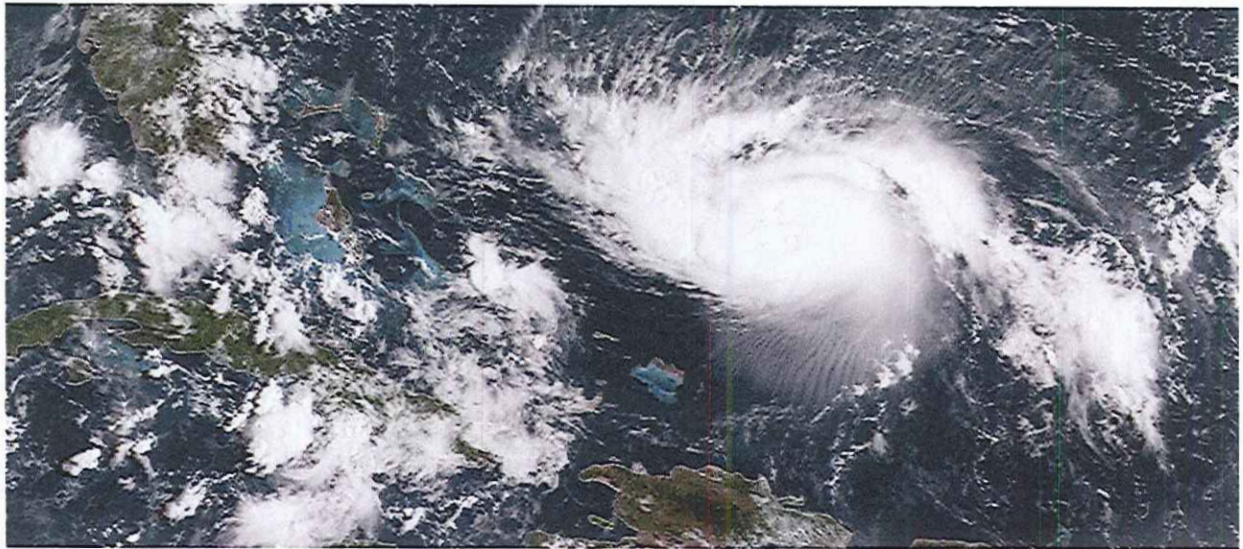


AGENT

Agents brace for Hurricane Dorian, step up to serve the community

Real estate professionals across Florida were checking on clients Friday as a potentially disastrous storm inched toward their state



NOAA via Getty Images

BY **JIM DALRYMPLE II** | Staff Writer
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When Tiffany McQuaid went to work Friday morning, she didn't go to a bunch of listing appointments. She didn't meet with home inspectors. And there were no open houses to hit.

Instead, the president of McQuaid & Company in Naples, Florida, spent Friday coordinating with her 32-person team as they dragged patio furniture inside buildings, put hurricane shutters on houses and raced around town taking down their own yard signs.

They were literally preparing for a disaster.

