

Hurricane Isaias churns through Bahamas as Florida prepares

August 1 2020, by Dánica Coto and Adriana Gómez Licón



A moto-taxi driver moves through a street flooded by rain brought by the outer bands of Hurricane Isaias, in the Tabarre district of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, early Friday, July 31, 2020. Isaias kept on a path early Friday toward the U.S. East Coast as it approached the Bahamas. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)

Forecasters declared a hurricane warning for parts of the Florida coast

Friday as Hurricane Isaias drenched the Bahamas on a track for the U.S. East Coast.

Officials in Florida said they were closing beaches, marinas and parks in Miami-Dade County. Mayor Carlos Giménez said the county had 20 evacuation centers on standby that could be set up with COVID-19 safety measures.

"We still don't think there is a need to open shelters for this storm, but they are ready," he said.

Authorities in North Carolina ordered the evacuation of Oracoke Island, which was slammed by last year's Hurricane Dorian, starting Saturday evening. Meanwhile, officials in the Bahamas evacuated people on Abaco who have been living in temporary structures since Dorian as well as people at the eastern end of Grand Bahama.

Isaias had maximum sustained winds of 80 mph (130 kph) late Friday and was expected to strengthen through early Saturday, the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said. The storm was centered about 135 miles (215 kilometers) south-southeast of Nassau in the Bahamas and was moving northwest at 15 mph (24 kph).

The [hurricane](#) knocked shingles off roofs and tumbled trees as it carved its way through an archipelago still recovering from Dorian's devastation. Bahamas Power and Light Co. cut off power in certain areas for safety.



In this image made from video, a large tree toppled by tropical storm winds is seen in Alto Trujillo, Puerto Rico, Thursday, July 30, 2020. Tropical Storm Isaias knocked out power and caused flooding and small landslides across Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic on Thursday as forecasters predicted it would strengthen into a hurricane while moving toward the Bahamas and U.S. East Coast.(AP Photo)

Paula Miller, Mercy Corps director for the Bahamas, told The Associated Press that while the islands can normally withstand strong hurricanes, some have been destabilized by the coronavirus pandemic and the damage caused by Dorian.

"With everything not quite shored up, property not secured, home not prepared, even a Category 1 will be enough to set them back," she said.

The Hurricane Center said heavy rains associated with the storm "may

begin to affect South and east-Central Florida beginning late Friday night, and the eastern Carolinas by early next week, potentially resulting in isolated flash and urban flooding, especially in low-lying and poorly drained areas."

A hurricane warning was in effect from Boca Raton, just north of Miami, about 150 miles north to the Flagler-Volusia county line. A hurricane watch was in effect south of Boca Raton to Hallendale Beach.



A man installs hurricane shutters on a building owned by Suga Development, Friday, July 31, 2020, in Lake Worth Beach, Fla. Forecasters have declared a hurricane watch for parts of the Florida coastline as Hurricane Isaias drenches the Bahamas on a track for the U.S. East Coast. (Lannis Waters/The Palm Beach Post via AP)

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said that the state was "fully prepared for this and any future storm during this hurricane season," with stockpiles of personal protective equipment, generators, bottled water and meals ready to be distributed.

But he urged people to have seven days worth of food, water and medication ready and said that state-run coronavirus testing sites in the areas where the storm could hit will be closed.

"Our sites, because they're outdoors with tents, if it were to get 40-, 50-mile-per-hour winds, it would just collapse," he said. "Safety is paramount for that."

Miami's mayor said that social-distancing measures prompted by COVID-19 meant each person in shelters needed to have 40 square feet and no more cafeteria-style dining would be allowed. People who are infected with the new coronavirus and need to evacuate will be isolated in classrooms separate them from the general population, Giménez said.



Residents wait in line to fill their containers with gasoline before the arrival of Hurricane Isaias in Freeport, Grand Bahama, Bahamas, Friday, July 31, 2020. (AP Photo/Tim Aylen)

In Daytona Beach and Polk County, authorities began distributing sandbags and other officials advised people to have emergency provisions at home sufficient for three to seven days.

A hurricane warning was in effect for northwest and central Bahamas.

"Continue to hunker down," said Trevor Basden, director of the Bahamas meteorology department.

