

Update on Mercola Headquarters

Analysis by [Dr. Joseph Mercola](#)

✓ Fact Checked

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › The Mercola website was cyberattacked and taken offline September 23, 2022
- › September 28, Category 4 hurricane Ian barreled through Cape Coral, Florida, damaging our headquarters. The White House has described the natural disaster as “likely to rank among the worst in the nation’s history”
- › October 12, 2022, Gov. Ron DeSantis held a roundtable discussion at the Mercola Market in Cape Coral. Local business leaders shared their top concerns and most pressing needs for the rebuilding process
- › Key concerns and requests for aid included addressing the mountains of debris and the widespread supply chain issues that affect construction materials and business equipment
- › Business owners also need financing and emergency bridge loans to cover expenses and meet payroll, as well as rapid construction permits. DeSantis supports temporarily relaxing local codes to allow property owners to place trailers on their properties while rebuilding their main homes. Mental health support services are also needed

As previously reported, the [Mercola website was cyberattacked](#) and taken offline September 23, 2022. The attack also destroyed our email servers. We’d barely begun recovering from that ordeal when Category 4 hurricane Ian barreled through Cape Coral, Florida, on September 28, damaging our headquarters.

The storm ripped off our building's solar panels, damaging the roof along with them, so there were leaks throughout the building. Winds of 155 mph (just 2 mph short of a Category 5 hurricane) were recorded along with a catastrophic storm surge that rose more than 12 feet above ground level.¹

Some areas also received nearly 16 inches of rainfall. A press release from the White House described the natural disaster as "likely to rank among the worst in the nation's history."²

Reality on the Ground in the Aftermath of Ian

In its wake, millions of Floridians were left without basic necessities like clean drinking water and electricity. During the storm, 99% of Cape Coral lost power,³ and the Sanibel Causeway, a series of bridges that connect Sanibel Island to Florida's mainland, was destroyed, leaving residents stranded on the island.⁴

At least 127 people were killed by Hurricane Ian.⁵ Fortunately, all of our employees remained safe, although some lost vehicles and others lost their homes. October 5, 2022, AFAR magazine published a report on the reality on the ground in the aftermath of hurricane Ian, and how you can help:⁶

"In the hours and days that followed, we saw the footage from Fort Myers Beach that looked like a bomb scene, shell-shocked locals ... surveying the damage ...

In Fort Myers Beach, one of places hardest hit by Ian's wrath, authorities estimate over 80% of the structures will have to be rebuilt, with entire communities having effectively been swept away by the storm surge.

To the north, Pine Island's roads connecting it to the mainland have also been washed away, leaving the island accessible by boat only (if you can find one that has survived the storm) ...

More than 2.5 million people in Florida were without power at the height of the storm-related outages. And some 42,000 linemen – the workers responsible for repairing, maintaining, and installing high-powered electrical lines ... are working tirelessly to restore it to communities here, a process that could take weeks or months.

A friend in Naples tells me exhausted linemen with nowhere to sleep or shower are staying in their trucks, and locals are gathering wet wipes and deodorant for them. On Sunday, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis's office reported that more than 1,600 rescues had been made in Florida so far, with over 1,000 team members dedicated to ongoing search and rescue ...

[A] mother, Callie Brown, and her partner who dumped Christmas decorations from plastic storage bins as water rose to their attic and loaded their three-month-old son and cat inside to swim for their lives down what was once their street ..."

In addition to the [Florida Disaster Fund](#) and [United Way Worldwide](#), local grassroots organizations are also collecting donations to help those most in need.

Examples of the organizations listed in this and other articles⁷ include [Metropolitan Ministries, Collaboratory](#), the [Harry Chapin Food Bank of Southwest Florida](#), [Captains for Clean Water](#), [All Hands and Hearts](#) and [A Voice in the Wilderness Empowerment Center](#), which has been feeding people left homeless after the hurricane.

DeSantis Roundtable at Mercola Headquarters

As reported by CBC News,⁸ an estimated 10,000 Floridians are in temporary shelters after the storm destroyed their homes and apartments. Florida already struggled with a housing shortage before the storm, thanks to the influx of people escaping tyranny in other states over the past couple of years.

“ The issues of displacement and homelessness were among the top concerns shared by our CEO, Steve Rye, during Gov. Ron DeSantis’ October 12 roundtable discussion, which took place at the Mercola Market in Cape Coral. ”

Hurricane Ian took many homes down to their bare foundations, making rebuilding a lengthy process. Volunteers and out-of-state aid workers who are helping in the cleanup and recovery also need places to stay, and in some cases are paying up to three times the normal price for a rental. Residents can’t afford such exorbitant prices, especially as many have also lost their jobs as businesses were wrecked.

Taken together, the situation has become rather untenable. Many have no choice but to relocate, either to another county or another state altogether. The issues of displacement and homelessness – which directly affect some of our own staff members – were among the top concerns shared by our CEO, Steve Rye, during Gov. Ron DeSantis’ October 12 roundtable discussion,^{9,10,11} which took place at the [Mercola Market in Cape Coral](#). As reported by WKMG ClickOrlando:¹²

“Accompanying DeSantis at the 2:15 p.m. roundtable were secretaries Dane Eagle of the Department of Economic Opportunity and Melanie Griffin of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, Florida Education Commissioner Manny Diaz Jr. and Laura DiBella, deputy secretary of Enterprise Florida.

The group faced questions from South Floridian residents and business owners keen on hearing the latest state efforts to help their communities bounce back from Ian’s destruction ...