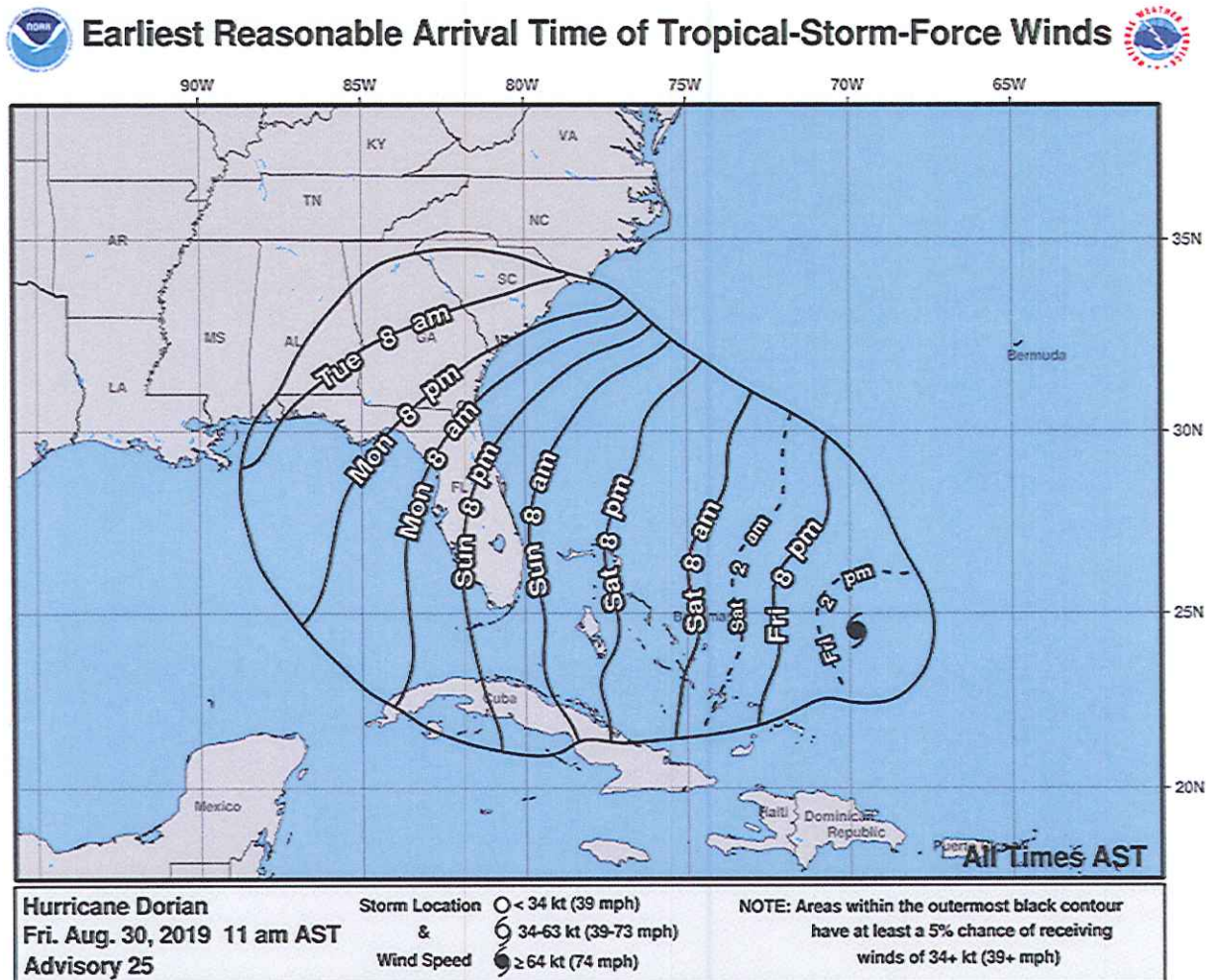
"We're just going around making sure at all of our listings, that everything's good," McQuaid told Inman Friday. "We're methodically going house by house."



Roy Head, a member of McQuaid's team, moves patio furniture inside a condo Friday before Hurricane Dorian hits. | Credit: Tiffany McQuaid

Naples sits near the southwest tip of Florida, a state that right now is waiting for the arrival of [Hurricane Dorian](#), which strengthened to a Category 3 storm Friday. On its website, the National Weather Service (NWS) [described](#) Dorian as “EXTREMELY DANGEROUS” and said that it poses a significant threat to both Florida and the Bahamas.

