

Back to the Future? A Florida Summer That Feels Familiar

Work has been... quiet. Not in a panic-inducing way. Just noticeably slower than what we've come to expect over the past few years. It's almost like Southwest Florida hit the pause button—something I haven't felt in a long time.

If you've lived here for a while, you know Florida has two main weather seasons: wet and dry. But we locals have always recognized two other seasons: "in-season" and "off-season."

When I first moved here in 2006, the distinction was clear. In-season—October through May—meant packed highways, snowbirds in every grocery aisle, and restaurant wait times that tested your patience. Off-season—June through September—brought quieter streets, open tables, and a general sense of breathing room. That was then.

Around 2018, that seasonal rhythm blurred. Florida became a year-round destination, and the population surge never seemed to take a break. Then came 2020. While the rest of the world hit pause due to COVID-19, our industry—building materials and construction—hit fast-forward. Housing demand exploded. Building never stopped. The growth from 2021 through 2023 was relentless: 24/7, 365 days a year.

But now in 2025? Something feels different again. This summer feels... familiar. Slower. Quieter. Like we've stepped back into the mid-2000s for a breather. And it raises a fair question: Why the change—and why now?

There's no shortage of theories. Economic analysts have their projections. Political pundits have their opinions. But anyone who's lived and worked in Florida over the past decade has seen firsthand the mounting pressures that could be contributing to the shift. Let's talk hurricanes.

When I moved here, people warned me: "Aren't you worried about the hurricanes?" Honestly, I didn't think much of it. Between 2006 and 2017, we barely got a scratch. But then came Hurricane Irma (2017), Hurricane Ian (2022), Hurricane Helene (2024), and just two weeks later, Hurricane Milton. Four major storms in seven years—each one more disruptive than the last. It's more than just wind and water. These storms have had a lasting impact:

- Delayed insurance payouts
- Skyrocketing premiums
- Some properties becoming uninsurable altogether
- Dramatic drops in property values

All this weighs heavily on the housing market, and the cracks are starting to show. Recently, The Wall Street Journal listed Cape Coral as the worst housing market in the U.S.—not just in Florida, but the entire country. That’s a stunning reversal from the boom just two years ago. People are pulling back. Watching their spending. Prioritizing differently. And it’s not just hurricanes or housing—it’s a broader shift. Climate change, political divisiveness, economic uncertainty... it’s all playing a part in reshaping what “normal” looks like for Southwest Florida and the industries that support it.

As someone in the building materials industry, I’ve seen the highs of the last five years. We’ve been proud to serve as an essential part of building homes, neighborhoods, and futures. And while the purpose behind what we do hasn’t changed, the urgency has. There’s a hum of caution in the air.

We’ve seen this before. In 2007, similar signs started popping up. And while today’s environment isn’t the same—we’ve put safeguards in place, our financial systems are better regulated, and our businesses are more prepared—we’d be foolish not to pay attention. So yes, know the signs. But also, embrace this moment. This slowdown—this return to “off-season” energy—could be a blessing in disguise. A chance to:

- Reenergize
- Reconnect with your customers and coworkers
- Refocus on fundamentals
- Reassess your goals
- Reinvest time with family

We don’t need to panic about next year’s budget right now. Forecasting the future in this climate feels more like throwing darts in the dark anyway. Instead, let’s take care of what’s right in front of us. Let’s lead well, serve well, and yes—laugh well. Laugh at ourselves. Laugh with each other. Because if you’re not smiling, you’re missing the point.

Maybe this isn’t a “new normal” after all. Maybe we’re just looping back in a DeLorean to a simpler time, before the pace got so unsustainable.

And while we’re here, let’s all say a quiet prayer that this year’s hurricane season spares us. Not just for convenience—but for the people still rebuilding, still waiting, still healing. Let’s make the most of this pause. Let’s be helpful. Let’s be hopeful. And let’s be ready because when the next wave of demand hits, we’ll need to be stronger, wiser, and more connected than ever.

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