

Mexico Beach, Florida Concrete Home Survives Hurricane Michael Virtually Untouched



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(ABC) – The seaside community of Mexico Beach, Florida, was demolished by Hurricane Michael — but one family's newly built concrete home survived virtually untouched.

“Hurricanes happen and so we intended to build it to survive” and pass through the generations, Dr. Lebron Lackey told ABC News of the vacation home he built last year with his uncle.

When Category 4 Michael made landfall at Mexico Beach Wednesday with winds around 155 mph, Lackey was home in Tennessee, “nauseated” as he monitored the house security camera, watching footage of the winds and debris whipping by.

Lackey wasn’t confident the home would survive, afraid he would lose the roof at any moment.

“I was watching the corner of the roof buck like an airplane wing. And I was watching the air pass by with debris in it about the speed of which you’d expect to see in an airplane,” he said.

For Lackey and his uncle, the goal during construction just last year was to go “overboard to preserve the structure.” He said they often went the extra mile to add more concrete — especially in corners.

Making small accommodations as they went, he said they often “went one step further” beyond the building codes, like when they added 1-foot thick concrete walls as well as steel cables to hold the roof steady.

They also built the ground floor out of tall pilings, with the house elevated above it, to create a ground floor structure intended to give way with massive storm surge if necessary — and “sure enough it did,” he said.

Lackey said he only felt the house was vulnerable in the corner of the roof from an “airplane wing effect.”

Lackey said the additions weren’t very expensive and called them “totally worth it.”

To others looking to build their dream beach home, Lackey recommends studying “the environment where you are and take whatever you hear and expect it to be worse than that. And if you want to have it last, build it above and beyond.”

“I’m a fan of concrete construction,” he added.

Though Lackey’s family’s home is standing strongly in the sand, it’s surrounded by destruction.

Michael demolished nearly every Mexico Beach home and business in its path, including the Mexico Beach Police Department.

Of the 18 confirmed fatalities from Hurricane Michael, one was in Mexico Beach.

“These are great people,” Lackey said of Mexico Beach residents, describing it as a small, family town.

“We will rebuild,” he said. “We’re coming back.”