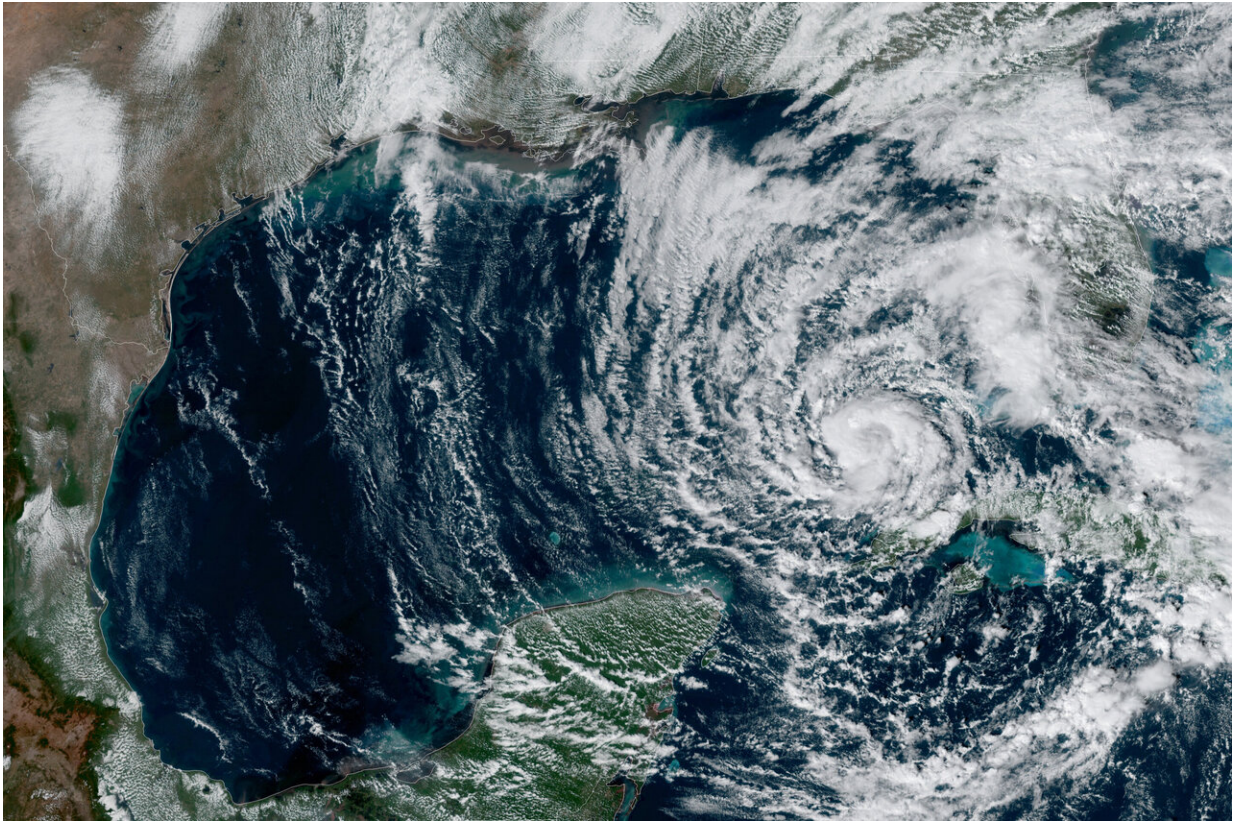


Tropical Storm Eta floods already drenched Florida cities

November 10 2020, by Freida Frisaro and Kelli Kennedy



This Monday, Nov. 9, 2020 satellite image made available by NOAA shows Tropical Storm Eta in the Gulf of Mexico at 1:51 p.m. EST. At left is Texas and at bottom is Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. (NOAA via AP)

A deluge of rain from Tropical Storm Eta caused flooding Monday

across South Florida's most densely populated urban areas, stranding cars, flooding businesses, and swamping entire neighborhoods with fast-rising water that had no place to drain.

Elsewhere, forecasters announced that Subtropical Storm Theta, a record-breaking 29th named storm of the 2020 hurricane season, had formed far out in the northeast Atlantic by late Monday night. It posed no immediate threat to land.

Eta made landfall in the Florida Keys and posed a serious threat across South Florida, which was already drenched from more than 14 inches (35 centimeters) of rain last month.

"Never seen this, never, not this deep," said Anthony Lyas, who has lived in his now-waterlogged Fort Lauderdale neighborhood since 1996. He described hearing water and debris slamming against his shuttered home overnight.

After striking Nicaragua as a Category 4 hurricane and killing nearly 70 people from Mexico to Panama, the storm moved into the Gulf of Mexico early Monday near where the Everglades meet the sea, with maximum sustained winds of 50 mph (85 kph).

"It was far worse than we could've ever imagined, and we were prepared," said Arbie Walker, a 27-year-old student whose Fort Lauderdale apartment was filled with 5 or 6 inches (13 to 15 centimeters) of water.



