

Hurricane Matthew damages roofs at NASA's launch center

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NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida

Hurricane Matthew lashed NASA's rocket launch facility at Cape Canaveral on Friday, causing power outages and damaging roofs as heavy winds battered the Florida coast, the US space agency said.

However, rockets, spaceships and crucial equipment for the US space program and private companies like SpaceX appeared unharmed.

"While there is damage to numerous facilities at Kennedy Space Center (KSC), it consists largely of roof damage, window damage, water intrusion, damage to modular buildings and to building siding," NASA's Sarah Loff wrote on the space agency website.

"There does not appear to be damage to flight hardware at this time."

Earlier, officials reported "limited roof damage" along with scattered debris and power outages.

By 9:45 am (1345 GMT), the worst of the storm had passed offshore from Cape Canaveral, NASA said.

About an hour earlier, around 8:30 am, Category 3 Matthew shaved past the NASA launchpad just 26 miles (42 kilometers) off the tip of Cape Canaveral, with winds gusting up to 107 miles (172 kilometers) per hour.

Most employees were evacuated, but a skeleton crew of 116 people rode out the hurricane at Kennedy Space Center.

Their mission is to report on significant events to the Emergency Operations Center, located in the Launch Control Center at Complex 39, and take any actions needed to keep the facility secure.

A more detailed, formal damage assessment is expected Saturday.

SpaceX said it was "closely monitoring the weather conditions and working with our partners at Kennedy Space Center and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station to safeguard facilities and personnel."

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