

What we know about Hurricane Irma: facts, figures, forecast

September 8 2017



Hurricane Irma has wreaked havoc on a string of Caribbean islands, including the French-Dutch territory of St Martin

Hurricane Irma has pounded the Caribbean, destroying homes and leaving at least 25 people dead.

The hurricane made landfall in Cuba's Camaguey Archipelago late on Friday as a maximum-strength Category Five storm, and is now bearing

down on the US state of Florida, where authorities have ordered 5.6 million people to evacuate.

It weakened Saturday to Category 4 and then to 3 but was expected to strengthen again before hitting the Florida Keys.

At least 25 people have died: 10 in the French islands of Saint Martin and Saint Barthelemy, six in British overseas territories, four in the US Virgin Islands, two in Puerto Rico and two in the Dutch part of Saint Martin and one in Barbuda.

The International Red Cross says 1.2 million people have already been affected by Irma—a number that could rise to 26 million.

The bill for loss and damage could hit \$120 billion (100 billion euros) in the United States and Caribbean, according to data modelling firm Enki Research.

Barbuda

Irma hit the tiny Caribbean island of Barbuda on Wednesday with winds up to 295 kph. The island suffered "absolute devastation," with up to 30 percent of properties demolished, Prime Minister Gaston Browne said.

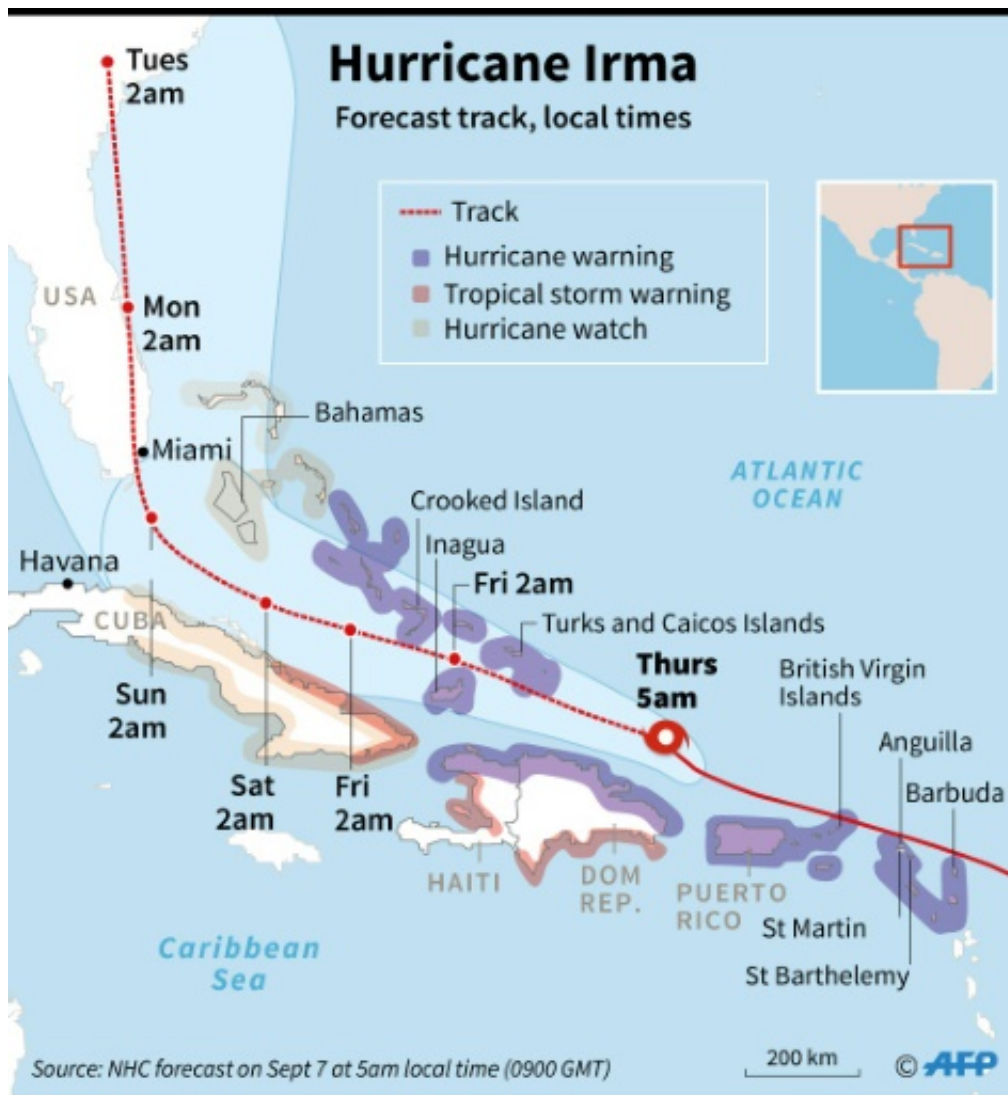
One person is known to have died on the island of 1,600 residents, apparently a child whose family was trying to get to safer ground.

