

Florida waits: Hurricane Dorian is looking increasingly dire

August 30 2019, by Adriana Gomez Licon And Ellis Rua



James Wolfe, 72, left, and Elaine Wolfe, 65, install shutters on their home in Vero Beach, Fla, Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019. The U.S. National Hurricane Center says Dorian could hit the Florida coast over the weekend as a major hurricane. (AP Photo/Ellis Rua)

Unsure of where Hurricane Dorian might strike, Florida residents

watched the increasingly dire forecast with a sense of helplessness Friday and braced for what could be the most powerful storm to hit the state's east coast in nearly 30 years.

President Donald Trump—whose Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach was in the crosshairs—warned it could be an "absolute monster."

"All indications are it's going to hit very hard and it's going to be very big," Trump said in a tweeted video, comparing Dorian to Hurricane Andrew, which obliterated thousands of homes south of Miami with winds topping 165 mph (266 kph) in 1992.

The National Hurricane Center said the Category 2 storm is expected to strengthen into a potentially catastrophic Category 4 with winds of almost 140 mph (225 kph) and slam the coast late Monday or early Tuesday—nearly 10 mph faster and a day later than previously forecast, as Dorian's forward motion began to slow.

Trump declared a state of emergency in Florida and authorized the Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate disaster-relief efforts.

The hurricane center's projected track showed the storm hitting around Palm Beach County, the site of Mar-a-Lago. But predicting its course with any confidence this far out is difficult, and forecasters cautioned that all of Florida, including Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Orlando, could be in harm's way.



In this Nov. 24, 2017, file photo shows President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Fla. Trump's prized resort in Florida is potentially sitting directly in the path of Hurricane Dorian, which is forecast to become an extremely destructive storm. The resort, which is currently closed for the summer, is on the wealthy barrier island of Palm Beach. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon, File)



Brevard County prepares for the approach of Hurricane Dorian, as well over 100 vehicles lined up at 10:00am for free sandbags being filled by trustees from the Brevard County Jail in the parking lot of Calvary Chapel, a church in Viera West, it was one of several locations offering sandbags. (Tim Shortt/Florida Today via AP)



Richard Henson (foreground) and his uncle, Peter Henson, prepare their grandmother's house Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, where she lives on Greenwood Drive in Fort Pierce, Fla., for the arrival of Hurricane Dorian. (Eric Hasert/TCPalm.com via AP)



Store shelves are empty of bottled water as residents buy supplies in preparation for Hurricane Dorian, in Doral, Fla., Thursday, July 29, 2019. The U.S. National Hurricane Center says Dorian could hit the Florida coast over the weekend as a major hurricane. (AP Photo/Marcus Lim)



Shoppers load their truck with supplies to prepare ahead of Hurricane Dorian at The Home Depot on Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, in Pembroke Pines, Fla. (AP Photo/Brynn Anderson)



Shoppers wait in long lines at Costco, Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, in Davie, Fla., as they stock up on supplies ahead of Hurricane Dorian. (AP Photo/Brynn Anderson)



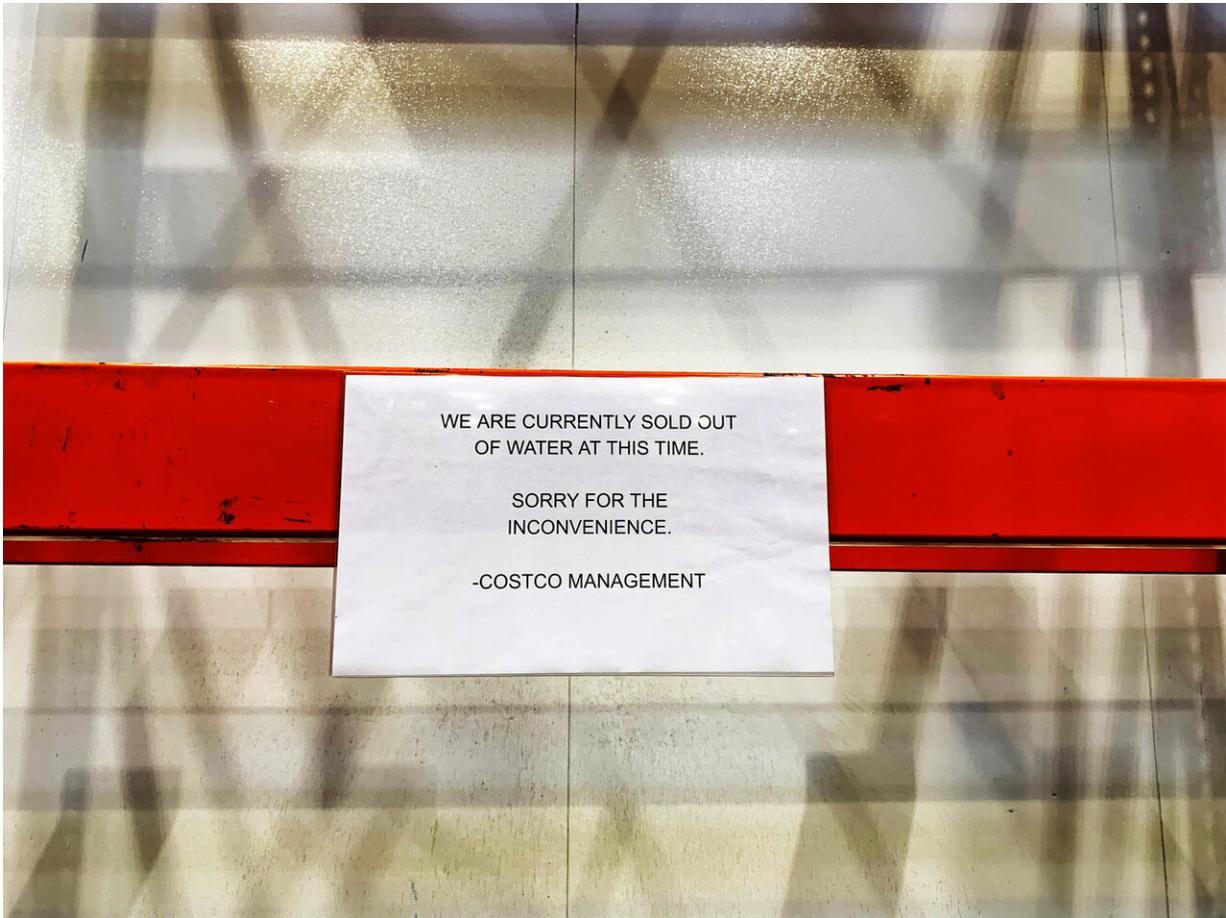
A shopper picks through canned meats at Publix grocery store ahead of Hurricane Dorian on Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, in Pembroke Pines, Fla. (AP Photo/Brynn Anderson)



A shopper stands with a dolly of plywood at The Home Depot ahead of Hurricane Dorian on Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, in Pembroke Pines, Fla. (AP Photo/Brynn Anderson)



Shoppers prepare ahead of Hurricane Dorian at The Home Depot on Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, in Pembroke Pines, Fla. (AP Photo/Brynn Anderson)



Empty shelves are seen with a sign at Costco stating that the retailer is currently sold out of water ahead of Hurricane Dorian on Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, in Davie, Fla. (AP Photo/Brynn Anderson)



People stand in line for propane fuel at BJ's Wholesale Club in preparation for Hurricane Dorian, Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, in Hialeah, Fla. Hurricane Dorian is heading towards Florida for a possible direct hit on the state over Labor Day. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)



Tiffany Miranda of Miami Springs stands in line with supplies at a BJ's Wholesale Club Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, in Hialeah, Fla. Miranda has been through five hurricanes and has never evacuated. She says, "you just have to be prepared." The U.S. National Hurricane Center says Dorian could hit the Florida coast over the weekend as a major hurricane. (AP Photo/Marcus Lim)



Arian Britto fills containers with gasoline at BJ's Wholesale Club in preparation for Hurricane Dorian, Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, in Hialeah, Fla. Hurricane Dorian is heading towards Florida for a possible direct hit on the state over Labor Day. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)



Tape blocks an entrance at BJ's Wholesale Club to control traffic flow as motorists line up for fuel in preparation for Hurricane Dorian, Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, in Hialeah, Fla. Hurricane Dorian is heading towards Florida for a possible direct hit on the state over Labor Day. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)

Forecasters warned, too, that the storm's slow movement could subject the state to a drawn-out pummeling from wind, storm surge and heavy rain.

Dorian played havoc with people's Labor Day weekend plans. Major airlines began allowing travelers to change their reservations without a fee. Royal Caribbean, Carnival and Norwegian began rerouting their cruise ships. Disney World in Orlando found itself in the storm's projected path.

Jessica Armesto and her 1-year-old daughter, Mila, had planned to have breakfast with Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy at Disney World. Instead, Armesto decided to take shelter at her mother's hurricane-resistant house in Miami with a kitchen full of nonperishable foods in case the power goes out.

"It felt like it was better to be safe than sorry, so we canceled our plans," Armesto said.

With the storm still days away, Florida authorities held off ordering any mass evacuations. Gov. Ron DeSantis said that if people were told to evacuate now and Dorian changed course, they could find themselves heading into the storm—something that happened during previous hurricanes.



In this Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019 photo, Jessica Armesto holds her one-year-old daughter, Mila's, at their home in Miami. Jessica was hoping that Mila could meet a real-life Minnie Mouse at Disney World before Hurricane Dorian derailed her plans. The U.S. National Hurricane Center says Hurricane Dorian could hit the Florida coast over the weekend as a major hurricane. (AP Photo/Marcus Lim)

Supermarkets ran out of bottled water and long lines formed at gas stations, with fuel shortages were reported in some places. But the governor said the Florida Highway Patrol would begin escorting fuel trucks to help them get past the lines of waiting motorists and replenish gas stations.

At a Publix supermarket in Cocoa Beach, Ed Ciecirski in the customer service department said the pharmacy was extra busy with people rushing to fill prescriptions. The grocery was rationing bottled water and had run out of dry ice.

"It's hairy," the 69-year-old Ciecirski said. But he said he was used to commotion after working for years as a supervisor for the post office.

Josefine Larrauri went to a Publix supermarket in Miami only to find empty shelves in the water section.

"I feel helpless because the whole coast is threatened," she said. "What's the use of going all the way to Georgia if it can land there?"



Brevard County prepares for the approach of Hurricane Dorian, as shoppers April Burson and her son Christian at Lowe's Home Improvement store in Rockledge, Fla., load up on plywood Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019, in Viera, Fla. (Tim Shortt/Florida Today via AP)

Feeding on the warm waters in the open ocean, Dorian steamed toward the U.S. after rolling through the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, where it inflicted less damage than feared but was blamed for at least one death.

As of midday Friday, Dorian was centered about 660 miles (1,060 kilometers) east of West Palm Beach with winds of 110 mph (175 kph) and was moving northwest at a slowed-down 10 mph (17 kph).

Forecasters said it was expected to keep on strengthening and become a Category 3 later in the day.

Coastal areas in the Southeast could get 6 to 12 inches (15 to 30 centimeters) of rain, with 18 inches (46 centimeters) in some places, triggering life-threatening flash floods, the hurricane center said.

Also imperiled were the Bahamas, where the sound of hammering echoed across the islands as people boarded up their homes with plywood. Canned food and bottled water were disappearing quickly. The storm was expected to hit by Sunday.

At NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, NASA began slowly moving a 380-foot-high mobile launch platform to the safety of the colossal Vehicle Assembly Building, built to withstand 125 mph wind. The launcher is for the mega rocket that NASA is developing to take astronauts to the moon.

The hurricane season typically peaks between mid-August and late October. One of the most powerful storms ever to hit the U.S. was on Labor Day 1935. The unnamed Category 5 hurricane crashed ashore along Florida's Gulf Coast on Sept. 2. It was blamed for over 400 deaths.

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