlier comment: I stayed in my one floor wood frame home during Helene. Left the state due to previously made vacation plans for Milton.*
- *Re: Helene We thought we could safely evacuate in the event of a surge. We had no idea that we would have 3 feet of water in front and behind our condo which cut off any escape route.*
- *Rebuilding, permit requirements are a hot mess in the city of St Petersburg and Pinellas County repairs still not complete in May mainly due to red tape.*
- *Receiving mandatory evacuations earlier would be ideal to get the house in order and leave safely.*
- *Reiterating that we chose not to evacuate because we feel very safe in our home not because we aren't concerned or ignore the advice of the experts. Our situation is somewhat unique.*
- *Relied on Pinellas County official's guidance, meteorologist Denis Phillips, and Mike's Weather Page. Between those three sources I felt well-informed and prepared.*
- *Renter neighbors were no help, we were at weather mercy. No electricity, no elevators in 14 story bldg., generators not kept in working order, etc. We were all at mercy of malfunction. No motel rooms in area after Milton available. I want to get out but have a very old car.*
- *REPEATED Pinellas County emergency phone calls to home phone line and both of our cell phones occurring every 15 minutes were over-the-top stressors.*

- *Residents should be allowed to reenter as soon as possible.*
- *Residents should be immediately allowed back to their homes after storm passes at own risk.*
- *Resources became scarce quickly. Gas was almost completely unavailable throughout my area the day before Milton hit, which was a major concern for many people including myself, as I was evacuating from Clearwater to Gainesville.*
- *Retention pond pumps need to be reevaluated and raised. Retention pond maintenance needs to be reviewed. The city cannot neglect its residents based on location/income basis and change things to better help other areas, all need to be treated equally, and city-owned/maintained areas should all be monitored and maintained!*
- *Sandbags are worthless and shelters breed sickness.*
- *Schools can be slow to make decisions, which impacts a family's decision to stay or evacuate before the rush of traffic from mandatory evacuation zones.*
- *Sewage/water supply issues greatly affected my decisions to evacuate and when I was able to return to my home.*
- *Sewer, electrical and water took weeks to repair. Living conditions would have been unbearable.*
- *Shame on St Pete for not acting like Tampa and get help quicker with less red tape to get back in our homes. I'm still displaced because of the inept permitting department and inspectors.*
- *Shameful decision making to let everyone have access to the barrier islands afterwards, with rampant looting. We have permits to give us access to our homes, but the sheriffs ignored that. This will strongly urge us to NOT evacuate in the future because they didn't do anything to keep our homes safe and power was out so cameras don't work.*
- *Since NOAA is being defunded, another source of reliable information for Florida storms is sorely needed.*
- *Since we live on the intracoastal, we have always prepared and evacuated when told to do so. What we were not prepared for was the mental toll of the damage to our community and immediate neighborhood. Many of our neighbors are still not able to return to their homes. We were more fortunate than most of our friends and neighbors, but this was and is still a devastating experience.*
- *So much damage from water in my neighborhood, however I was safe.*
- *Some shelters accept pets. The problem is that they separate you from your pets at the shelter. In a storm, people want to be next to their animals (dogs) because they are probably scared too. In a storm, people want to be next to their animals (dogs) because they are probably scared too. It's a therapy thing for both pets and humans. If there ever is an entire county mass evacuation, I'm concerned the decision may be made too late, and too many people will clog the roads, and we will get stuck in zero-moving traffic. Not worth the hassle to pack everything up to leave. People don't realize how important stuff you really have to consider. I'm also concerned about the city sewer backing up and getting into the home because of a lack of maintenance or lack of adequate storm drainage, or whatever the case might be. Infrastructure adequacy is a big concern.*
- *Stayed at Largo High School everyone working there did the absolute best possible. Needed more restrooms people are not neat at all a lot of sloppy people.*
- *Still displaced, 6 months later. Permitting issues in Treasure Island need to be addressed!*
- *Stop weather seeding, chemtrails bioengineering etc.*
- *Storm surge is real.*
- *Storm surge is the thing that scares me the most where I am followed by just the sheer noise of the storms. I prefer to get out sooner and watch from a distance with air conditioning rather than be in the thick of it hearing the destruction.*
- *Storms are very unpredictable, and can turn or strengthen with little or no warning. I feel it's better to plan on leaving even if the storm doesn't appear too bad initially.*
- *Sunset Beach section of Treasure Island is still a mess. My building is just starting to rebuild, because it took so long to get permits. 7 months. As a result, the top floors that weren't damaged, now likely have mold/mildew that will have to be treated. It's a real shame. I would have had to relocate under these circumstances anyway.*
