

Hurricane Milton is a Category 5. Florida orders evacuations and scrambles to clear Helene's debris

BELLEAIR BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Florida's storm-battered Gulf Coast raced against a Category 5 hurricane Monday as workers sprinted to pick up heaps of appliances and other street debris left over from Helene two weeks ago and highways were clogged with people fleeing ahead of the storm.

The center of Hurricane Milton could come ashore Wednesday in the Tampa Bay region, which has not endured a direct hit by a major hurricane in more than a century. Scientists expect the system to weaken slightly before landfall, though it could retain hurricane strength as it churns across central Florida toward the Atlantic Ocean. That would largely spare other states ravaged by Helene, which killed at least 230 people on its path from Florida to the Carolinas.

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