



# 1926 Hurricane Destroys Southwest Florida

## Fact Sheet

Event date: September 11 – 22, 1926  
Minimum pressure: 934.98 mb  
Highest storm surge:  
14 feet in Miami  
6 feet in Ft. Myers

Landfall pressure: 934.98 mb  
Death toll: ~373  
Peak winds:  
150 mph in Miami  
100 mph in Punta Rassa



**Figure 1.** Damage to Knight's Chapel in Nokomis, FL

### Summary of event:

Tropical storm force winds began in Lee County late in the evening on September 17, 1926. Storm warnings were placed along the southeast coast of Florida at noon on the 17<sup>th</sup>. At 11:00 pm those storm warnings became hurricane warnings. A mere 7 hours later the eye of the storm enveloped Miami, FL. The storm made landfall at 6:10 am in Miami, FL as a Category 4. The storm then exited the southwest coast of Florida near Bonita Springs, where the eye passed over Punta Rassa, FL at 3:15 pm on September 18, 1926 with a minimum pressure of 28.05 inches.

Fort Myers, FL experienced a storm surge of 4 to 6 feet above normal. The storm flooded the entire island of Sanibel with salt water, and forced almost half of the island's residents to relocate. The *Naples Star* reported that automobiles parked in the streets were, "filled with muddy saltwater and sea creatures. Those animals later died when the water subsided leaving a stench that lingered for weeks." An excerpt from Mr. Reardon's personal journal stated that as he exited his shelter he saw, "whole sides of apartment blocks had been torn away... Everyone was looking for a drink of water – and there was none to be had... [There was] a boy covered in blood running blindly across the street." Similar accounts of destruction abound throughout the path of this Major Hurricane.

According to a report by Christopher Landsea for the National Hurricane Center, the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926 ranks as number one for damage costs as normalized to 1995 dollars by inflation.



Figure 2. Proposed storm tack according to the National Hurricane Center.



Fort Lauderdale, FL



Nokomis, FL



Fort Myers, FL



Fort Myers, FL

Figure 3. Damage photographs and flooded streets.



**Boca Grande, FL**



**Boca Grande, FL**



**Boca Grande, FL**



**Boca Grande, FL**

**Figure 4.** Flood waters and damage photographs.



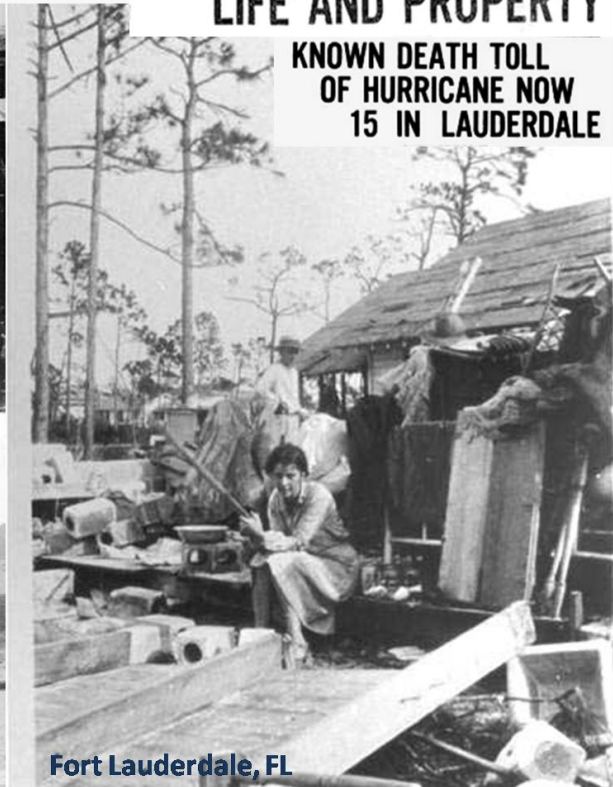
Seven Identified, One Unknown Dead In Lauderdale  
After Hurricane Strikes Lower East Coast With  
Hollywood And Miami Worst Sufferers

HURRICANE CLAIMS  
HEAVY TOLL OF  
LIFE AND PROPERTY

KNOWN DEATH TOLL  
OF HURRICANE NOW  
15 IN LAUDERDALE



Fort Myers, FL



Fort Lauderdale, FL



Arcadia, FL

Figure 5. Newspaper headlines and damage photographs.

**Links for more information:**

[http://www.miamibeach411.com/History/photo\\_1926\\_hurricane\\_1.html](http://www.miamibeach411.com/History/photo_1926_hurricane_1.html),

<http://www.aoml.noaa.gov/hrd/Landsea/USdmg/#table7>,

<http://www.worldpolicy.org/projects/globalrights/environment/report/index.html>,

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