- *Surge predictions need to get better. Madeira Beach has had serious flooding from Eta in 2020 which hardly had any surge warning at all. During Helene they vastly underestimated surge for the barrier islands until the morning of when the slosh models started showing tides way above what was previously predicted.*
- *Tell people to stay away from social media posts, the amount of AI generated exaggerations are ridiculous and cause undue stress.*
- *Thank you for everything you do to educate and prepare the community.*
- *Thank you to local government for the long hours and hard work that they did to keep us all prepared and safe.*
- *Thank you.*

- *Thanks for doing this.*
- *Thanks for doing what you do in keeping the communities as safe as possible during these dangerous storms.*
- *Thanks to Gov. Desantis for eliminating Tolls during the emergency.*
- *Thanks to the first responders for checking on our neighborhood as well as all the trash and other debris removal departments for doing such a great job.*
- *The aftermath cleanup was very slow, why would anyone even think they could use Tropicana field to house the tree & electrical crews after the storm? Even I knew that roof was gonna come off! Totally waste of resources.*
- *The amount of traffic on the interstate evacuating and lack of gas made it extremely stressful. It took me five hours to evacuate a 2 Hour drive and there was no gas for me to get home for a week.*
- *The back to back nature of these storms created a larger awareness of the need to evacuate.*
- *The biggest issue is the lack of gasoline when trying to evacuate and even more when trying to get back. Also due to the configuration of Florida it is hard to decide which way to go ... we've pretty much got to go North out of the state. I have an elderly parent and they do not travel well, and the last thing I need is to be stuck on the side of the road out of gas. On the other hand the heat during the days the power is out is very hard for them also. As someone who is from Florida, fortunately my experience is the storm itself is not as bad and the before and aftermath.*
- *The biggest problem with evacuating was gas shortage and traffic.*
- *The City of Clearwater was not prepared in advance for storms. They have not been progressing on FEMA CRS planning. They have not proactively implemented drainage maintenance plans. The beach communities are now expecting us high elevation homeowners to help pay for their choices to live in harms way. NOT FAIR!*
- *The city of Clearwater was woefully unprepared for Milton. They were completely focused on the beaches and Helene cleanup. The vegetative debris from Helene that wasn't picked up caused drainage blockages. They didn't make sandbags available until after evacuations were supposed to be done- I know people who would have had less damage to their homes if sandbags were available before the evacuations were in place. The city needs to improve their planning and communication with residents. Non beach residents shouldn't have been de-prioritized.*
- *The City of St Pete failed the citizens after Helene. Little to no response or urgency to the damage or steps of action needed. Then Milton hit & total chaos followed. They need to be better prepared & have a plan of action going forward.*
- *The City of St Petersburg should not be allowed to reject post disaster recovery permit because the prior owners didn't obtain permit for a garage conversion to living room or something happened during the permit process and was never closed properly. It's been almost 8 months since the storm and I hired an architecture to design retrofitting garage conversion plans, the city continues commenting back and forth it would be awesome if they would at least approve the post disaster permit while I work with architecture on garage conversion plans.*
- *The city turning the sewage system off and the city allowing sewage spills is a major concern.*
- *The debris pick up is still not done on our street. We did most of it ourselves but there is still some in the median. We lost power with Helene for 4 days but not with Milton.*
- *The decision when to evacuate is hard. Leave too early, the storm path may change. Leave too late, stuck in traffic, no gas, be stranded in the storm.*
- *The emergency alerts being repeatedly triggered before the storm was excessive leading some including myself to turn off the alerts because the information became repetitive and slightly a nuisance as we got the alert the first time, sending multiple alerts for the same thing, with the annoying alert sounds took away from the severity of an alert that could be life-saving and new.*
- *The fatigue of coworkers, family and friends was palpable and extensive. So many experienced displacements and interruptions of their lives. We run short term rentals and were inundated with requests from people who were now homeless. I physically and emotionally got sick from the stress of 2 back to back storms. It was costly as two of our rentals were damaged. Out of pocket costs that were not reimbursed by insurance were in the thousands. We had to manage our tenants and find them other accommodation which was difficult and costly. We had one tenant who was mentally ill and had to take her to a shelter. That is a whole different story! Too much to go into here! Anyway, it was too much management in such a short time.*
- *The forecasted track of the storm is the key factor. Had Milton come on shore into Tampa Bay, it would have been much worse. Of course this wasn't determined until too late to make the evacuation call. My son lives on the small amount of high ground in Pinellas. We went there for Milton. The time it would take to get back into Pinellas after the storm influenced my decision to stay. Also, the nightmare of traffic is a consideration.*