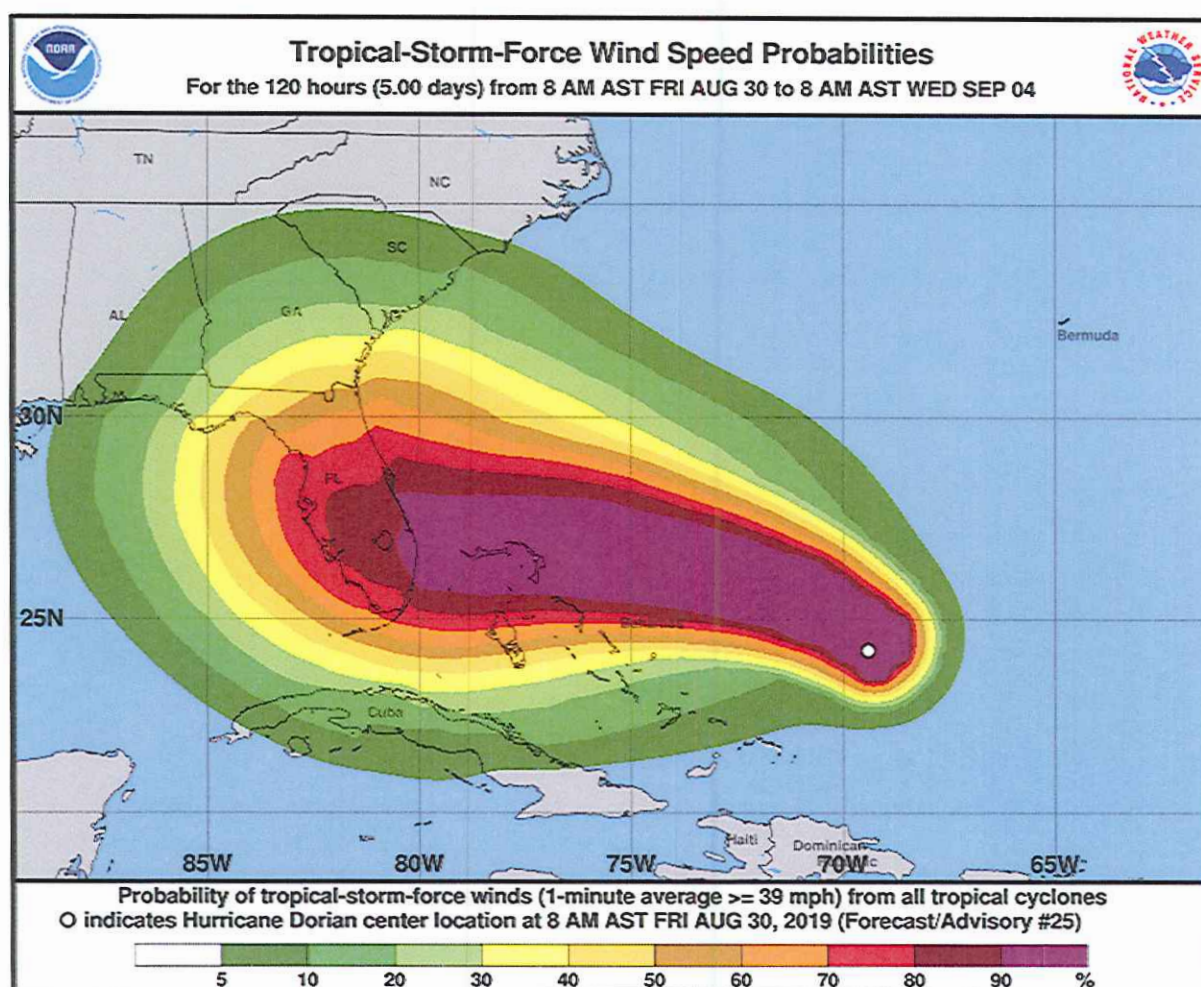
As of Friday afternoon, the NWS estimated that Dorian could begin sweeping across Florida early next week. The storm could dump anywhere between two and 15 [inches of rain](#) on parts of the state and [bring winds](#) of up to 90 miles per hour in some areas.



Those conditions could be cataclysmic. An [analysis released Thursday by analytics firm CoreLogic](#) showed that Dorian's storm surge is threatening 668,052 housing units on Florida's east coast. Collectively, those homes represent a reconstruction cost of \$144.6 billion, according to CoreLogic.