A man walks his bike through a flooded street in the Melrose Place neighborhood at 38th Ave. just south of Broward Blvd. on Monday, Nov., 9, 2020. Tropical Storm Eta brought heavy rain and high winds to South Florida as it made landfall in the Florida Keys Sunday. (Joe Cavaretta/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)

"It took us 20 minutes to navigate out of our neighborhood due to the heavy flooding in our area," Walker added. Floodwaters also submerged half of his sister's car.

As much as 16 inches of rain damaged one of the state's largest COVID-19 testing sites, at Miami-Dade County's Hard Rock Stadium, officials said. Throughout the pandemic, it has been among the busiest places to get a coronavirus diagnosis. The site was expected to be closed

until Wednesday or Thursday.

Eta hit land late Sunday as it blew over Lower Matecumbe, in the middle of the chain of small islands that form the Keys, but the heavily populated areas of Miami-Dade and Broward Counties bore the brunt of the fury.

It was the 28th named storm of a busy Atlantic [hurricane season](#), tying the 2005 record for named storms. And late Monday, it was followed by the 29th—Theta.



Lemay Acosta pulls his daughter Layla, 2, and dog Buster on a boat as they tour his flooded neighborhood in Plantation, Fla., on Monday, Nov. 9, 2020, a day after Tropical Storm Eta made landfall in the Florida Keys and flooded parts of South Florida. (Carline Jean/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)

The U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami said Theta broke the record of 28 named storms in 2005. Theta had developed about 995 miles (1,600 kilometers) southwest of the Azores, bearing top sustained winds of 50 mph (85 kph) as that system moved eastward at 15 mph (24 kph).

Late Monday night, Eta was about 180 miles (285 kilometers) southwest of the Dry Tortugas, moving southwest at 9 mph (15 kph). Forecasters said the storm, which had slowed in recent hours, was expected to strengthen overnight as it meanders in the southeastern Gulf of Mexico.

Forecasters said the system could intensify again into a minimal hurricane once it slowly moves up the southwest Gulf Coast. It is just far enough offshore to maintain its strength while dumping vast amounts of water across the lower third of the Florida peninsula. Rain and wind also were felt as far north as the Tampa Bay area.



Lemay Acosta and his daughter Layla, 2, take a boat ride in his flooded neighborhood in Plantation, Fla. a day after Tropical Storm Eta made landfall in the Florida Keys and flooded parts of South Florida, Monday, Nov. 9, 2020. South Florida will experience the high winds, rain and chance of tornadoes into Monday. (Carline Jean/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)

Fort Lauderdale Mayor Dean Trantalis called it a 100-year rain event.

"Once the ground becomes saturated, there's really no place for the water to go," Trantalis said. "It's not like a major hurricane. It's more of a rain event, and we're just doing our best to ensure that the people in our community are being protected."

City officials dispatched some 24 tanker trucks with giant vacuums to soak up water from the past few weeks. Some older neighborhoods

simply do not have any drainage. The city also passed out 6,000 sandbags to worried residents over the weekend, but water seeped into homes and stranded cars in parking lots and along roadways.

"There was just so much rain in such a short amount of time there was no where for it to go," said Fort Lauderdale resident Morgan Shattuck, who took photos of flooding on her street that showed swiftly moving water near the top of vehicles' wheels.



Residents walk a flooded street to reach their homes, Monday, Nov. 9, 2020 in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Tropical Storm Eta caused severe flooding in South Florida in areas already saturated from previous downpours. (AP Photo/Marta Lavandier)

Randi Barry, 36, also woke up Monday to flooded streets outside her home in Fort Lauderdale, and joined her neighbors in helping people whose cars were stuck in high water.

"There are a lot of people with their doors open, getting furniture up to higher ground and trying to get water out of their homes," Barry said.

A tractor-trailer was left dangling off the elevated Palmetto Expressway in Miami, the Florida Highway Patrol reported. The driver lost control on the wet, slick road and suffered minor injuries, CBS 4 in Miami reported.

"Please take this storm seriously," urged Palm Beach County Emergency Management Director Bill Johnson. "Please don't drive through flooded roadways."

Firefighters had pulled a person from a car that had driven into a canal Sunday night in Lauderhill, north of Miami. The patient was hospitalized in critical condition, according to a statement from Lauderhill Fire.



