

Hurricane Irma

By Nora Quinn

The category five Hurricane dubbed “Irma” passed directly through Polk County. There were deaths and injuries around the state, and Lakeland Electric estimated that 78,000 of their customers lost power, and 15,000,000 Floridians did as well. Speaking to two of the students at Polk State Collegiate High School, this author performed before and after interviews in order to fully understand the intense impact that was brought upon our community.

Before (09/08/2017)

Nora Quinn: Hi guys! Please introduce yourselves and tell what part of Polk County you live in.

Zachary Martin: My name is Zachary Martin and I live in Auburndale.



“The storm was very difficult for me and my family,” Israa told me, “but I know many people had it worse so I’m just searching for ways I can help.”

Israa Saoud: Hello! My name is Israa Saoud and I live in the south of Lakeland.

NQ: Thank you so much for taking the time to do these interviews with me. So, how what type of things did your family do in order to prepare for

the arrival of Hurricane Irma?

ZM: My family prepared during the week leading up to the Hurricane by buying cases of water, a generator, and some gasoline.

IS: We grew up in Miami and experienced Hurricane Katrina so we definitely had to rack up on all the essentials. I was fortunate enough to have bought water, gas, batteries, flashlights, and non-perishable food.

NQ: Well I’m glad that you were both relatively well prepared. If you remember any major storm, how was this similar

ZM: This storm was the worst my house has ever endured so I can’t quite say this was similar to any other.

IS: I felt the same chaos back when I experienced Katrina but I have to say that this was more destructive and vivid.

After: (09/18/2017)

NQ: It's so nice to be able to chat with you guys again. How did your home and family fare in the storm? Did you lose power?

ZM: Power was lost the night of the storm. Many branches were torn up in my front yard but worst of all, three trees uprooted and fell against my house.

IS: I lost power hours before the eye hit Lakeland. My house flooded while I was sleeping but my father was alert and we were awakened to help soak up the water. We used all our towels, blankets, bedding, and I even had to use some of my clothes. Our pool screens were torn apart and the roots of our Tabebuia tree slowly separated from the earth.

NQ: I'm sorry to hear that, and I'm glad that y'all are both okay. What was the worst part of the storm for you?

ZM: I ended up sleeping through the whole storm since it hit at night, but the worst part was definitely the trees falling on the house and having to remove them later.

IS: The worst part was the flooding but thankfully we took care of it quickly and efficiently..

NQ: That sounds very difficult. How has your family recovered so far?

ZM: My family got the power back within 3 days, and we later were able to clean up our property.

IS: Thank you to Lakeland Electric and their wonderful hard working employees! Our power was restored and I was finally able to begin my college work. Throughout the week, not only did we work on our home, but I supported my community. We

“All we can do is hope and prepare,” Zachary Martin stated in regards to the possibility of yet another hurricane (Maria) hitting Florida.