Two of those islands, Abaco and Grand Bahama, were battered by

Dorian, a Category 5 storm that hovered over the area for two days and killed at least 70 people, with more than 280 reported missing. People are still living in tents on both islands, and officials said crews were trying to remove leftover debris ahead of Isaias.

Prime Minister Hubert Minnis relaxed a coronavirus lockdown as a result of the impending storm, but imposed a 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew. He said supermarkets, pharmacies, gas stations and hardware stores would be allowed to be open as long as weather permitted.



A man carries drinking water for a customer at a water depot store before the arrival of Hurricane Isaias in Freeport, Grand Bahama, Bahamas, Friday, July 31, 2020. (AP Photo/Tim Aylene)

The Bahamas has reported more than 570 confirmed COVID-19 cases and at least 14 deaths. It recently barred travelers from the U.S. following a surge in cases after it reopened to international tourism.

Given the pandemic, the prime minister urged young people to stay safe from the approaching storm to respect social distancing measures.

"Please do not engage in hurricane or COVID(-19) parties," he said. "It can be devastating."

On Thursday, while still a tropical storm, Isaias toppled trees, destroyed crops and caused widespread flooding and small landslides in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, where hundreds of thousands of people were left without power and water.

Officials reported that a man died in the Dominican Republic when he was electrocuted by a fallen electrical cable. More than 5,000 people were evacuated, and more than 130 communities remained cut off by floodwaters.



Wendell Smith unfolds his storm shutters over a window on his Arden Forest home in preparation for the arrival of Hurricane Isaias, in Freeport, Grand Bahama, Bahamas, Friday, July 31, 2020. (AP Photo/Tim Aylen)



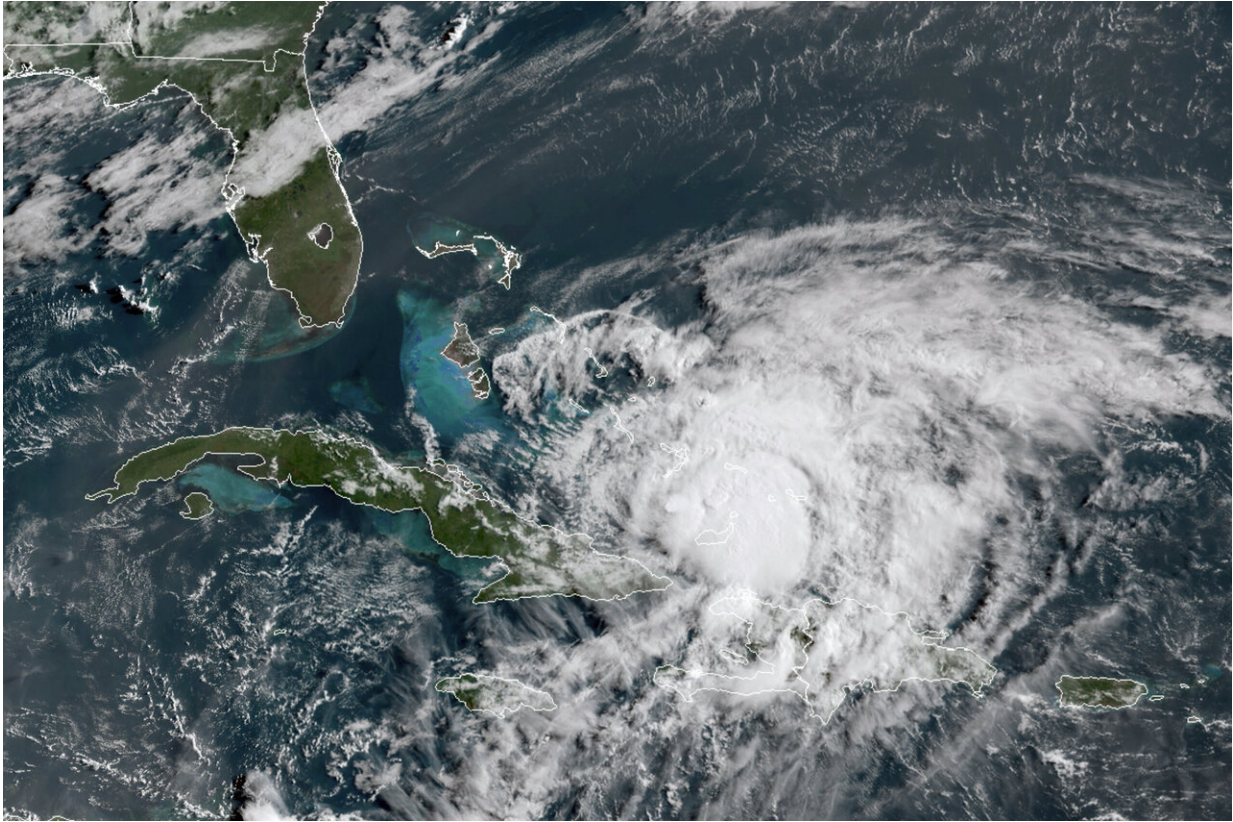
Home Depot aisles are stocked with hurricane supplies as Hurricane Isaias approaches South Florida on Friday, July 31, 2020 in Boynton Beach, Fla. Isaias is forecasted to stay east of the coast but it will bring winds and possible coasting flooding. (Amy Beth Bennett/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)



