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Conch Bar, Middle Caicos

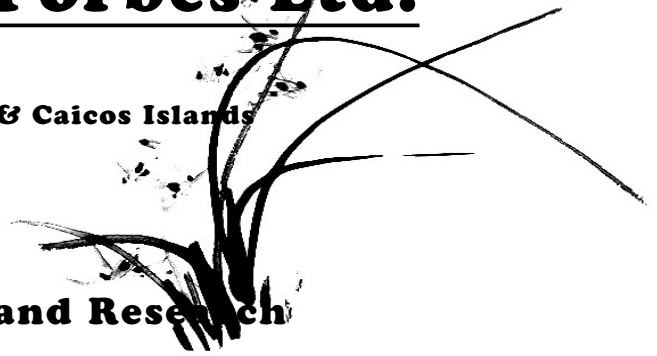
c/o P.O. Box 1059 Providenciales, Turks & Caicos Islands

Office Tel/Fax: 1- 649 946-6132

Email : forbesrealty@tcway.tc

Website : www.forbesrealtytc.com

Direct Cell : 1-649-231-4884



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Middle Caicos Update after Hanna and Ike!

The end of August, with the annual Middle Caicos EXPO festival, and the island filled with friends, family and visitors. The summer heat was on, temperatures over 100 degrees every day with the sea a tepid relief. A fine turnout to a terrific weekend of fun – which then left many people stranded here as Tropical Storm Hanna arrived slowly Sunday August 30th.

As we expected just a bad storm, many did no major hurricane preparation, but she came on as a Category 1 hurricane and stayed, and stayed, and stayed until September 4th. The rainfall during those days was incredible, and the winds drove rain into every doorstep, nook or cranny possible as Hanna sat on TCI, crawling westward at 2 miles/hr!! All the local ponds were overflowing across the roads, most front yards impassable, and the villages of Bambarra and Lorimers became cut off totally, even from each other. Power and telephone and cable TV faded away as days of wet wild weather continued, lines broken, equipment flooded and services cut off. Road surfacing floated off the curry base like icing knifed off a cake, until finally, even the new causeway buckled, twisted with bad damage by the unending forces of water. Tidal surges were enormous and so much fresh water fell as to discolour the sea in the channel.

By Friday September 5th, the sky was finally clear, and the runway dry enough to allow visitors to depart for home by plane, leaving vehicles behind. But the incoming news of Hurricane Ike was deadly serious – on track directly for TCI - a category 4 hurricane, concentrated and powerful, due to hit us Saturday by late afternoon. All day Friday and Saturday windows were boarded, doors sandbagged, and supplies replenished as far as possible with quick boat trips to North and Provo. The shelters, not used or really needed during Hurricane Hanna, with quickly readied with emergency equipment and supplies, as radio encouraged folk to fully protect themselves.



Hunkered down, we hid in the house behind shuttered windows and doors, listening to the pounding, creaking, whipping, slashing, banging...noise of awesome power. The eye was forecast to pass over in the wee morning hours, but no true quiet or calm fell upon us. Coming out of the house Sunday afternoon, once the storm had mostly passed, I closed my eyes approaching the corner, scared that I would see only devastation. Most folk suffered leaks, some interior sheetrock falling or damaged, but only one hilltop home in Conch Bar lost its roof. Trees are leafless, shrubbery flattened and the high water levels of the ponds have not fallen.

Middle Caicos was spared the brunt of the storm, lying just far enough north of the direct path that winds here only lifted shingles, not roofs. And mercifully, Hurricane Ike was a dry storm, with little rain, as no one could have handled more after the drenching of Hanna.

Bambarra can be reached but Montpelier pond still overflows the main road with significant contiguous property under water. Lorimers is still cut off and no one has yet ventured out to Wild Cow Run or Long Bay to access the situation there. Saltwater pushed up from the sea into shore over 100 ft, with the sand bank now carved steep along Bambarra beach and many curvy roads have wash out damage. But overall it is astonishing however, the little major damage has occurred.

I write today on my laptop, with power secured in Conch Bar, fans, stereo and refrigerator humming along. Bambarra and Lorimers will remain without power for some further time until water recedes, lines and poles can be restored. The Middle Caicos substation provides our power as the power connection to North across the causeway is gone, and diesel fuel is trundled over every few days. And importantly, as I write, the causeway is being cleared and leveled to be minimally passable for cars again, with rebuilding a much later chore. From September 17th, the causeway will be open again.

By next week I should be back on track at our new Middle Caicos office, unpacking boxes of files and equipment safely stored during the storms, contacting clients to resume projects, and forging ahead in our island life. If you would like any properties investigated for damage or any further information, please let me know. Hopefully by month end I will have a full realty update on Middle Caicos prepared for sending to you.

Email, fax and regular telephone will be weeks before restored here on Middle Caicos, but I will do my best to get to Provo each week to stay in regular communication. My cell phone works, most of the time, but I ask your patience if you wish to reach me : 1-649-231-4884.

It is absolutely amazing to be so blessed, especially as the destruction in Grand Turk and South Caicos was massive. Each morning I wake in true thankfulness, and am humbled. God bless and keep us all.

Cheers, Sara

Email : forbesrealty@tcway.tc Office : 1-649-946-6132 Cell : 1-649-231-4884
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