An advertising billboard lies on the ground after falling from high winds and rain from Tropical Storm Eta, Monday, Nov. 9, 2020, in Key Largo, Fla. The storm had top sustained winds of 65 mph Sunday night as it crossed over the Florida Keys. (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)



A couple walks along the beach during a downpour, Sunday, Nov. 8, 2020, on Miami Beach, Florida's famed South Beach. A strengthening Tropical Storm Eta cut across Cuba on Sunday, and forecasters say it's likely to be a hurricane before hitting the Florida Keys Sunday night or Monday. (AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee)



Cars move along highway A1A with poor visability in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Sunday, Nov. 8, 2020. A strengthening Tropical Storm Eta sliced across Cuba on Sunday and was aimed at the southern tip of Florida, where officials braced for a storm that could hit at hurricane force after leaving scores of dead and over 100 missing in Mexico and Central America. (Joe Cavaretta/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)



An aerial view of the massive, rain-fueled landslide in the village of Queja, in Guatemala, Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020, in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Eta. (Esteban Biba/Pool Photo via AP)



A policeman stands guard at the area where a plane that crashed in Guatemala City, Sunday, Nov. 8, 2020. A plane crashed after taking off from Guatemala City's La Aurora Airport with humanitarian aid to the areas affected by the ETA storm. At least one person died in the accident, firefighters reported. (AP Photo/Moises Castillo)



A semi is partially buried in a massive, rain-fueled landslide in the village of Queja, in Guatemala, Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020, in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Eta. (Esteban Biba/Pool Photo via AP)



A girl rescued from the zone where residents are believed buried by a massive, rain-fueled landslide, is carried on a stretcher to a waiting ambulance during a search and rescue operation, in San Cristobal Verapaz, Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020, in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Eta. (AP Photo/Moises Castillo)



Volunteer firefighters huddle in prayer before beginning a search and rescue operation in San Cristobal Verapaz, Saturday, Nov. 7, 2020, in the aftermath of Hurricane Eta. Searchers in Guatemala were digging through mud and debris looking for an estimated 100 people believed buried by a massive, rain-fueled landslide, as Eta regained tropical storm strength and churned toward Cuba. (AP Photo/Moises Castillo)



A parking lot at Hard Rock Stadium, the site of one of the major COVID-19 testing sites in the state, is flooded in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Eta, Monday, Nov. 9, 2020, in Miami Gardens, Fla. The site suffered major damage due to extensive rain dumped by the storm, and will remain closed until Wednesday or Thursday. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)



Two dogs look out from a flooded field in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Eta, Monday, Nov. 9, 2020, in Davie, Fla. A deluge of rain from Tropical Storm Eta caused flooding Monday across South Florida's most densely populated urban areas, stranding cars, flooding businesses, and swamping entire neighborhoods with fast-rising water that had no place to drain. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)



Rance Ford watches a passing vehicle on his flooded street in Melrose Manors in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Monday, Nov. 9, 2020. Tropical Storm Eta dumped rain as it passed over South Florida streets flooded. (Joe Cavaretta/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)



A man sits in the bed of a truck as flooding is seen in the Melrose Manors neighborhood west of downtown Fort Lauderdale on Monday, Nov. 9, 2020. Tropical Storm Eta brought heavy rain and high winds to South Florida as it made landfall in the Florida Keys Sunday. (Joe Cavaretta/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)



A parking lot at Hard Rock Stadium, the site of one of the major COVID-19 testing sites in the state, is flooded in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Eta, Monday, Nov. 9, 2020, in Miami Gardens, Fla. The site suffered major damage due to extensive rain dumped by the storm, and will remain closed until Wednesday or Thursday. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)



Evan and Denise Knight try to keep dry along with their baby Zion, on a flooded street in Melrose Park in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Monday, Nov. 9, 2020. Heavy rain from Tropical Storm Eta caused dangerous flooding Monday across Florida's most densely populated urban areas, stranding cars and swamping entire neighborhoods with fast-rising water that had no place to drain. (Joe Cavaretta/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)



The parking lot of the Sawp Shop Flea Market in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., is seen flooded, Monday, Nov. 9, 2020. Heavy rain from Tropical Storm Eta caused dangerous flooding Monday across Florida's most densely populated urban areas, stranding cars and swamping entire neighborhoods with fast-rising water that had no place to drain. (Joe Cavaretta/South Florida Sun-Sentinel via AP)

In the Keys, the mayor ordered mandatory evacuations for mobile home and RV parks, campgrounds and other low-lying areas. School districts closed, saying the roads were already too flooded and the winds could be too gusty for buses to transport students. But the islands were spared any major damage, and officials expected shelters to close and schools to reopen by Tuesday.

Aside from a banyan tree that fell on a home and injured people inside,

Key Largo was largely unscathed, Fire Chief Don Bock said.

Eta was not done yet with Cuba, just 90 miles (140 kilometers) south of Florida, where the storm continued to swell rivers and flood coastal zones. Some 25,000 people were evacuated with no reports of deaths, but rainfall continued, with total accumulations of up to 25 inches (63 centimeters) predicted. A tropical [storm](#) watch was in effect for parts of the island.

Nearly a week after Eta crashed ashore in Nicaragua, authorities from Panama to Guatemala have reported more than 100 dead and an even higher number of missing. Extensive flooding and landslides have affected hundreds of thousands of people in countries already struggling with the economic fallout of the pandemic.

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Citation: Tropical Storm Eta floods already drenched Florida cities (2020, November 10)
retrieved 7 August 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2020-11-tropical-storm-eta-drenched-florida.html>

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