

Man refuses to get off his Fort Myers Beach roof, protesting FEMA regulations

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Rick Loughery is refusing to get off the roof of his Fort Myers Beach garage, an act he undertook in protest of FEMA regulations.

FEMA's regulations say the garage is a laterally attached structure attached to the house.

"I'm up here because the town of Fort Myers Beach and the state have decided that they want me to demolish my garage," Rick said.

Loughery and his wife, Amy Loughery argue the garage was an independent structure to the house that was only connected to the house by a soft flash attachment.

"The FEMA standards are so strict that it makes it difficult for the town to have the flexibility to do what they'd like to do, which is to help them save their garage," said Fort Myers Beach vice mayor Jim Atterholt.

FEMA said it has to be up to code with the flood plain or get knocked down, so to comply with the code, the Fort Myers Beach garage roof would need breakaway walls, foundation supports and air-conditioned living space above the structure.

The Lougherys don't agree.



WINK News spoke to Amy to get more information about the Fort Myers Beach garage and roof.

“We were here for the storm. We have waves that were hitting the house that were 20 feet high,” she said. “The garage is the only thing that saved my husband, our son and I. [We] actually retreated to the neighbor’s house because it’s slightly elevated, and so we were over there at the beginning of the storm, but he stayed, and the only reason he’s still here is because of this garage.”

The garage is not just any garage. It helped save Rick during Hurricane Ian, when the water overtook his home.

“I tied myself onto the corner here the garage, and I made a swim for next door to try and make it to my family, and I made it to them and found out they were okay and alive,” Rick said.

How long does Rick plan on staying on his roof?

“As long as I have to,” said Rick.

Rick said the only thing that will get him to come down is if he gets a satisfactory answer to the question of why his garage has to go, one that his permitting agent and engineer can actually agree with.

Whether the town says he has to demolish it or it can stay, that’s what it’ll take.

“I’m not really up here just for myself,” Rick said. “I’m up here because everybody’s having a similar story. It’s, it’s not just my story. There’s a million different stories.”

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