On the topic of temporary housing, DeSantis reiterated the recent launch of [FEMA’s Transitional Sheltering Assistance program](#) in Florida, with many

Floridians in areas hit hard by Ian now eligible for FEMA-funded temporary housing as their own property undergoes repairs or otherwise.”

Other Local Concerns and Updates on Recovery Efforts

Robbie Roepstorff, president of Sanibel Island’s Edison National Bank, reviewed the most urgent needs of the local banking industry, which included “securing electrical access, funding commercial restoration of flooded or otherwise damaged banks and keeping employees on a good payroll.”

Roepstorff also suggested the state take action to prevent property owners whose properties have been affected from receiving property tax notices for their now destroyed or nonexistent homes. DeSantis promised accommodations will be made, but didn’t get further into specifics.¹³

Other concerns and requests for aid raised by local business owners included:¹⁴

Mountains of debris, making for a generally unsafe environment for residents, in addition to presenting difficulties for the recovery effort

Widespread supply chain issues affecting construction materials and business equipment that need to be replaced

Lack of business financing and emergency bridge loans to cover expenses and meet payroll

Need for more rapid construction permits, as well as labor

Need for a temporary relaxing of local codes to allow property owners to place trailers on their properties while rebuilding their main homes – a strategy DeSantis said he supports

Need for mental health support services

Many residents still do not have power and/or internet restored, which also hampers recovery efforts

DeSantis Praised for His Leadership

DeSantis also received a lot of praise for his quick and robust response to the crisis. As just one example, Marty Harrity, a co-owner of Doc Ford's Rum Bar and Grille, and the Dixie Fish Co., praised the speed with which the state was able to erect a temporary bridge to replace the Sanibel Causeway. "It's miraculous," he said. DeSantis agreed, saying "Nobody thought we would be able to do that this soon."

Thoughts on Rebuilding for Improved Resilience

As reported by The Washington Post,¹⁵ the private home insurance market is also caving after the calamity of hurricane Ian, and many homeowners may find themselves facing high out-of-pocket costs to rebuild, or be forced to take their insurer to court:¹⁶

"The home-insurance business was in trouble even before Hurricane Ian tore across the state last month. Big insurers were taking their business elsewhere, smaller ones were going broke, costs due to litigation and fraud had soared, and so had premiums.

The private market was pulling back as the risk of weather-related damage mounted, leaving homeowners to buy protection from the state-backed Citizens Property Insurance Corp. and the federal National Flood Insurance Program – or else to go uninsured.

This creaking system could be flattened altogether by Ian. Expect an epidemic of new litigation as insurers and policy holders fight over what destroyed their homes. (Standard policies cover damage from wind but not from flooding.) Costs to private insurers alone could reach \$63 billion.

This worsening mess proves, for the umpteenth time, that rebuilding homes and other structures isn't good enough: The public and private treatment of weather-related risks needs to go back to the drawing board ... the current approach discourages responsible choices on what gets built and where."

The article goes on to review how insurance, hidden state subsidies and mortgage securitization contribute to the problem, and while the Bloomberg editors who penned it are clearly Great Reset supporters, they do make some good points on rebuilding to improve rather than undermine resiliency over time:

"... policy makers owe it to voters to ... attend to fundamentals. An approach that prioritizes rebuilding and carrying on as before, rather than reducing risk and improving resilience, is a formula for continually escalating harms ...

The government needs to understand how its pre- and post-disaster interventions interact, and get its countless agencies and programs on the same page.

Gather and disseminate location-based information about climate-related risks; use that information to guide infrastructure investment; and so far as politics allows, confront businesses and households with the true costs of their choices.

Curbing subsidies through the federal flood-insurance program is difficult but indispensable. Urge or require property owners in high-risk areas to insure themselves.

Oblige states to cover a bigger share of recovery spending. Condition new federal investment on disaster-planning and mitigation ... Help the victims, to be sure. But concentrate as well on ensuring that next time, they'll be fewer and better prepared."

We Need Your Help More Than Ever Before

These challenges will not be our downfall. On the contrary, they will make us stronger. Any time you stand up to adversity, it strengthens your resiliency, and I'm certain we, as a business, and Florida as a whole, will be better for it in the end. That said, this past month has definitely stretched us thin.

We want to thank everyone who has reached out with concerns and well wishes. Many have also reached out asking how they may assist. The challenges of the past few weeks, from our website being hacked to surviving a Category 4 hurricane, are unlike anything we've faced before. We got knocked down, but not for long. We have a lot of rebuilding to do still, but we are back on our feet.

If you'd like to help, the [Mercola Market](#) store is up and running and our fulfillment centers are open and able to ship products. So, if you need anything from the Mercola Market, you can support us by shopping there. We do need your help as we continue to support our community in rebuilding homes and businesses.

We're committed, as always, to help you optimize your health and build your own resilience against the many threats facing us these days. Make sure you're getting our daily newsletter and sign up for a free subscription to my Substack at [TakeControl.Substack.com](#).

Sources and References

- ¹ [WFTL September 28, 2022](#)
- ² [The White House September 30, 2022](#)
- ³ [Cape Coral, Hurricane Ian Recovery September 30, 2022](#)
- ⁴ [NPR September 30, 2022](#)
- ⁵ [ABC News October 12, 2022](#)
- ⁶ [AFAR October 5, 2022](#)
- ⁷ [ABC Action News October 4, 2022](#)
- ⁸ [CBC October 2, 2022](#)
- ⁹ [Fox4Now October 12, 2022](#)
- ^{10, 12, 13} [ClickOrlando October 12, 2022](#)
- ^{11, 14} [Fort Myers Beach Talk October 12, 2022](#)
- ^{15, 16} [Washington Post October 13, 2022](#)