Why Waffle House Closures Indicate a Code Red for Florida As Hurricane Ian Makes Landfall



Hurricane Ian is approaching the West Coast of Florida with 150+ mph winds, making landfall just past before 4:30 PM on Cayo Costa near Fort Meyers and Cape Coral.

As the storm continues to strengthen and barrel its way through the Sunshine State, many businesses are taking action as Ian gears up to an almost Category 5 level hurricane.

Watch the latest updates on the storm in real time below:

[embedded content]

One business that made an alarming decision to close its doors

is Waffle House, which has historically been known to be a trusted indicator of just how bad a storm or natural disaster will be thanks to what's been called the Waffle House Index.

The index has three levels – green (restaurants will operate as normal) yellow (restaurants will operate with limited power or menu offerings) and red (restaurants are to be closed.)

Waffle House told *Entrepreneur* that the company has currently shuttered 21 locations from Brandeon to Naples, Florida, noting that those locations are in the "direct path of the storm" with some in "flood-prone areas" as Ian ravages onward.

The Waffle House Index has often been viewed as the standard for determining the severity of a storm by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as locations are made to be equipped with food and emergency supplies in times of distress in order to serve the local communities in times of need.

"The Waffle House Index does not belong to us but was created by former FEMA Director Craig Fugate as a way to help FEMA workers to determine where the hardest hit areas of a community were after a storm in order to get critical resources there first," Waffle House Vice President of Public Relations Njeri Boss told *Entrepreneur.*

Many on Twitter made note of the Waffle House closures and what that could mean for the Sunshine State as Ian continues to make its way towards land.

> *The six horsemen of an impending hurricane, in order of severity:*
> *– Publix begins selling hurricane cakes*
> *– Midwestern family starts checking in*
> *– Disney closes*
> *– Editor asks you to check out plywood supply at Home Depot*
> *– Jim Cantore arrives*
> *– Waffle House closes*

> — Kati Kokal (@katikokal) September 27, 2022

> They've closed the Waffle Houses in the storm's path.
>
> If you didn't take it seriously before, this is The Sign.
>
> You still have time to go, folks.
>
> — Rick Wilson (@TheRickWilson) September 28, 2022

> the key to hurricane panic is the following:
>
> 1. if Disney closes
> 2. if you go to the store to buy water, and even the Dasani is gone. if the dasani water is still there, even if all the others are gone, you're fine.
> 3. if Waffle House closes
>
> —

> Anyone coming to the United States on vacation should be told at customs that if a local Waffle House closes down it's a sign of a real serious emergency.
>
> — devon sawa (@DevonESawa) September 28, 2022

> Waffle House in Fort Myers just shut down. Shits about to get real
>
> — Parker Slater (@parks_24) September 28, 2022

Many continue to view the chain's closures as an ominous sign for what's to come.

"If you get there and the Waffle House is closed? That's really bad," former FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate said. "That's where you go to work."

Waffle House maintained that the chain has been (and will continue to be) monitoring the storm’s path.

“We continue to monitor weather conditions, work closely with local government officials, emergency management teams, and our local leadership in the field to make appropriate decisions based on the circumstances in each location,” Boss told *Entrepreneur.*

This is a developing story.

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