

'Sheer anxiety': Louisiana braces itself for Hurricane Delta

October 8 2020, by Stacey Plaisance and Rebecca Santana



This Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020 satellite image made available by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shows Hurricane Delta in the Gulf of Mexico at 10:41 a.m. EDT. Delta made landfall Wednesday just south of the Mexican resort of Cancun as an extremely dangerous Category 2 storm. (NOAA via AP)

Louisiana residents still recovering from the devastation of a powerful hurricane less than two months ago braced for another hit as Hurricane Delta steamed north through the Gulf on Thursday after swiping Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula.

Forecasters warned that the storm could blow ashore Friday with winds of up to 100 mph (160 kph) and a storm surge of up to 11 feet (3.4 meters). They placed most of Louisiana within Delta's path, including the southwest area of the state around Lake Charles, where Category 4 Hurricane Laura ripped houses from their foundations, peeled off roofs and tore trailers in half on Aug. 27.

Nearly six weeks later, 5,600 people remain in New Orleans hotels because their homes are too damaged to occupy. Trees, roofs and other debris left in Laura's wake still sit by roadsides waiting for pickup even as forecasters warned that Delta could be a larger than average storm.

The large majority of structures damaged by Laura haven't been permanently repaired, Gov. John Bel Edwards noted on Wednesday.

"All that debris could become missiles in really strong wind," said Edwards, who also worried about the "sheer anxiety" the storm could cause already traumatized residents.

"We don't want a hurricane to hit anywhere, but we know that the area that is least prepared and ready for a storm happens to be southwest Louisiana," he said.



Stephanie Verrett and Jodie Jones fill sandbags to protect their home in anticipation of Hurricane Delta, expected to arrive along the Gulf Coast later this week, in Houma, La., Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

Edwards said President Donald Trump approved his request to declare a federal emergency, which frees up federal resources. This is the sixth time in the Atlantic hurricane season that people in Louisiana have been forced to flee the state's barrier islands and sail boats to safe harbor while emergency officials ramp up command centers and consider ordering evacuations.

In neighboring Mississippi, Gov. Tate Reeves also declared a state of emergency. The Southern part of Mississippi could see heavy rain and flash flooding.

Hurricane Delta is the 25th named storm of the Atlantic's unprecedented hurricane season. Delta hit Mexico as a Category 2 hurricane just south of the resort city of Cancun early Wednesday with high winds and heavy rain, cutting power to more than 260,000 customers and forcing tourists into storm shelters. No deaths or injuries were reported.



Bernie Arnould, center, gets help from Kaden Ashley and D.J. Hebert, left, all with Pelican Companies, as they board up the windows to the front of MC Bank in Amelia, La., Wednesday, Oct., 7, 2020, in In preparation for Hurricane Delta. (Chris Granger/The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate via AP)

The storm weakened to a Category 1 storm Wednesday afternoon, but had already restrengthened to a Category 2 by Thursday morning, with

sustained winds near 100 mph. The storm was expected to become a major hurricane by Thursday night, with some weakening forecast once Delta approaches the northern Gulf Coast on Friday.

Many residents said they have had enough.

"This has to be the worst year that I have experienced," said Andrius Vitto, 42, a food truck owner from Gramercy who helped feed hungry evacuees after Laura. After learning this week that his native New Iberia, just to the east of Laura's worst devastation, was in Hurricane Delta's sights, "the hair rolled up on my arms," he said. "To see all this happening in one year—you know with the wildfires, with the hurricanes, the rain, all the other stuff in the news—COVID—It's mind-boggling."



fill sandbags to protect their home in anticipation of Hurricane Delta, expected to arrive along the Gulf Coast later this week, in Houma, La., Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

In Sulphur, across the Calcasieu River from Lake Charles, Ben Reynolds was deciding Wednesday whether to leave or stay. He had to use a generator for power for a week after Hurricane Laura.

"It's depressing," Reynolds said. "It's scary as hell."

While New Orleans has been mostly spared by the weather and found itself outside Delta's cone Wednesday, constant vigilance and months as a COVID-19 hot spot have strained a vulnerable city still scarred by memories of 2005's Hurricane Katrina. Delta's shifting forecast track likely meant no need for a major evacuation, but the city's emergency officials were on alert.

"We've had five near misses. We need to watch this one very, very closely," New Orleans Emergency Director Collin Arnold said.

