

Florida gets hit by hurricanes, but who could have predicted we'd have four within six weeks this year? The city of Lake Wales in Polk County has the distinction of being the geographical center of the Florida peninsula. It also marks the spot where the paths of Hurricanes Charley and Frances crisscrossed the state this year within three weeks of each other. That's the kind of déjà vu nobody needs.

After the first two knockout blows, Hurricane Ivan and Hurricane Jeanne kept everyone on pins and needles until they landed their own left hooks and scored two more major blows to Florida. Even areas not affected by wind damage were impacted by large amounts of rainfall from the storms. As those systems moved inland they spawned hundreds of tornados and flooding in states up and down the eastern half of the United States. While Florida was grabbing headlines as the point of landfall, many other states were being devastated by flooding from the slow-moving storms. There's enough misery to share for everyone east of the Mississippi.

Several lessons have been learned or relearned:

- Native trees fared better in the storms than imported specimen trees.
- Beach erosion is a natural process. Living on barrier islands is a gamble.
- Shortcuts in construction lead to lots of structural damage.
- Trees and power lines do not make good neighbors.
- A house sitting in a grove of trees is a sitting duck.
- Waterfront and low-lying property is prone to flooding.
- People should learn to be more self-sufficient instead of depending on the government.
- Florida would never have been developed if not for air conditioning.

Debris cleanup has become a cottage industry. I saw dozens of trucks from other states parked at motels because the county doesn't have enough manpower or vehicles to get the job done. It took more than a month before the piles of debris along our street were picked up, and they're still far from finished.

Trying to Reason with 'Cane Season

BY JOEL JACKSON



**SUPERINTENDENTS
FIND THERE'S MORE
THAN ONE 'EYE' IN
F-L-O-R-I-D-A.**

All the debris generated from golf course tree damage is sitting in piles with nowhere to go unless someone invests in a heavy-duty chipper. Some courses won't have to buy mulch for a long time. Insurance companies and course owners are going toe-to-toe over how much course damage will be covered after which deductible is paid on which hurricane. The loss of revenue from courses being closed is staggering.

But there must be some silver linings behind the storm clouds. I may be reaching, but here are a few:

- A lot of big trees causing thin turfgrass are now firewood or mulch.
- People might believe us now when we say, "Mother Nature rules."
- Not having a phone for a few days wasn't always a bad thing.
- Those with old irrigation systems didn't have to water very much.
- Club members appreciated the staff efforts and helped clean up or cooked meals for the crew.
- Clubs and vendors loaned, shared or hauled equipment to those in need.
- Everyone will now have a hurricane plan, and that includes utility companies.
- People got to know their neighbors.
- There is something that can limit the use of cell phones.

People are measured by how they handle adversity, and I'm betting that superintendents will prevail at the end of this struggle to get their courses back in shape. The real test will be for owners and members as they grapple with the reality that nature is a force beyond their control.

Meanwhile, my windows are still boarded up and I'm keeping my television tuned to The Weather Channel.

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