- *The gas shortage was very eye opening. just never experienced anything like that.*
- *The help we received in Florida and other states was unacceptable. The insurance companies that let their customers down was also unacceptable. FEMA was worthless.*
- *The insurance village set up after Milton was a huge help. I had many questions answered.*
- *The issue becomes the category of hurricane, path and timing. I would be more likely to evacuate ahead of time if I had the exact details, but you just don't know until it is upon you. Having an elderly dad and 3 dogs it becomes a big event to evacuate. When I purchased my home, one of the deciding factors was being in a non evac zone. Once I bought, I started bringing the house up to current code. My Safe Florida grant program helped me understand what needed to be done through the baseline wind mitigation survey conducted.*
- *The live broadcasts from the weather chasers is so valuable, as is the weather channel, fox 13, Denis Philips, and Mike's Weather channel helped us make decisions and follow along.*
- *The local news kept saying you don't have to go far to be safe, yet we did go far and were safe. Schools are not good evacuation sites because if people cannot return home, the schools lack bathroom and shower facilities to sustain crowds and lack privacy. We prefer to go to a hotel further away, but we can afford it. Houses within 500 yards of us were completely underwater and we had friends who were not able to return home for several days.*
- *The loss of my vehicle put me in a financial mess. Shelters are dirty and disgusting. No place to wash your privates disgusting. I cannot stress it enough. I went to the Largo high school never again. I wanna know where I can move my car to higher ground. I cannot afford to lose another vehicle. The lots of food and going with without electric for three weeks was really tough.*
- *The main reason we evacuated out of state during Milton was the risk of water and power being out for several day. I did not want to be in my house with our power or water. We check with neighbors and did not return until the power was back on which was 6 days.*
- *The media needs to predict these storms more accurately so people can prepare and leave the projected area sooner.*
- *The most important factor in decision to evacuate was family agreement. Fact-based news reports from NOAA and local weather professionals was essential. Thank you, Pinellas County, for providing trustworthy information on evacuation routes and flood zones. and Alerts.*
- *The national news sensationalized the hurricanes' categories, which caused undue fear and panic among both residents and their loved ones far away. However, we WERE sufficiently warned about the catastrophic storm surge.*
- *The news or local government needing to explain the need for evacuation and what your risk factor is for staying based on location and type of residence (I.e. flood zone, wood v. block home, rainfall flooding). Also explain what to expect in the aftermath of a storm (store closures, loss of water and power).*
- *The only reason we had any flooding at all is because the City of St. Pete turned off the water treatment plant and back flushed the tanks. The raw sewage came from the manhole covers, flooded our streets and came into our homes. We lost almost everything due to the City's blatant negligence.*
- *The people I know that stayed, were either too stubborn to leave or waited too late to gather their belongings and get out. I personally think there needs to be more information on shelters. I was told by several people they were disgusting. Perhaps shelters could do more to promote themselves as a safe option.*
- *The people of Pinellas County need to be reminded that with three storms last summer and a LOT of flooding and damage, we did NOT receive a direct hit from any of these storm.*
- *The power outages and supply shortages right after the storms were very concerning.*
- *The process of getting through Hurricanes Eta, Idalia, Helene and Milton have increased my confidence in my abilities to understand weather data.*
- *The security at the shelters needs to be better. More shelters need to be available to the public. The media needs to be better about informing you what to bring to a shelter. Many people (elderly) arrived with nothing to sleep on.*
- *The state did an awful job of getting gas into Pinellas County. The county waited too long to announce mandatory evacuations and did nothing to help us once our neighborhood flooded. We were flooded for a week and had zero response other than the sheriff using high water vehicles to ferry residents back and forth.*
- *The storm drains need to be cleared before storms. My husband and a neighbor had to clear two drains in both storms to keep the water flowing and not back up into our yards & street. According to them it seemed like they had not been done in a while. Or maybe a screen of some sort could be placed over the opening to prevent stuff*

getting stuck in the inner opening. It would make easier to remove debris when it flows down. Underground electric would be another suggestion, and more trimming of trees so that when they are swaying they don't knock out power or cable. There needs to be more streamlined & efficiency helping people after the storm. A lot of these people are still going through repairs from the last 2 and we are now entering into hurricane season June 1st. There needs to be a better way to move things along to get them whole again.

