

Tampa Bay Times

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★★★ THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2017 | \$1

SWEATING, WAITING

» As a third of Florida waits for power to return, heat takes a toll on seniors.

» Irma could make traveling more miserable if a highway gets blocked.



JIM DAMASKE | Times

Prospect Towers residents, from left, Nancy Bivins, Josie Johnson and Karen Datkun enjoy the breeze from two fans set up in a common area of the 17-story senior residence Wednesday in Clearwater. The building was on its third day without power. How did the residents cope with no air conditioning, no lights and no power to cook? Story, 6A.

BY CAITLIN JOHNSTON AND JUSTINE GRIFFIN
Times Staff Writers

The lights are back for more than half of those who lost power during Hurricane Irma's trek through Florida.

But that's little consolation for the third of the state that remained without air conditioning or electricity well into the third day after the storm.

As of 6 p.m. Wednesday, just under 3.3 million energy customers were still in the dark as utilities were mounting one of the biggest power restoration efforts in the country's history.

At the peak of the outage on Monday, 6.7 million customers — roughly 64 percent of the state — were powerless.

Who's still out where?

The highest number of power outages are in South Florida, where about 398,000 Florida Power and Light customers in Miami-Dade and nearly 294,000 in Broward remain without power.

Duke Energy reported more than 584,000 accounts without power Wednesday evening, including about 186,000 in Pinellas and nearly 45,000 in Pasco.

Tampa Electric has just over 177,000 still without power — about 141,000 of those in Hillsborough.

Duke Energy officials said they expect to have power restored for essentially all customers in Pinellas and Pasco counties by midnight Friday. Those in Citrus, Hernando and Polk counties might have to wait as long as midnight Sunday.

Almost all Tampa Electric households should get power back by Sunday, Tampa Electric president Gordon Gillette said.

Pinellas County was the hardest hit in Tampa Bay, with almost 80 percent of the

» See POWER, 7A



CHERIE DIEZ | Times

The Santa Fe River reaches the edges of Interstate 75 near O'Leno State Park in High Springs.

River's rise may shut part of I-75

BY KRISTEN M. CLARK
Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

TALLAHASSEE — A rapidly rising river — caused by the historic flooding that Jacksonville saw Monday — threatens to force 36 miles of Interstate 75 to completely shut down in north-central Florida, from Interstate 10 in Lake City south to U.S. 441 in Alachua.

The swelling Santa Fe River, which closed two nearby highways late Wednesday, was the latest headache for motorists trav-

eling back south after evacuating because of Hurricane Irma.

Stretches of U.S. 41 and U.S. 27 north of High Springs — on the border of Alachua and Columbia counties — were blocked off because of rising water under bridges that spanned the Santa Fe, state officials said. Drivers were re-routed on local detours.

Officials said late Wednesday that I-75 would remain open, but it could still be closed if the Santa Fe continued its rise. An estimate

of when it would close was not available.

Closing this stretch of I-75 would force drivers onto long detours that could add as much as 200 or 300 miles to an already-grueling trip home.

The I-75 bridge over the Santa Fe River near mile marker 408 "remains safe and passable," state transportation officials said earlier Wednesday.

"The river is expected to crest

» See I-75, 10A

Eight die in nursing home without AC

BY CAROL MARBIN MILLER, CHARLES RABIN, DAVID J. NEAL AND CAITLIN OSTROFF
Miami Herald

Eight Hollywood nursing home residents died Wednesday morning in a building left without air conditioning after Irma roared through South Florida, according to Hollywood police and the city.

The home is directly across from a hospital.

Hollywood police have begun a criminal investigation into the deaths at the Rehabilitation Center at Hollywood Hills, while the Agency for Health Care Administration and Department of Children & Families have begun their own investigations.

The owner of the nursing home also is an officer of Larkin Community Hospital, a medical center with a troubled history.

Gov. Rick Scott declared in a statement, "I'm going to aggressively demand answers on how this tragic event took place. Although the details of these reported deaths are still under investigation, this situation is unfathomable."

Later, Scott directed AHCA to issue an emergency moratorium for the facility, prohibiting it from admitting any patients until the order is lifted.

Tuesday afternoon, the center reported to AHCA that it had power and access to fans

» See DEATHS, 6A

Not a priority

Official says calls for state help unanswered at Hillsborough site.
Nation, 6A

Gas station turns into a staging area

Valrico residents unite for a community relief effort to assist people who lost their homes in Alafia River flooding. Local, 1B

Damage delays opener at Freefall Theatre

After \$90,000 in water damage at Freefall, the world premiere of *White Fang* has been moved from Sept. 30 to Oct. 7. Local, 8B

Bucs return with tales from Hurricane Irma

Some players left town for areas farther north, but one player decided to hunker down at One Buc Place with his family. Sports, 1C

The storm has not canceled everything

Hurricane Irma has taken a toll on the Tampa Bay area's entertainment schedule, but we'll let you know what is still a go. Etc, 2B

Thunderstorms

8 a.m. 76° Noon 83° 4 p.m. 88° 8 p.m. 83°
40% chance of rain
More, back page of Sports



© Times Publishing Co.
Vol. 134 No. 52