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Milton

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Clearwater, the hurricane center said, after parts of the area were blasted with more than 16 inches of rain. Additional rainfall amounts of 2 to 4 inches are expected across portions of the east-central to northeast Florida coast through Thursday morning, the hurricane center said in its morning update.

"This rainfall will continue to bring the risk of considerable flash and urban flooding, along with moderate to major river flooding," the updated warned.

St. Pete Beach resident not allowed to return home yet

David Green, who sheltered at a loved one's home in Valrico, Florida, just east of Tampa, said Hurricane Milton's winds were some of the worst he's experienced. Green, 62, – whose house in St. Pete Beach had to be completely emptied after it was flooded by Helene – took to the interior hallways and closets as Milton bore down. He, his family and several dogs huddled as they listened to what sounded like branches crash on the roof.

"Streets are flooded here. Lots of trees down," he texted to USA TODAY. "Lots of vinyl and wood fences down in the neighborhood."

Eager to see whether there was any damage at his home, Green hopes he will soon be able to drive into St. Pete Beach. The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office announced early Thursday that all roads into the county, which encompasses St. Pete Beach and the city of St. Petersburg, will be "closed until further notice due to hazardous conditions." Rescue efforts were underway in the county, the sheriff's office said in social media posts Thursday.

'It wasn't too bad': Lt. Dan survives storm on 22-foot sailboat

Meanwhile, Joe Malinowski, who became known as "Lt. Dan" for riding out Milton on his 22-foot sailboat, said he had no problems during the storm, raising his arm in triumph as the sun rose over Tampa Bay on Thursday morning.

Malinowski, 54, had been live-streaming his adventures aboard the Seashell for several days, catching media attention for his plan to stay moored in the harbor as Milton passed.

"The hand of God was over Tampa," Malinowski declared Friday morning. "It wasn't too bad."

Thursday morning, a growing stream of Tampa residents made their way to Bayshore Boulevard to check on Malinowski, whose "Lt. Dan" nickname refers to a "Forrest Gump" movie character. Malinowski is missing his lower left leg.

"You made it! I'm so glad you're safe," Tampa resident Monet Rahall, 28, called down to Malinowski.

Rahall said she had to come check on Malinowski for herself, after watching his videos while she rode out the storm at her nearby home.

"He's an icon," she said. "I saw him on the internet and wanted to see him for myself."

Contributing: Eric Lagatta, Michael Loria and Christopher Cann, USA TODAY; *Jeffrey Meesey and Jennifer Sangalang, Florida Today; Kate Cimini, Fort Myers News-Press;* Reuters

First responders rescue a person early Thursday morning in South Daytona, Fla.
NADIA ZOMORODIAN/DAYTONA BEACH NEWS JOURNAL

The St. Lucie County, Fla., Sherriff's Office lies in ruin after a tornado tore through the area on Wednesday. Reported tornadoes tore through parts of southwest Florida, including in Collier and Lee Counties, causing extensive damage across Fort Myers and Cape Coral, local authorities said.
ERIC HASERT/TREASURE COAST NEWSPAPERS

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