

# HVAC company has weathered storms in SWFL for 25 years

Local Journalism Lives Here. Just \$9.99/month

LEARN MORE  
([HTTP://OFFERS.NAPLESNEWS.COM/SPECIALOFFER?](http://offers.naplesnews.com/specialoffer?)

John Osborne, Daily News correspondent

Published 7:59 p.m. ET Nov. 8, 2017 Updated 4:00 a.m. ET Nov. 17, 2017

SOURCE=BENBNOV&UTM\_MEDIUM=NANOBAR&UTM\_SOURCE=BOUNCE-EXCHANGE&UTM\_CAMPAIGN=READLOCAL17)



(Photo: Nicole Raucheisen/Naples Daily News)

The guest list for a Naples-based HVAC company's 25th anniversary party this year might include such names as Andrew, Charley, Wilma and Irma — however uninvited they might have been.

But though he might have been a tad bit wet behind the ears when he started Florida Cool Inc. a quarter-century ago, that's certainly no longer the case for owner Tom Caprio, who has weathered more than his fair share of Southwest Florida storms over the years.

"When we first started in 1992, Hurricane Andrew came in, and it was pretty much myself and my partner," recalled Caprio, a New Jersey native who shares four sons and a daughter with his wife, Lisa, an anesthesiologist.

"I was doing service calls, and he was doing new construction, and I remember working on a job on Marco Island in the early morning and late at night under a flashlight to get the client reconnected."

Despite the decidedly wet conditions, however, Caprio chose another elemental analogy to describe the first major natural disaster he encountered on the job.

"It was definitely a baptism by fire," he said with a laugh. "And it hasn't just been the hurricanes, either. We've had some no-name storms over the years that have been pretty wicked, too."

So whenever something wicked his way comes, Caprio applies the lessons he's learned over the years and passes down to his employees.

"We talk about having an emergency plan if something happens, and in our environment, that something is usually a hurricane," said Caprio, who employs 20 to 25 workers, depending on the time of year.

So when Irma came along on Sep. 10, Caprio and his team stood ready to serve an impressive client list that boasts more than 6,000 customers.

"Irma arrived on Sunday, and everything was OK with my home on Monday, so on Tuesday I came in to check on the business," he said.

Although he found a few roof leaks, Caprio said everything else seemed to be in good working order.

So, as has been his habit since he entered the industry at 18, he got down to work.

“The phones and Internet were up and running, so starting that Tuesday, we spent two straight weeks answering phones, talking to current customers and potential customers,” he said. “A lot of people who aren’t experienced with these storms think that their generators will run their air conditioning, but there’s definitely a science to it.”

Florida Cool client Bert Pohlmann, who owns a number of businesses around Naples, including the iconic Tin City shopping district, echoed those sentiments.

“It’s almost like calling a college professor to come fix your problem,” the Chicago transplant said. “Tom is very personable and very good at what he does. He always identifies the problems and fixes them in an expeditious manner.”

Florida Cool Head of Operations Ana Lenhart said Caprio’s caring nature filters throughout the entire company.

“The philosophy here is that we look after our employees with a supportive environment and training,” the native Londoner said. “If we treat our employees with respect, our customers will benefit in turn.”

Florida Cool Director of Marketing Nick Deshais said customers benefit a bit more than might be expected at times.

“One time a customer called Tom late at night to tell him his thermostat wasn’t working,” Deshais said. “Tom happened to have the same system in his home, so he took his own thermostat off his wall and drove over and installed it in the customer’s home. That’s just who Tom is.”

“The most satisfying part of working HVAC is taking care of customers — resolving or solving problems,” he said. “It’s not just installing a box and taking their money.”

Read or Share this story: <http://www.naplesnews.com/story/money/business/local/2017/11/09/hvac-company-has-weathered-storms-swfl-25-years/846464001/>

---