

Hurricane Ivan Storm Surge Stock Video & Photos

Category 4 Hurricane Ivan photos, video, and chase account

Pensacola Beach Barrier Island, Florida

September 16-17 2004

Mike Theiss, a stormchaser, wrote this account of his Hurricane Ivan experience and how he came to be at the Dome of a Home after the storm passed.

http://www.mthurricane.com/Hurricane_Ivan.htm

Chase Account: I arrived onto Pensacola Beach barrier island around 3:00pm and decided this would be the best place to be to document the effects of storm surge on a barrier island. I found a condominium complex that had a built in parking garage that was 5 floors high and had an additional 10 floors of condos on top. I knew in this location I would be able to document the storm surge and keep my truck safe and prevent it from being swept away as so many cars did. I set up shop and received frequent radar updates from Jim Ponce, Dave Lewison, and Gary Padgett. My laptop was having a few problems and figured I had a few minutes to spare to work on it so I could get a glimpse at the current radar. The storm surge was already all the way up to the sand dunes and the waves crashing offshore were around 10-15 feet high. The sun set and I realized the most intense part of Ivan was going to make landfall at dark and I knew I would not be able to document the huge waves that were predicted to happen because it would be too dark to see. I estimate I experienced sustained winds of 100mph with gusts up to 130mph during the most intense part of the storm that started around midnight. The entire first floor was under water and 10 foot waves were crashing on top of the surge into the building. The waves were huge and every wave that crashed into the building would shake it as if in a minor earthquake. I estimate the highest storm surge the island experienced was around 15 feet. I was getting a bit concerned thinking about what would happen if the storm surge eroded away the sand from underneath the building, would the building sink or just fall over ?? I tried to hide this scary thought into the back of my mind as I was already here and I knew by the morning hours the worst of the storm would be over and I only had a few hours to go. I occasionally shined the spotlight out and witnessed the water rushing over the island like a river you would see while white water rafting, The water was moving very fast and any structures or vehicles in it's way would be swept away! I documented water getting blown through concrete block walls from the raw power of the wind driving it through. The entire night I heard houses being destroyed and huge waves crashing onto the building that would produce a chilling low frequency rumbling bass sound.

Daybreak! I snoozed in the truck from 5am-7am and the sunlight woke me up to a complete war zone! Major Destruction ! Ummm, were did the roads go, GONE ! The roads were completely washed away and the area was completely devastated. The sand dunes were gone and many houses were swept off their foundations. I shot some video for a few hours and waited until the surge completely subsided. Around 1:00pm I attempted to drive off the island, but got my truck stuck in the sand under a mile into the drive. I decided I could walk off the island if I could find a safe route without stepping into any sinkholes. The wind was still blowing hard with some gusts up to 60mph. I was getting completely sand blasted by every gust and got tons of sand embedded in my hair, ears, and eyes. I decided to carry what ever I could carry on my back that would keep me alive, including my camera and laptop. So, I was now

on foot carrying 2 camera bags, a laptop case, a pillowcase full of food, and a gallon of Hawaiian punch. Just when I thought I had seen it all, I witnessed a house on stilts lean back as the back stilts sunk about 10 feet into the sand. I wasn't able to capture this because it happened so fast and the thick sand blowing in the wind would ruin my camera instantly if I pulled it out of the bag. I started to realize that this day was going to be long and challenging and I had to really go into survival mode as the soft spots in the sand were becoming more frequent and I didn't want to sink into one of these sinkholes never to be found again. I walked for what seemed eternity into the sandblast and caught a glimpse of someone walking in the distance, Another human being, Hello ! I yelled. It was Kerry Sanders of NBC news and he was snapping pictures of the destruction and instantly introduced himself and asked what I was doing on the island and if I needed a place to stay. We went back to the "Dome Home", where NBC news correspondent Kerry Sanders, NBC news cameraman Craig White, NBC news sound engineer Chuck Stewart, and the owner of the "Dome Home" Mark Sigler rode out the storm. They were working hard trying to figure out a way to get their video off the island as NBC news and myself were the only journalist on the island to document this event. I spent the next 24 hours in the "Dome Home" and documented the story along with them as we walked around the island in disbelief and shot video and ran into a elderly couple in shock who rode out the storm in their house and shot a survival story of a man who's house completely fell apart around him and was thrown into the storm surge and luckily was able to crawl into another house and lay in the bathtub with a mattress over his head for the remainder of the storm. I picked the brains of the NBC crew during dinner on their past experiences and let me tell you, these guys are some of the best in the business and have been in the media for a long time and have covered allot of huge stories, including being embedded with the U.S. troops in the Iraq war. I was able to catch a ride off the island by boat and felt like kissing the solid ground I stood on when I stepped off the boat. I'm Alive

A black rectangular box containing the name "Mike Theiss" written in a white, cursive script.

Special Thanks to Mark Sigler owner of the "Dome Home"

More information on the "Dome Home" - www.domeofahome.com

Special Thanks to the NBC news crew that helped me out while in distress, NBC should be proud to have them apart of their team !

NBC news correspondent Kerry Sanders article on Hurricane Ivan - [Click Here](#)