- The storm surge that impacted Pinellas County put my friends and loved ones in extreme danger. We are used to hearing the same warnings, but the storm surge had never actually happened. I don't know if there is a better way to predict it or warn us. My friends and loved ones who live on the barrier islands had grown tired of evacuating, being prevented to return home after the storm (the bridges are closed), worrying about their property (addressing damage and leaving it prone to looting), and feeling like they are a burden on their friends and family when they evacuate to their homes. As a high school teacher, I have heard terrifying stories of my students rescuing people, driving their boats down the road so they wouldn't run into the power lines suspended next to them. I have friends who performed CPR on a woman who came floating into their parking area, but she didn't make it. It was heartbreaking to hear my students talk about finding pets buried in the sand in their neighborhoods the day after Helene. One told me that her parents had their home built to hurricane specifications so they could shelter in place, but their hot water heater caught fire when the saltwater intruded their lower level. Months later, family and friends are still displaced. My mother's apartment building is not slated to open again until "Spring 2026," so she's living with me. Some residents are camping in their driveways to this day. Some of my students have moved out of the county to live with family as their parents stay here and try to remediate their living situation. One thing is certain. We care about each other as a community. We are doing what we can to help each other.
- *The surge flooded the buildings pool and destroyed all the equipment and got into the electrical / chiller room with minimal damage. It was about 10 inches from entering the building. This was with Helene. Milton just caused damage to our car ports.*
- *The surrounding counties had mandatory evacuations before my county did so I placed less importance on the warnings.*
- *The very local weather forecasters were the ones we relied on and their Facebook feeds, including ABC 28 Tampa Denis Phillips and Mike's weather page (Oldsmar - near my house) on Facebook.*
- *The winds tend to get downplayed, in favor of storm surge. For inland areas or in Pinellas County away from the coast, wind is a serious threat. Also, the amount of rainfall with Milton completely astonished me. I had no idea it could rain that hard. Many neighborhoods in St. Pete that are on "high ground" flooded from rain. So basically I feel there is too much emphasis on storm surge coverage by "national media", where the high velocity winds and flooding from rain affect more people not directly on the coast.*
- *There are not enough shelters or low-cost commercial lodging options that allow pets and that strongly affects my evacuation decisions. Evacuation orders are not given or heeded early enough causing extremely congested evacuation routes, which also strongly affects my decisions to stay or go.*
- *There are overhead wires still not fixed outside our home.*
- *There has been an enormous improvement in the preparation list and I'm thankful to say I had a bit to do with that because Florida is full of people that have never been through a hurricane and appear clueless and can't seem to handle the smallest problem. A serious lack of common sense in preparation. Experience is key for learning.*
- *There is a small part of me that feels tempted to stay and protect my home because a family member did that and saved most of their furniture that way. In reality I would just prepare items to be above ground level way in advance and consider flood barrier walls...*
- *There is always a lot of fear mongering at a National level. I preferred my info from local weather people.*
- *There should be non-flood prone facilities on high and dry for the handicapped in Pinellas County...I have not taken time to look. Sorry, being totally disabled takes more time to attend to daily activities with the help of a caregiver!*
- *There was too much henny penny too soon. Because people know hurricanes can go in different direction, most people do not evacuate until a couple of days before. By then you are stuck in traffic for 16 to 24 hours trying to get out of Florida and many times you may be driving right into the storm. Additionally, a lot of the flooding is caused by construction on swampland. Many areas that had never flooded before did these storms. The water no longer has anywhere to go to due to overbuilding.*

- *There were not enough resources to evacuate all handicapped individuals that could not be in a car even though the handicapped individual is not in mandatory evacuation zone.*
- *There's not enough space here but I will say that I have friends who work in emergency management and I look to them for advice/guidance. When they say it's time to go, I go.*
- *These hurricanes confirmed my choice to evacuate early and return only after power and services are restored.*