Along with getting hit by Hurricane Laura and escaping Hurricane Sally, Louisiana saw heavy flooding June 7 from Tropical Storm Cristobal. Tropical Storm Beta prompted tropical storm warnings in mid-September as it slowly crawled up the northeast Texas coast.



Puppies await transport to the Berkshire Humane Society after a plane full of a few dozen puppies arrived at Pittsfield Municipal Airport in Pittsfield, Mass., Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020, from Mobile, Ala., ahead of Tropical Storm Delta to make room in the shelters affected by the storm. Some of the dogs will go to the Berkshire Humane Society and others will go to the Montgomery SPCA in New York. Once medically cleared, the dogs will be available for adoption to approved homes. (Ben Garver/The Berkshire Eagle via AP)



A plane full of a few dozen puppies arrives at Pittsfield Municipal Airport in Pittsfield, Mass., Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020, from Mobile, Ala., ahead of Tropical Storm Delta to make room in the shelters affected by the storm. Some of the dogs will go to the Berkshire Humane Society and others will go to the Montgomery SPCA in New York state. Once medically cleared, the dogs will be available for adoption to approved homes. (Ben Garver/The Berkshire Eagle via AP)



Terrebonne Parish employee Raul Estrada stabilizes the rock wall with cement on Island Road in Isle de Jean Charles, La., ahead of Hurricane Delta Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. Delta could make landfall, possibly as a Category 3 storm, sometime Friday south of Morgan City, La. (David Grunfeld/The Advocate via AP)



Jule Chaisson pulls his crab traps from Bayou Dularge in anticipation of Hurricane Delta, expected to arrive along the Gulf Coast later this week, in Theriot, La., Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. He said he's pulled around 1,000 traps over the last three days. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



Charles Russ pulls their boat from the water after pulling his crab traps from Bayou Dularge in anticipation of Hurricane Delta, expected to arrive along the Gulf Coast later this week, in Theriot, La., Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



Charles Russ and Allan Bergeron, right, pull their boat from the water after pulling their crab traps from Bayou Dularge in anticipation of Hurricane Delta, expected to arrive along the Gulf Coast later this week, in Theriot, La., Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



Jule Chaisson motors his boat to the dock after pulling some of his crab traps from Bayou Dularge in anticipation of Hurricane Delta, expected to arrive along the Gulf Coast later this week, in Theriot, La., Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. He said he pulled around 1,000 traps over the last three days. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



Brian Dufrene loads his crab traps on a trailer after pulling them from Bayou Dularge in anticipation of Hurricane Delta, expected to arrive along the Gulf Coast later this week, in Theriot, La., Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. Dufrene says he's pulled around 1,000 traps over the last three days. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)



A sport fisherman leaves Pointe Aux Chenes in Terrebonne Parish ahead of Hurricane Delta on Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. Delta could make landfall, possibly as a Category 3 storm, sometime Friday south of Morgan City, La. (David Grunfeld/The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate via AP)



Police clear debris from a road after the passing of Hurricane Delta in Tizimin, Mexico, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. Hurricane Delta made landfall Wednesday just south of the Mexican resort of Cancun as a Category 2 storm, downing trees and knocking out power to some resorts along the northeastern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. (AP Photo/Andres Kudacki)



Motorcyclists ride past a power post toppled by Hurricane Delta in Tizimin, Mexico, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. Delta made landfall Wednesday just south of the Mexican resort of Cancun as a Category 2 storm, downing trees and knocking out power to some resorts along the northeastern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. (AP Photo/Andres Kudacki)



A man pushes his bicycle along a flooded street after the passing of Hurricane Delta in Tizimin, Mexico, Wednesday, Oct. 7, 2020. Delta made landfall Wednesday just south of the Mexican resort of Cancun as a Category 2 storm, downing trees and knocking out power to some resorts along the northeastern coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. (AP Photo/Andres Kudacki)

Tropical Storm Marco looked like it might deliver the first half of a hurricane double-blow with Laura, but nearly dissipated before hitting the state near the mouth of the Mississippi River on Aug. 24.

There are nearly eight weeks of hurricane season left, although forecasters at the National Weather Service office in New Orleans noted in a [discussion Tuesday](#) of this week's forecast that outside of Delta, the skies above the Gulf of Mexico look calm.

"Not seeing any signs of any additional tropical weather in the extended which is OK with us because we are SO DONE with Hurricane Season 2020," they wrote.

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