Workers remove chairs from the beach in preparation for Hurricane Isaias, Friday, July 31, 2020, in Miami Beach, Fla. Forecasters declared a hurricane warning for parts of the Florida coast Friday as Hurricane Isaias drenched the Bahamas on track for the U.S. East Coast. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)



Women enjoy the waves from a high surf, Friday, July 31, 2020, in Miami Beach, Fla. Forecasters declared a hurricane warning for parts of the Florida coast Friday as Hurricane Isaias drenched the Bahamas on track for the U.S. East Coast. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)



In this GOES-16 satellite image taken Friday, July 31, 2020, at 8:40 a.m. EDT., and provided by NOAA, Hurricane Isaias churns in the Caribbean. Hurricane Isaias kept on a path early Friday toward the U.S. East Coast as it approached the Bahamas, parts of which are still recovering from the devastation of last year's Hurricane Dorian. (NOAA via AP)



In this image made from video, people look at level of Canovanas river following heavy rain caused by the storm in Alto Trujillo, Puerto Rico, Thursday, July 30, 2020. Tropical Storm Isaias knocked out power and caused flooding and small landslides across Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic on Thursday as forecasters predicted it would strengthen into a hurricane while moving toward the Bahamas and U.S. East Coast.(AP Photo)



In this image made from video, cars drive through high water on a road in Canovanas, Puerto Rico, Thursday, July 30, 2020. Tropical Storm Isaias knocked out power and caused flooding and small landslides across Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic on Thursday as forecasters predicted it would strengthen into a hurricane while moving toward the Bahamas and U.S. East Coast.(AP Photo)



Drivers fuel up at BJ's in Boynton Beach, Fla., as they prepare for Hurricane Isaias on Friday, July 31, 2020. Isaias is forecasted to stay east of the coast but it will bring winds and possible coasting flooding. (Amy Beth Bennett/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)



A red flag flies from a lifeguard station indicating high surf, Friday, July 31, 2020, in Miami Beach, Fla. Forecasters declared a hurricane warning for parts of the Florida coast Friday as Hurricane Isaias drenched the Bahamas on track for the U.S. East Coast. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)



Pedestrians venture out into the rain brought by the outer bands of Hurricane Isaias in the Petionville district of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, early Friday, July 31, 2020. Isaias kept on a path early Friday toward the U.S. East Coast as it approached the Bahamas. (AP Photo/Dieu Nalio Chery)



A resident walks with containers filled with gasoline at Cooper's gas station before the arrival of Hurricane Isaias in Freeport, Grand Bahama, Bahamas, Friday, July 31, 2020. (AP Photo/Tim Aylen)



Residents cover a window with plywood in preparation for the arrival of Hurricane Isaias, in the Heritage neighborhood of Freeport, Grand Bahama, Bahamas, Friday, July 31, 2020. (AP Photo/Tim Ayles)



Darrel Duncombe stands nearby as Max Hall cuts a sheet of plywood to use to repair a roof in preparation for the arrival of Hurricane Isaias in Freeport, Grand Bahama, Bahamas, Friday, July 31, 2020. (AP Photo/Tim Ayles)

In Puerto Rico, the National Guard rescued at least 35 people from floodwaters that swept away one woman who remains missing.

Isaias was expected to produce 4 to 8 inches (10 to 20 centimeters) of rain in the Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

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