- *These seem like the worst storms in all my FL years. I evacuated for Irma but nothing in between. This is going to get much worse. All the hype and sensation of the media and not so great news reporters makes us all scared and over buying resources. I listen to one guy only and it keeps me sane & prepared. But supplies are way too expensive to buy- hurricane proof windows Ha! A generator - I wish! So we are going to keep toughing it out until our home blows away. Also, we went to GA. I couldn't find a local hotel that accepted dogs. After I had been in GA I heard that in an emergency ALL hotels are required to accept pets. Is that even true?? If so, I could have saved 2K & been closer to home for myself & the grandma down the street that I made go with us. The info given in a time like that just isn't explained well... and I'm pretty darn smart.*
- *These were our first 2 hurricanes that we stayed for. We lost power and had a small amount of water intrusion at the door but are on level 5. The wind was extremely scary and we lost power but are now better prepared for next time.*
- *They opened the barrier islands too fast.*
- *They should have had more shelters available where we could bring our dog next to us. Most of the shelters wouldn't let us have the dog in the room with us they had to be in a separate room.*
- *They were eye-opening for sure especially Helene and the storm surge impact. It was a good storm to really watch to see. I've lived in my house since 2001. And Helene brought the worst flooding I've seen in that time to my immediate area. I am an evacuation zone D so it was good to see with a storm like Helene that didn't even hit us directly just grazed by us with the impacts were.*
- *This hurricane season convinced me to move out of a flood zone and into the center of the state to high ground and build a hurricane fortified home instead of buying my dream home on the water in Pass-A-grille later this year.*
- *This is local to the City of Clearwater. They did an amazing job of cleaning up Clearwater Beach, but a lousy job of communicating to residents when they would be allowed to go back to their home, so we could make plans.*
- *This was the storm we always worried about in the Tampa Bay area.*
- *This wasn't covered in the questions, but a huge post-Milton influence is friends and neighbors who did not evacuate and said they would never ride out another storm like that at home again.*
- *Too many people in my area never evacuated! One elderly man had to be rescued from rising water. My daughter, 3-year-old grandson, and I left as soon as we were told to do so. Not sure if others were told by officials driving through the neighborhood to leave, and they did not.*
- *Too much focus on wind damages and too little on surge and the levels of surge.*
- *Too much info way, way in advance may have seemed like 'nagging' and people stopped listening when things finally became more certain.*
- *Took too long to lift mandatory evacuation order after storm. Will think before so that again.*
- *traffic on roads out terrible and makes people not want to evacuate. Not sure how the officials can fix that but lifting tolls is helpful it seems.*
- *Train Bay News 9 to not overly dramatize or broadcast Jim Cantore media hype.*
- *Traumatic.*
- *Unfortunately we had high, swift moving water in our area. Street looked like wild river. Storm drains clogged and canal blocked. City could do more throughout year to ensure blockages from vegetation are cleared. Caveat is back-to-back storms didn't allow recovery time.*
- *Unless my roof were to be taken off by a tornado, I have little reason to evacuate. I am in zone E and not in a flood prone area. Personally, people who are not in an evacuation zone SHOULD shelter in place. This allows those who are evacuated the ability to so safely and efficiently.*
- *Unnecessary damage occurred in my area due to the failure of the pump station at the City of St Petersburg. Also, the pump station here at the community where I live failed. Resulting in no water usage. Then, when the water came back on, we were cautioned not to use it because of no drainage. But in this community of 500 homes people did shower etc. causing flooding in the community.*
- *Unprecedented and ongoing trauma/mental health problems have been evident in my community and all those affected, especially by the flooding from Helene.*

- *USF, colleges and schools need to stop waiting until the last minute to make decisions. Close just to air on the safe side so parents and college students have time to plan or prepare for evacuations.*
- *Very much appreciate the breakdown lanes being opened for evacuation, it made leaving Pinellas County much more efficient than usual.*
- *Very scary. Makes me take future hurricanes more seriously. Making a list of things we'd like to have for next season and what we'd like to do around the house.*
- *Very traumatic. Spent 6 hours with my fiancé and dog on our kitchen table to stay away from flood waters. We got around by boat to help neighbors get supplies. Our house, cars and all of our belongings were totaled in one evening. I had to buy a 2nd home to live in and now have to pay 2 mortgages. I had to buy a 2nd home to live in and now have to pay 2 mortgages. I have to demolish and rebuild a new home to meet FEMA standards. Insurance is only covering about 1/3 of that cost. It is unplanned and financially devastating. Zero help from the Red Cross because they had a rep admittedly drive by in a car and said nothing looked wrong with my house. FEMA helped a little. All of this is coming out of savings and retirement accounts. It's very sad.*
- *Want to clarify some of the earlier answers: we relied on local information but most often got it online, combination of social media and their own websites and alerts. We felt well informed by Pinellas County and that really helped us make our decision whether to evacuate.*
