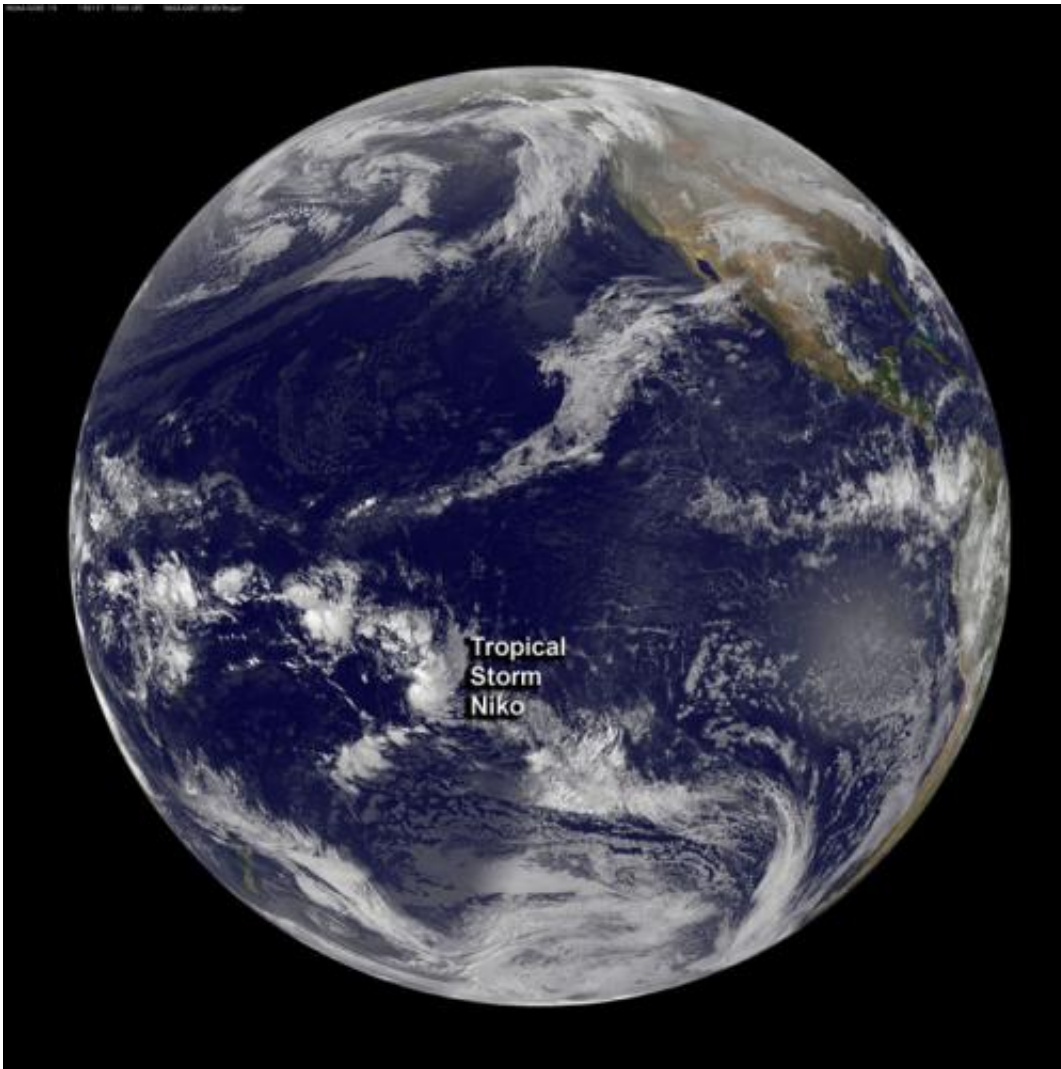


GOES-West captures birth of Tropical Cyclone Niko in Southern Pacific

January 21 2015, by Rob Gutro



The GOES-West satellite on Jan. 21 at 10 a.m. EST showed bands of thunderstorms in Niko's eastern quadrant wrapping into the center. This full-disk view shows the storm location in the Southern Pacific. Credit: NASA/NOAA GOES Project

NOAA's GOES-West satellite captured the birth of Tropical Cyclone Niko in the Southern Pacific Ocean near French Polynesia.

NOAA's Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites or GOES-West satellite sits in a [geostationary orbit](#) over the Eastern Pacific Ocean. Geostationary describes an orbit in which a satellite is always in the same position with respect to the rotating Earth. This allows GOES to hover continuously over one position on Earth's surface, appearing stationary. As a result, GOES provide a constant vigil for the atmospheric "triggers" for severe weather conditions such as tornadoes, flash floods, hail storms and hurricanes.

Infrared data taken from GOES-West on Jan. 21 at 1500 UTC (10 a.m. EST) was made into an image at NASA/NOAA's GOES Project at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland. The infrared image showed bands of thunderstorms in the eastern quadrant wrapping into the low-level center.

At 0900 UTC (4 a.m. EST) on Jan. 21, Niko had maximum sustained winds near 45 knots (51.7 mph/83.3 kph) and appears to be intensifying. Niko was just 151 nautical miles (172.9 miles/279.8 km) north of Papeete, Tahiti, near 15.0 south and 149.9 west. The tropical storm was moving to the south-southeast at 7 knots (8 mph/12.9 kph).

Over the next two days, Niko is expected to pass east of Tahiti, which is located within the Society Islands, which are part of French Polynesia. French Polynesia is made up of 118 islands and atolls that cover more than 1,200 miles (2,000 kilometers) in the South Pacific Ocean.

The Joint Typhoon Warning Center forecast calls for Niko to strengthen into a hurricane after passing Tahiti on its way south into the open waters

of the South Pacific Ocean.

Provided by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

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