

## Bermuda buffeted by wind, rain from passing Rafael (Update)

October 16 2012, by Elizabeth Roberts

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(AP)—Fast-moving Hurricane Rafael was barreling past Bermuda on Monday night, driving gusty winds and pelting rain as its center traveled east of the storm-hardened British Atlantic territory.

By 8 p.m. EDT, Rafael was a Category 1 hurricane with winds of 85 mph (140 kph) as its spinning center was located about 115 miles (190 kilometers) east-southeast of Bermuda. Since hurricane-force winds only extend outward by some 35 miles, Bermuda was being buffeted by tropical-storm-force winds that were expected to subside by Wednesday morning.

Satellite images showed the big storm system dwarfing the tiny British territory, where strict building codes are enforced to withstand rough weather. The hurricane was moving north-northeast at 26 mph (43 kph) and it was expected to gradually weaken over the next 48 hours as it heads out further over the open Atlantic.

Forecasters at the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said Rafael was expected to fizzle out later in the week.

Bermuda Weather Service director Kimberley Zuill said wind gusts at the territory's highest areas could reach up to 75 mph and warned of the possibility of flooding.

"We have already been under the effects of Rafael this morning as the first rain band swept across the area bringing rainfall to much of the

island," Zuill said. "Fortunately, Rafael's strongest winds remain on the eastern side of the system and furthest away from Bermuda."

Seas around the island's outer reefs are expected to surge to 18 feet (5 meters) late Tuesday, she said.

Swells generated by the hurricane were also expected to impact eastern-facing beaches of the Bahamas and portions of the U.S. East Coast during the next couple of days.

Among those bracing for Rafael in Bermuda was 38-year-old Chris Shallcross, a senior software developer who moved to the island from Britain about two weeks ago.

"I haven't done much to prepare, except buy some waterproofs because it looks like it might be a bit wet and windy," Shallcross said. "I hope that's not the naivety of a newbie to the island."

Government offices closed about an hour earlier than usual on Tuesday afternoon to give public workers a chance to complete storm preparations at home. Several flights were cancelled and several others rescheduled. Most of the local ferry service was suspended as well.

National Security Minister Wayne Perinchief urged residents to remain at home while the hurricane passed to the east.

"I urge the public to exercise caution and remain indoors during the heaviest winds and thunderstorms," Perinchief said.

Not everybody bothered to prepare for the storm on the territory of about 65,000 inhabitants.

Richard Naud, a software developer from Quebec City who moved to

Bermuda in early September, said he hadn't heard about the approaching hurricane until Sunday.

"Since I heard no one talk about it, I figured it was not worth having a panic attack," he said.

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