

Wind and rain from Florence's leading edge lash Carolinas

September 13 2018, by Jonathan Drew And Jeffrey Collins



Waves crash under the Avalon Fishing Pier in Kill Devil Hills, N.C., Thursday, Sept. 13, 2018 as Hurricane Florence approaches the east coast. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)

The outer bands of wind and rain from a weakened but still lethal Hurricane Florence began lashing North Carolina on Thursday as the monster storm moved in for a prolonged and potentially catastrophic drenching along the Southeast coast.

Florence's winds had dropped from a peak of 140 mph (225 kph) to 105

mph (165 kph) by midmorning, reducing the hurricane from a terrifying Category 4 to a 2. But forecasters warned that the widening storm—and its likelihood of lingering around the coast day after day—will bring seawater surging onto land and torrential downpours.

"It truly is really about the whole size of this storm," National Hurricane Center Director Ken Graham said. "The larger and the slower the storm is, the greater the threat and the impact—and we have that."

As of 11 a.m. EDT, Florence was centered about 145 miles (230 kilometers) southeast of Wilmington, its forward movement slowed to 10 mph (17 kph). Hurricane-force winds extended 80 miles (130 kilometers) from its center, and tropical-storm-force winds up to 195 miles (315 kilometers).

Forecasters said Florence's eye could come ashore early Friday around the North Carolina-South Carolina line. Then it is likely to hover along the coast Saturday, pushing up to 13 feet (nearly 4 meters) of storm surge and unloading water on both states.



An onlooker checks out the heavy surf at the Avalon Fishing Pier in Kill Devil Hills, N.C., Thursday, Sept. 13, 2018 as Hurricane Florence approaches the east coast. (AP Photo/Gerry Broome)

By midday, Spanish moss blew sideways in the trees as the winds increased in Wilmington. On North Carolina's Outer Banks, water flowed through streets and between beachfront homes, and some of the few people still left in Nags Head took photos of angry waves topped with white froth.

The forecast calls for as much as 40 inches (102 centimeters) of rain over seven days along the coast, with the deluge continuing even as the center of the storm pushes its way over the Appalachian Mountains.

The result could be what the Houston area saw during Hurricane Harvey just over a year ago: catastrophic inland flooding that could swamp homes, businesses, farms and industrial sites.

The police chief of a barrier island in Florence's bulls'-eye said he was asking for next-of-kin contact information from the few residents who refused to leave.



Police patrol past boarded up shops along the boardwalk in Myrtle Beach, S.C., Thursday, Sept. 13, 2018, as Hurricane Florence approaches the east coast. (AP Photo/David Goldman)

"I'm not going to put our personnel in harm's way, especially for people that we've already told to evacuate," Wrightsville Beach Police Chief Dan House said.

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper urged residents to remain alert despite changing forecasts.

"Don't relax, don't get complacent. Stay on guard. This is a powerful storm that can kill. Today the threat becomes a reality," he said.

About 5.25 million people live in areas under hurricane warnings or watches, and 4.9 million in places covered by tropical storm warnings or watches, the National Weather Service said.



Body surfer Andrew Vanotteren, of Savannah, Ga., crashes into waves from Hurricane Florence, Wednesday, Sept., 12, 2018, on the south beach of Tybee Island, Ga. Vanotteren and his friend Bailey Gaddis said the waves have gotten bigger and better every evening as the storm approaches. (AP Photo/Stephen B. Morton)

Weather Underground meteorology director Jeff Masters said Florence eventually could strike as a Category 1 with winds less than 100 mph (160 kph), but that's still enough to cause at least \$1 billion in damage. Water kills more people in hurricanes than wind does.

Scientists said it is too soon to say what role, if any, global warming played in the storm. But previous research has shown that the strongest hurricanes are getting wetter, more intense and intensifying faster because of human-caused climate change.

It's unclear exactly how many people fled ahead of the storm, but more than 1.7 million people in the Carolinas and Virginia were warned to

clear out.

Airlines canceled about 1,200 flights and counting, and some airports in the Carolinas virtually shut down. Home Depot and Lowe's activated emergency response centers and sent in around 1,100 trucks to get generators, trash bags and bottled water to stores before and after the storm.



This enhanced satellite image made available by NOAA shows Hurricane Florence off the eastern coast of the United States on Wednesday, Sept. 12, 2018

at 5:52 p.m. EDT. (NOAA via AP)

Duke Energy, the nation's No. 2 power company, said Florence could knock out electricity to three-quarters of its 4 million customers in the Carolinas, and outages could last for weeks. Workers are being brought in from the Midwest and Florida to help in the storm's aftermath, it said.

Florence's weakening as it neared the coast created tension between some who left home and authorities who worried that the storm could still be deadly.

Frustrated after evacuating his beach home for a storm that has since been downgraded, retired nurse Frederick Fisher grumbled in the lobby of a hotel in Wilmington several miles inland.

"Against my better judgment, due to emotionalism, I evacuated," he said. "I've got four cats inside the house. If I can't get back in a week, after awhile they might turn on each other or trash the place."



Korea war veteran, Ed Coddington, 83, second from right, and wife Esther, 78, wait with Markia McCleod, rear, her aunt Ernestine McCleod and daughter Keymoni, 4, in a shelter for Hurricane Florence to pass after evacuating from their nearby homes in Conway, S.C., Wednesday, Sept. 12, 2018. (AP Photo/David Goldman)



Filling sandbags with sand provided by the City of Tybee Island, Sib McLellan, left, and his wife, Lisa McLellan, prepare for Hurricane Florence, Wednesday, Sept., 12, 2018 on Tybee Island, Ga. (AP Photo/Stephen B. Morton)



Vickie Grate, left, waits in a shelter with her son Chris, center, and his girlfriend Sarah, who only gave their first names, for Hurricane Florence to pass after evacuating from their nearby homes, in Conway, S.C., Wednesday, Sept. 12, 2018. (AP Photo/David Goldman)



A National Guardsman directs counterflow traffic traveling west from Myrtle Beach on U.S. 501 as Hurricane Florence approaches the East Coast, Wednesday, Sept. 12, 2018, in Conway, S.C. (AP Photo/Sean Rayford)



Members of law enforcement work with the National Guard to direct traffic onto U.S. Highway 501 as Hurricane Florence approaches the East Coast Wednesday, Sept. 12, 2018, near Conway, S.C. Time is running short to get out of the way of Hurricane Florence, a monster of a storm that has a region of more than 10 million people in its potentially devastating sights. (AP Photo/Sean Rayford)

© 2018 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Wind and rain from Florence's leading edge lash Carolinas (2018, September 13)
retrieved 24 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2018-09-tropical-bands-florence-lashing-carolinas.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.