- *Was surprised by the amount of damage to much of the island. My building was high with only 3" of interior flooding. Strong winds and gusts prior to Helene's passage changed my mind and prompted me to evacuate to save my car.*
- *We and our neighbors sustained a substantial amount of flooding and erosion because Pinellas County and the City of Safety Harbor were working on the bay side and Headwaters B of Mullet Creek which produced a back up of water up of water over 25' high. The water caused substantial erosion across the entire length of our property and wiped out 1/2 of my next-door neighbor's yard.*
- *We are all hoping the city does something to prevent flooding because the sewer infrastructure failed. That should be a third-world problem.*
- *We are all suffering post traumatic flood disorder. The storm surge was the worst.*
- *We are moving out of the city to a more protected area of Tampa because of the experience and potential for the area to experience more direct impacts as a result of climate change.*
- *We are not in a flood zone, but we experienced stormwater flooding During Milton.*
- *We are selling our house and will likely move out of Florida. We relied so heavily on FEMA and the NOAA throughout this process, and not being able to rely on them due to current administration during upcoming hurricane seasons makes us feel that continuing to live in Florida won't be possible.*
- *We can't stop the weather. Our community needs to do a better job fixing infrastructure (drainage, sewers, water mains, electrical grid, dangerous trees) and recovery processes (permitting, debris clean up and management, assisting vulnerable populations, etc.) in general and with the knowledge we live in hurricane alley - so when the worst does happen, and it will again, we are better prepared to protect home and life prior, and better prepared to withstand catastrophic damage and pick up and carry on after. I feel like this city had no plan for the aftermath. No plan for obvious things like securing construction cranes dangling on high rise condos prior to a storm. As if it wouldn't ever happen here. As if we haven't seen this kind of thing happen countless times before in other communities. It's not easy. But It's not rocket science either. A lot of common sense and pre planning goes a long way.*
- *We do not live in a flood zone and have a well built home with hurricane windows and a generator. Falling trees are the most serious risk. The risk of leaving the home appears greater due to traffic in the Tampa Bay area and limited options to go with pets. On balance, remaining in our home still appears to be the safest option but it is subject to revaluation as the hurricane season proceeds.*
- *We evacuated to a friend's during Milton due to the predicted 15 foot storm surge. Our home is 11 feet above sea level and our car is a hybrid.*
- *We failed our elderly community- many don't have social media or cell phones. I helped elderly flooding victims and they did not know there were hotels or shelters to go to afterwards or food trucks with free food 2 blocks from them- many had no idea. We cannot be all electronic to inform and notify because the elderly (of which we have many) are not able to find out the way the rest of us do to stay informed.*
- *We felt that the local weather predictions for the hurricane Helene storm surge were very inaccurate. They were saying it will hit at low tide. And if you flooded in Debbie, you'll flood, otherwise you'll be ok. Not true. Many people stayed because of that and were flooded 2-4 ft. We were all surprised with Helene surge level.*

- *We flooded 3 ft of water with Helene and Milton took the roof off our house. What a disaster.*
- *We followed Denis Phillips for our information which helped us decide what to do.*
- *We had a 100-year healthy live oak tree uproot and fall on our home.*
- *We had a family member who was to leave after we left. Securing the house more. Sadly got trapped after the water started to rise. So the family was split during the first evacuation.*
- *We had just moved to the country, never experienced anything like that, was extremely scary and overwhelming especially when my husband was away and I was alone with our daughter. Will never do it again.*
- *We had no power for a week. My son, who also lives in St Petersburg in the 33712 zip code had no power for 3 weeks. It was impossible to get gas and was super unpleasant.*
- *We had yard debris from Helene, easy to pick up. During Milton we lost 5 trees in the woods behind our house. It took over a month to get a quote on tree removal, and the removal and subsequent repair of the lawn was very expensive.*
- *We have hardened our block home with roll down shutters, metal roofing, hurricane strapped the hip roof, and whole house standby generator. We have hurricane supplies for us and family members that shelter here in our non-evacuation zoned home.*
- *We learned more about the flooding from the bay. A lot of people in our neighborhood moved their car to the parking lot of the nearby strip mall.*
- *We left for Milton. After the storm they said do not come back yet. We did anyway, but telling people that is a mistake. It makes people not want to leave, for fear they will come back to a looted home or worse because law enforcement will not let them back in..... People deserve to get right back into their homes and property they left. Dangerous or not, it is all they have as humans...It is their lives.....*
