

Hurricane Harvey hits Texas hard

(CNN) Hurricane Harvey has weakened since it hit South Texas head-on late Friday but forecasters say water levels will still rise as torrential rain and blasting winds continue over the next days.

The powerful eye wall of Harvey initially reached land by 11 p.m. ET between Port Aransas and Port O'Connor, Texas, with the then-Category 4 storm packing winds of more than 130 mph. As it moved over land, Harvey gradually lost some of its punch and by 6 a.m. ET was downgraded to a still-dangerous Category 1 hurricane with winds at 90 mph, the National Hurricane Center said.

It was the first Category 4 hurricane to make landfall in the United States since Hurricane Charley in 2004.

Millions of residents along the south Texas coast saw hurricane-force winds that knocked down trees, power poles and signs.

First responders are yet to assess the impact that the extremely powerful hurricane has caused over Texas in the first hours since landfall but forecasters have said it will be devastating and leave areas “uninhabitable for weeks or months.”

Harvey has the “highest potential to kill the most amount of people and cause the most amount of damage,” said Brock Long, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

As Harvey deluges Texas, coastal cities could see 13 feet of storm surge and as much as 40 inches of rain by Wednesday.

Latest developments

— Almost 10 inches of rain had already been reported at a few locations in southeastern Texas as of 5 a.m. ET, the National Weather Service said.

— There have been reports of structural and building problems in Rockport, Aransas Pass, and Port Aransas, Texas, said Tom Beal, a meteorologist with National Weather Service office in Corpus Christi. He anticipated that the hurricane would clear that area sometime about 4 a.m. ET Saturday.

— The hurricane center said a tide gauge in Port Lavaca, Texas reported storm surge of 6.4 feet.

— More than 211,000 customers of the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) electric system have lost power since Harvey made landfall Friday night, the corporation said.

— Rockport, Texas, officials are advising residents who refuse to evacuate to write their names and Social Security number on their forearm, Mayor Pro Tem Patrick Rios told CNN. Rios said it will “help out first responders should they find a body.”

— President Donald Trump, who will visit the area next week, has signed a disaster declaration for the state.

Just the Beginning

Firefighters were “hunkered down” in the fire station as the eye of the storm was over them.

Roy Laird, assistant chief with the Rockport Volunteer Fire Department, told CNN they were anxious to get out and check the city for damage but it could be hours before they will be able to safely leave the station.

“We had probably 140 mph winds earlier. It was howling,” Laird added.

For hours, Karl Hattman and his family heard “what sounded like a freight train” from inside their Rockport home. When they decided to see what the storm had done to their neighborhood on Saturday, they faced an already chaotic scene.

Surrounded by the early morning darkness, they saw many trees down, a pile of debris blocking their driveway and Hattman’s vehicle damaged after it was hit by roof tiles.

“We are very concerned to see what (Harvey) has been done when it lights out in the morning,” Kattman said.

Joey Walker, 25, works with the Galveston Island Beach Patrol and was riding out the storm from a house on Galveston Island. He posted video of near-white out conditions overlooking Stewart Beach.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said anyone not leaving should plan to stay off the roads once the storm starts.

“People need to know, this is not a one-, two-day event and done,” Turner said.

The storm will stall and dump rain on South Texas and parts of Louisiana into the middle of next week, forecasters predicted.

CNN’s Dave Alsup, Artemis Moshtaghian, Joe Sterling, Amanda Jackson, Matt Rehbein, AnneClaire Stapleton, Dakin Andone, David Williams, David Shortell, Elliott C. McLaughlin, Nick Valencia contributed to this report.

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