St Barts, St Martin and Anguilla

Irma then slammed into the holiday islands of St Barts and St Martin, wielding monster winds and torrential rain.

St Martin is divided between France and the Netherlands. France said 10 people had died, while the Netherlands said the storm killed two on the Dutch side, called Sint Maarten.

In the British archipelago of Anguilla, one man was crushed to death in a house collapse.



Updated forecast track of Hurricane Irma, close-up on the Caribbean.

British Virgin Islands

Five people have been killed in the British Virgin Islands, according to the local government.

Just east of Puerto Rico, it is home to roughly 28,000 people and includes British billionaire Richard Branson's Necker Island.

US Virgin Islands

At least four people have been killed in the US Virgin Islands, officials told AFP.

"We lost a significant and a good number of assets... in terms of fire stations, police stations," Governor Kenneth Mapp said on Facebook.

Puerto Rico

At least two people were killed in the US territory of Puerto Rico, and more than half of its three million residents were without power after rivers broke their banks in the centre and north of the island.

Dominican Republic

The storm tore past the Dominican Republic Thursday, bringing torrential rain. Some 20,000 people were evacuated and more than 2,000 homes affected by floods.

Haiti

Irma brought flooding and caused several injuries in Haiti, but passed further north than had been forecast, sparing the impoverished island the

worst. A number of roads were washed out.

Bahamas

The Bahamas escaped the worst of Irma's wrath, with no casualties or major infrastructure damages reported Friday.



Many Florida residents have joined a mass exodus amid the increasingly dire warnings to leave.

But reports indicated that there were several downed power lines, toppled trees, debris and roofs damaged.

Cuba

Irma made landfall on the island's Camaguey Archipelago late Friday. Close to a million people have left their homes to stay with relatives or in shelters and the electricity supply cut as a precautionary measure.

Before the hurricane even arrived, there was torrential rain which lasted hours.

The Caribbean's biggest island, Cuba had already evacuated 10,000 foreign tourists from beach resorts and raised its disaster alert level to maximum ahead of Irma's arrival.

So far there have been no reports of hurricane victims.

Where next?

Irma is expected to strike the Florida Keys late Saturday and Sunday before moving inland to Georgia and South Carolina, according to the US National Hurricane Center.

Authorities have ordered 5.6 million people—around a quarter of Florida's population—to evacuate and many residents have joined a mass exodus.

The US military is mobilising thousands of troops and deploying several large ships to help with evacuations and humanitarian relief.

A state of emergency has been declared in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. Georgia ordered the evacuation of the city of Savannah and other coastal areas.

More hurricanes

On Friday, another hurricane, Jose, strengthened to Category 4 as it followed the path of Irma, packing winds of 240 kph.

St Barts and St Martin have been placed on alert ahead of its projected passage over the islands. Meteo France predicted it would bring huge waves of up to eight metres high and winds of 150 kph.

A third hurricane, Katia, made landfall in eastern Mexico late Friday killing two people, just as the country grappled with damage inflicted by its worst earthquake in a century.

It was later downgraded from Category One to a tropical storm, but the US National Hurricane Center warned it was bringing rains likely to cause "life-threatening flash floods and mudslides, especially in areas of mountainous terrain".

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