

Hurricane Dorian weakens to Category 3 as it camps out over devastated Bahamas

Hurricane Dorian weakened to a Category 3 storm over the Bahamas early Tuesday, after virtually stalling over the island nation where it caused devastation and was blamed for at least five deaths.

The National Hurricane Center said in a 5 a.m. update that Dorian had maximum sustained winds near 120 mph and was stationary just north of Grand Bahama Island.

“It’s as if we’re fighting a war with the enemy having all the weapons at its disposal,” Prime Minister Hubert Minnis told reporters.

Parts of the northern Bahamas were in the midst of a “historic tragedy” and that five people had been confirmed dead and at least 21 people had been injured and taken to hospitals, Minnis said Monday.

Minnis said that images and videos seen by officials are heartbreaking, with many homes and businesses and other buildings completely or partially destroyed.

“Dorian is still battering Grand Bahama Island and will continue for many more hours,” Minnis tweeted. “We know that there are a number of people in serious distress. We pray for their safety and will provide relief and assistance as soon as possible.”

Although it had been downgraded, Dorian was expected to remain a perilously powerful hurricane for the next couple of days, with “devastating” winds and a “life-threatening” storm surge, the center said.

The storm was forecast to travel “dangerously close” to the Florida east coast late Tuesday through Wednesday evening, the center said. It would then move “very near” the Georgia and South Carolina coasts Wednesday night and Thursday, and near or over the North Carolina coast late Thursday, the center added.

The Latest on Dorian:

- The storm had maximum sustained winds of 120 mph and was stationary just north of Grand Bahama Island, in a “stationary” position, the hurricane center said at 5 a.m. Tuesday. Isolated rainfall of over 30 inches in northwestern Bahamas could cause “life-threatening flash floods.”
- At least five people have died in the Abaco Islands, Bahamian officials say. A woman told Eyewitness News Bahamas that her 8-year-old grandson was killed in a possible drowning.
- Officials say Dorian is set to come “dangerously close” to Florida’s east coast late Tuesday through Wednesday evening, very near the Georgia and South Carolina coasts Wednesday night and Thursday, and near or over North Carolina’s coast late Thursday.
- Several airports including Fort Lauderdale, Palm Beach and Orlando international airports in Florida have shut down their operations. As of 6 a.m. Tuesday, some 1,381 flights within, out and into the U.S. had been canceled, according to FlightAware, an aviation data company. Amtrak also canceled some of its East Coast service.
- More than 70 nursing homes and assisted living facilities have evacuated along Florida’s east coast. Many of the state’s toll roads are suspended, and several ports have closed. In addition, more than 85 shelters are open statewide.
- Six counties east of Interstate 95 in Georgia were ordered to evacuate, Gov. Brian Kemp says.

The National Hurricane Center warned that a tornado or two was possible near the east coast of Florida through Tuesday night. The risk will then shift to coastal Georgia and the coastal Carolinas on Wednesday into Thursday.

Millions of people along the southeastern coast of the United States are bracing for Dorian’s effects in the coming days as meteorologists warn the storm’s actual trajectory is uncertain. President Donald Trump has approved emergency declarations for Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia. Virginia Gov. The governors of North Carolina and Virginia have also declared states of emergency.

Southport, North Carolina, Mayor J.V. Dove said that forecasts show the storm

traveling up the coast and not making landfall.

“Still, we are expecting and do expect heavy rainfall, perhaps 10 inches or more, plus tropical-storm-force winds, and we’re preparing for that,” Dove said on MSNBC early Tuesday. A state of emergency would be in effect at 7 a.m.

“One thing I’ve learned about hurricanes is that a lot of people are very afraid of the winds, but most of our trouble comes from the flooding, the heavy rains that are caused by the hurricanes themselves,” the mayor said.

The National Weather Service in Miami tweeted early Tuesday that coastal flooding had been reported in the city, and urged people to not drive through flooded roadways. The weather service in Jacksonville said fast-moving rain bands would produce brief but torrential downpours and up to 30-mph wind gusts.

On Sunday, the governors of South Carolina and Georgia ordered at least 1 million people to evacuate their coasts beginning Monday.

Authorities in Florida ordered mandatory evacuations in some vulnerable coastal areas. In Florida, more than 120 shelters are filling up with people who’ve decided its too dangerous to risk staying at home.

Areas in the United States with populations of more than 3.5 million were under hurricane warnings, and another 9 million were under tropical storm warnings early Tuesday, according to the weather service.

A hurricane warning was in place for Jupiter Inlet, Florida, to Ponte Vedra Beach near Jacksonville as well as for the northwestern Bahamas.

A hurricane watch extended from Deerfield Beach north of Fort Lauderdale to Jupiter Inlet, Florida, as well as north of Ponte Vedra Beach Florida to the South Santee River in South Carolina.

A storm surge warning covered a stretch of the coast from Lantana, Florida, to the Savannah River. A tropical storm warning was issued for Deerfield Beach to Jupiter Inlet and north of Ponte Vedra Beach Florida to Altamaha Sound in Georgia.

A storm surge and tropical storm watch covered other areas of Florida and South Carolina.

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