



FIU's Wall of Wind

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on August 24, 2012**



*This speech was presented at the inauguration of FIU's Wall of Wind
on August 24, 2012*

Good morning! I am Mark Rosenberg, President of FIU, and it is my pleasure to welcome you to today's 20th anniversary remembrance of Hurricane Andrew, and the grand opening of FIU's 12-fan Wall of Wind. It is also my privilege to introduce our distinguished platform party and our partnering agencies that are with us today: NOAA, the Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory, the National Hurricane Center, the National Weather Service, Miami-Dade County Emergency Management and the City of Homestead. Thank you for joining us.

Like many South Floridians, I clearly recall the days surrounding Hurricane Andrew. Back then, every news report warned of what Andrew could mean for us, but we never imagined the impact it would have, even 20 years later. During the early hours of August 24, 1992, we could hear and feel Hurricane Andrew's roaring, forceful winds and hard, loud rain slamming against our homes.

The result was a 25-mile-wide swath of extreme destruction and devastating losses to our community –a community that was neither mentally nor structurally prepared for a storm of that magnitude. In the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, community leaders came together to aid the rebuilding of South Florida. But this catastrophe gave the students, faculty and staff of FIU a unique opportunity to fulfill our mission of teaching, research and service to our community.

Immediately after Andrew, our relief efforts began. More than a quarter million pounds of relief supplies filled the Graham Center ballrooms. Students, faculty and staff volunteered to organize supplies and seek out members of our community who needed us the most, including homeless South Floridians. Following Andrew, we made it a point to better understand these types of events. We committed ourselves to

researching and evaluating how the impact of such a horrific event could help us plan for disasters, locally and nationally.

About six months after the storm, FIU hosted the “Lessons Learned from Hurricane Andrew” conference. We also worked with the National Hurricane Center to bring it to the Modesto Maidique Campus, so we could collaborate to address some of the problems associated with hurricanes. In the years following Hurricane Andrew, our Institute for Public Opinion Research conducted studies that have served as key elements in the multidisciplinary efforts of FIU's hurricane research.

During this time of reconstruction, The Knight Foundation provided \$2.5 million to “We will Rebuild,” an organization of community, political and business leaders charged with raising money for the mass recovery effort. A grant from the We Will Rebuild Foundation helped establish the International Hurricane Research Center at FIU in 1996. The Center was created to focus on hurricane damage research and mitigation. For the residents of the U.S. East and Gulf Coasts and Caribbean islands that are threatened by hurricanes each summer and fall, the IHRC promotes a multidisciplinary, large-scale disaster research agenda to address vulnerabilities. IHRC research tries to answer fundamental questions that will help us reduce the hurricane threat. The Center's current studies involve areas such as: household mitigation and evacuation; storm hazard and vulnerability mapping, especially for vulnerable populations; long-term community recovery; and insurance mitigation incentive programs.

Today, as a result of our experience with Hurricane Andrew, FIU is at the forefront of finding solutions to protect our neighbors from the effects of hurricanes and other potentially catastrophic wind events. Our research is helping our neighbors better prepare for these storms and to mitigate the damage from these storms. Here in Miami we are also fortunate to have the core of NOAA's Hurricane team; from the researchers at NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory, who fly into these

storms to expand our understanding of hurricanes, to the National Hurricane Center forecasters who give us the most accurate forecast possible, to the local Miami Weather Forecast Office meteorologists who help prepare our community for specific local impacts from a threatening storm.

We also are fortunate to have all sectors of the community engaged with our emergency management agencies. Volunteer, faith and community-based organizations; colleges, universities and the private sector. All of them are contributing more than ever before to enhance our community's disaster resilience. Twenty years after Andrew, we are still dedicated to better preparing and educating our community and others on potentially harmful hurricanes. We can't go back and prevent the destruction and devastation caused by Andrew. But we can make a difference in the future of our community through teaching, research, and service. We are proud to live in Florida, which is among the best-prepared states in the nation when it comes to hurricanes. And now we would like to share a video about Hurricane Andrew.

Please join me in a moment of reflection for the victims of Hurricane Andrew. Thank you. We are honored to have with us today the Deputy Associate Administrator for Response and Recovery for FEMA, Elizabeth A. Zimmerman. Please join me in welcoming her to the podium. Thank you.

Unfortunately, Because of the pending threat of "Isaac", Dr. Rick Knabb, director of the National Hurricane Center, could not be with us today. However, last night, he did send me the following letter and asked that I read it:

On behalf of the National Hurricane Center, I congratulate you on the inauguration of your new "Wall of Wind!" Your exciting, cutting edge and very important achievement makes it much more disappointing for me to not be able to be with you on this special day. As I'm sure you'll understand,

my staff and I remain focused on preparing and communicating the most accurate forecast of the approaching storm as possible. But, we all know full well,

the forecast is only one of the critical pieces required in the interdisciplinary effort to save lives and mitigate property damage from storms properly preparing for the storm represents one of the other critical pieces.

Of course, personal preparation is very important (and I hope you are all ready too!). So is ensuring that our families and businesses have a safe haven into which they can retreat. Your "Wall of Wind" gives us a much better opportunity for storm-resistant and resilient structures. I know that this tremendous achievement was only accomplished with a commensurately tremendous effort on your part. The National Hurricane Center is honored to be part of yet another proud moment for Florida International University.

I look forward to the tangible advances that the Wall of Wind will initiate and to our continued collaboration with you.

Sincerely, Dr. Richard Knabb

This morning, we do have other experts in this field who have joined us to share their insight into where we are 20 years after Andrew. Join me in welcoming: Dr. Bob Atlas, director of the Atlantic Oceanographic Meteorological Laboratory. Kate Hale, director of emergency services for James City County in Virginia. Of course, most of us remember her leadership as the director of emergency management for Dade County when Andrew struck South Florida. She is also an FIU alumna, who has a bachelor's degree in anthropology/sociology from FIU and was working on her MBA when Andrew interrupted. Welcome!

We are proud of the groundbreaking, Worlds Ahead research that we are conducting right here with the Wall of Wind. In fact, you might have seen it featured this week in many national and international media outlets, including the *Today* show,

ABC World News with Diane Sawyer, and the *Weather Channel*. I would like to share with you a video about our research efforts.

And now it gives me great pleasure to introduce a longtime member of the FIU family, the Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart.