

Indian Ocean island Mayotte lifts cyclone red alert

December 9 2019



The Indian Ocean island of Mayotte has been placed on red alert for cyclone Belna

Officials on the small Indian Ocean island of Mayotte said Sunday they had lifted the red alert in place for Cyclone Belna, after it brushed past

the French territory.

Officials had told islanders to keep off the roads and stay indoors earlier as they declared a red alert in the expectation that the [cyclone](#) would hit the island.

Island officials have not yet said how much damage the storm caused on Mayotte, which is home to a quarter of a million people.

While early forecasts had suggested the cyclone would hit the island full-on, the latest prediction from France-Meteo—that it would veer further south and miss the island—proved more accurate, Mayotte's governor Jean-Francois Colombet said.

The cyclone is now 100 kilometres (60 miles) away from the island, but officials still advised islanders to be careful.

Many schools were to be closed Monday because some were being used as [emergency shelters](#) for between 10,000 and 15,000 of the islanders most vulnerable to possible damage caused by Belna.

But island officials said that barges linking the different islands would resume Monday.

In the run-up to the arrival of the cyclone, most people had heeded the official advice to stay indoors and off the streets, Colombet told a local newspaper.

The island's 256,000 inhabitants had also been advised to stock up on drinking water.

After Mayotte, the cyclone was forecast on Monday to hit the neighbouring Comoros archipelago then the island of Madagascar. They

issued orange and yellow alerts respectively.

Mayotte's airport has been closed, and the island's roads declared off-limits from Sunday afternoon.

This will be the third cyclone to hit the island in 50 years, Colombet said.

The Comoros government announced an orange alert for the island of Anjouan, while the archipelago's other two [islands](#) were placed on a lesser yellow alert.

The authorities called on the population to take the usual precautions: shutter windows and doors, stock up on provisions and prepare to take refuge in mosques, schools or others homes if necessary.

The archipelago was struck by Cyclone Kenneth in April, killing at least three people before it continued on to Mozambique, where it caused widespread damage.

Cyclone Belna is expected to land on Madagascar's northwest coastal region of Boeny on Monday afternoon.

Madagascar's northern tourism island of Nosy Be was also expected to be affected.

The country's transport ministry called on fishermen not to take to the sea because of fierce winds.

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