An analysis from realtor.com, provided to Inman Friday, further found that "6.5 million households, \$1.5 trillion worth of residential real estate, and 7.3 percent of current U.S. inventory await the brunt of the storm."

"Based on our recent history with major storms, the damage from wind and storm surge waves is likely to be severe," realtor.com senior economist George Ratiu said in a statement. "Based on an analysis by realtor.com of the top 5 metro markets in the storm's path, it is expected to impact over \$1.5 trillion in residential real estate, in addition to commercial properties. We expect the economic impact to be broader, depending on the storm's subsequent path and duration."



As dire as all of that sounds, however, McQuaid was taking it in stride Friday afternoon.

“This is not our first rodeo,” she explained.

McQuaid went on to recall that in September of 2017, Hurricane Irma also slammed into Florida and “ended up hitting us in our area pretty dramatically.” Power was out in certain neighborhoods, trees were knocked down, and flooding was widespread.

To cope, McQuaid’s team opened its office and provided food and water. The building still had electricity, so they let people come charge their devices there as well.

Tiffany McQuaid

McQuaid herself also began checking on homes, starting with those of clients but eventually expanding her efforts to include the properties of anyone who got word that she was in the area and available.

“I checked probably about 212 homes in a period of less than a week,” she recalled. “It was crazy. I was wading through standing water. I felt like a crocodile hunter.”

Though Dorian hasn’t arrived yet, McQuaid is already taking a similarly community-minded approach this time

around. Because many of her clients live out of state, she and her team are currently doing the rounds checking on their properties and battening down all the proverbial, and literal, hatches. She also described her team driving around the city to distribute food and water and flashlights to anyone they know who might need it.

“We are in full hurricane preparedness mode,” she added.

Jonathan Keith, who leads the JK Team at Compass in Fort Lauderdale, was also getting ready for the coming storm Friday. He told Inman that real estate agents are actually among the best people positioned to offer help to the community.

“We’re at the top of the pyramid when it comes to knowing everything that’s going on in town,” he explained, adding that agents should particularly try to stay connected with local elected and emergency officials.

Jonathan Keith

Keith also said that he and his team members were touching base with their clients, making sure

everyone has enough fuel, and having service workers dispatched to help with any preparations clients might need.

That was a recurring theme among agents who spoke with Inman Friday. Jill Hertzberg, one of the two “Jills” who lead [the Jills Zeder Group](#) in Miami, said that her team was also making calls, moving furniture and pulling up yard signs, which can get caught in the wind and “really hurt something” while airborne.

For the next few days, however, Hertzberg and her team are mostly playing a waiting game and keeping an eye on properties as clients evacuate.

“I think in general a lot of people right now are leaving,” she said. “They don’t want to be in harm’s way, and they don’t want to be without electricity.”

Jill Hertzberg

Sean Frank, the founder of Orlando brokerage Mainframe Real Estate, is also getting ready with his team, though they have the added complications that come with property management.

Mainframe runs about 80 rental units, in addition to working with conventional buyers and sellers, so Friday, Frank’s team was working to get word to tenants that they ought to bring in potted plants and avoid taping their windows (which Frank said doesn’t actually increase safety).

The good news is that none of the agents who spoke with Inman Friday thought Hurricane Dorian would have significant long-term impacts on the local real estate market, with McQuaid noting that in the case of Irma, the storm overall “didn’t impact pricing at all.”

That said, there could be shorter-term snags. Frank noted that closings next week will all probably get put on hold as buyers opt to have post-hurricane property inspections.

“There’s probably going to be inspections on almost every property,” he speculated. “The last time we had a hurricane, more than half the properties had a re-inspection.”

That process could be further complicated if electricity in the area goes out.

Sean Frank

“It’s going to definitely slow things down,” he explained. “The bottleneck is getting utilities turned on for most people.”

Still, agents are optimistic that Florida will recover. And while a hurricane can be, of course, a natural disaster, several agents also said that it also represents a chance to do what they do best: build the community.

“To be honest, I love hurricanes,” Keith said, “because I think it’s the best way to bring the community together.”

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