- *We learned that unexpected flooding due to hyper-local rainwater patterns happened around us, which caused unexpected issues because of heavy rain for a number of hours. So, even if we are not in typical flood zone, water intrusion can happen. So, I am concerned about that type of water damage happening in the future since storms will be intensifying and dropping more water more quickly. Being without power for more than a few hours is very worrisome.*
- *We live in a non-flood, non-evacuation zone. Our neighborhood's elevation is 60 ft above sea level. We have a new roof, hurricane shutters on every window, and new hurricane impact garage doors. We have solar panels with batteries as well as a portable generator for additional backup. We are thoroughly prepared for a hurricane.*
- *We live in an island with floods. We always, always evacuate because if we don't evacuate and decide we made the wrong decision, and there is a problem, there is no changing our mind.*
- *We live on 5th floor.*
- *We lived in Port Charlotte in 2004, and experienced hurricane Charlie. That storm took an unpredicted path, and we had no opportunity to evacuate. After experiencing a cat 4+ storm, we vowed, never again. No reason to go through that if you don't have to.*
- *We lost everything due to Hurricane Katrina so we evacuate more often than most people we know.*
- *We need more evacuation routes. Roads are too congested.*
- *We need NOAA. I relied heavily on it to decide whether or not to leave, it is only through chance that Milton did not maintain the intensity that was originally forecasted. Even just from a Category 3 storm, St Pete and Sarasota was greatly impacted. The city of St. Pete has a history of poorly maintained storm infrastructure.*
- *We need reminders like them have in the Keys. Polls that show the storm surge flooding potential.*
- *We only have 6 in our entire family, and all adults are physically disabled. We are incapable of a lot that is necessary during a hurricane.*
- *We prepared better than anyone. The house was sealed up airtight. The city did not shut the sewer lines causing 16 inches of back up. Note outside the house was 4 feet surge.*
- *We purchased a new home in a non-flood zone. Hurricanes are only going to get more intense in the future.*
- *We stayed at the condo, because residents reported staying prior storms. However, this next season we will likely evacuate because the condo will require it.*
- *We stayed because my elderly Parents stayed. My plan was to head to a nearby shelter if track changed.*
- *We stayed during Helene even though we were under mandatory evacuation because we have a 3-level town home and knew the flooding wouldn't be life threatening. We're glad we stayed because we saved our garage level belongings.*

- *We stayed for Helene and evacuated for Milton. My husband is a firefighter from NY so I listen to him. We have a sheriff and 2 firefighters in our neighborhood, so they go out in their trucks to make sure people are ok and we have a neighborhood webpage to keep in contact with who stays. The firefighters from NY belong to CERT East Lake but I think Tarpon Springs could really use one especially for the fact that most members are retired firefighters and police officers and veterans.*
- *We were able to provide shelter for others more affected during and after the storm. We did quite a bit of prep and recovery outside our home that will become more difficult as we age. Neighbors did assist us some in clean up, and we assisted others. Also, we provided info to neighbors who chose to leave and were worried about damage to their homes. The neighborhood formed a Facebook group that let us know who else stayed nearby in case we needed help.*
- *We were lucky to not have sustained any significant damage. Power was out for a few days after Milton. We are about 8 miles from the beach and have noticed that the wind is greatly reduced the further away you are. We have prepped as best we can but are always looking at new ways to stay prepared. We have aluminum shutters which are the strongest shutter option to have. We also use garage door braces. Rain was more of a problem after Milton. We didn't lose power after Helene but we did during Milton.*
- *We were not prepared to lose power for 9 days. We now have a generator, more emergency supplies, a better plan for securing doors prone to flooding, and have had all our trees trimmed in preparation for high winds.*
- *We were really shocked at how the storms intensified as they moved closer to our location and so surprised that we had 2 storms that close together in 10 days.*
- *We were traveling out of the country during Hurricane Helene. We learned about the damage to our area by internet while in Austria. We were home for 3 days when Hurricane Milton struck.*
- *We were very disappointed that our mayor of St Pete had no presence and made no announcements prior to either storm. We followed Tampa's mayor. We really appreciated St Petersburg opening parking garages for vehicles. More facilities were needed. Appreciated the City's clean-up effort, providing water, fuel, shower & laundry, and the incredible effort done to clear debris, open roads, and restore power. City residents did not understand the threat of flooding by creeks and lakes. Emphasis needed for those areas.*
- *We were very frustrated that the city of St Pete Beach used the park outside our home as a temporary landfill. We were so fearful that the Helene debris would be blown into our townhome and destroy it during Milton.*
- *We were very lucky overall. We saw a ton of deviation and trauma. (I'm a teacher and also have friends and family who had major losses or damages). I think we got a lot of great information in the area and a strong community. Hopefully this year is better.*
- *We were very lucky. Grateful to the police and fire department and the power company who did a fabulous job.*
- *We were without power for 5 days after Milton and stayed in our house.*
- *We would evacuate in a minute because the school right across the street is a shelter but they don't allow pets. I will never leave my dogs behind.*
- *We're close to the areas that flooded and had severe damage. We lost trees but we're sitting higher than our neighbors, so I wasn't that concerned with flooding unless the storm surge was going to be worse than it was. I trusted my local officials. If zone D had a mandatory evacuation, we might have gone to a shelter.*
- *We're long-time residents, so we have a lot of experience. Our choice to evacuate was based on the amount of debris from Helene and the large oaks over and around our house.*
- *Whether to stay or evacuate is a very stressful time. It's a very hard decision since I'm inland a bit.*
- *While we are technically in Zone C and we're under mandatory evacuation for Hurricane Milton, part of our property is in Zone B, and our house is raised several feet above Zone C elevation. We are also mere yards from a major road that has a higher elevation if we need to evacuate. We did not lose power before, during, or after either hurricane.*
- *While we were confident about our decision to evacuate with our kids during both storms, many of our neighbors chose to stay. Hearing stories from coastal Pinellas County residents who remained in their homes with up to 8 feet of water is terrifying. Our lives were turned upside down, and we are still recovering, but we felt safe during the storms aside from tornado warnings in the area we evacuated to. Whatever messaging and services can be enhanced to convince more people to evacuate to safety would be a huge benefit to all.*
- *Why didn't Madeira Beach do something about raising our home before? I asked prior, after our first 4 floods & when nothing was forthcoming, we spent \$13,000 on dam-easy door barriers, good up to 3 ft. Got hit with 5 ft surge.*
- *Wild experience. Hope more people take evacuations more seriously moving forward.*

- *Will not evacuate because the govt closed access to the island making the home damage worse, but not able to dry home.*
- *Will ride out as we no longer have tree that was at risk of falling on house, as it came down last year.*
- *Work should be required to let you evacuate days before the hurricanes expected landfall. My husband is not an essential worker and his job did not let him leave work, he had to work until the day that the hurricane was expected to hit land. This put us in a precarious situation as we had to drive almost to Georgia (from St. Pete FL) to get to the only available hotel room for those dates. We booked the hotel 1 week before hurricane hit, but even by then all the hotels were full. We were almost forced to shelter in place (gas not available because we had to use the gas to get to and from work, and then the gas stations were sold out of gas). We also could not find any gas for the trip back home.*
- *Yes, we live in a condo and our elevator was out for more than 80 days. My husband has mobility issues and had to be helped down the stairs 3 days a week to go to physical therapy. NO ONE from Treasure Island would help us get him down. The fire department helped him 1 time, then said they couldn't do it again. We had to rely on the kindness of a friend to get him down the stairway. I'm sure there were others in the same situation. From our balcony, we can see Isle of Palms. I don't know how many homes are on that island but I do know there are very few lights on in those homes. People are not home yet, more than 6 months later. Please spread the word that things are NOT back to normal. We used to be able to walk to many restaurants from our condo. Now there is the Waffle House and Foxy's. Many hotels are still closed or only partially opened. We are planning on moving further inland.*
- *Yes. A lot of damage could've been lessened if you had let owners back onto the barrier islands and not prevented them from doing so for 3 to 4 days after Helene.*
- *You asked about damage to homes but never asked about other damage. I had damage to my yard that took months to clean up and to my car. Never asked if I used my generator, I did.*
- *You can only rely on yourselves during a storm like Milton. We had a couple (the man was blind) come Honker down at our house, thinking a little party. First hurricane since 1990, we had someone come stay for a hurricane. I was outside until midnight keeping water flowing from my backyard. It was something I've never seen before. I had that "fog" they talk about for some time.*
- *You should always consider the hurricane may be worse than forecasted. If it is worse, you may be stranded on roofs/countertops without help. Several of my neighbors did not evacuate and That's exactly what happened.*