

# Cuba evacuates 180,000 as Tropical Storm Elsa approaches

July 5 2021, by Andrea Rodríguez



Frank Barakat carries his daughter Valentina, 2, through an shopping aisle dedicated for hurricane supplies as the Home Depot store prepares for possible effects of tropical storm Elsa in Miami on Saturday, July 3, 2021. Elsa fell back to tropical storm force as it brushed past Haiti and the Dominican Republic on Saturday and threatened to unleash flooding and landslides before taking aim at Cuba and Florida. Credit: Al Diaz/Miami Herald via AP

Cuba evacuated 180,000 people amid fears Sunday that Tropical Storm

Elsa could cause heavy flooding after battering several Caribbean islands, killing at least three people.

The Cuban government opened shelters and moved to protect sugarcane and cocoa crops ahead of the [storm](#). Most of those evacuated went to relatives' homes, while some people sheltered at [government facilities](#). Hundreds living in mountainous areas took refuge in natural caves prepared for the emergency.

The storm's next target was Florida, where Gov. Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency in 15 counties, including in Miami-Dade County, where a high-rise condominium building collapsed last week.

Late Sunday afternoon, Elsa's center was near Cuba's southern coast, about 15 miles (20 kilometers) west of Cabo Cruz, and was moving northwest at 14 mph (22 kph). It had maximum sustained winds of about 60 mph (95 kph), according to the National Hurricane Center in Miami.

The center said the storm was expected to gradually weaken while moving across Cuba on Monday.

"After Elsa emerges over the Florida Straits and the southeastern Gulf of Mexico, some slight restrengthening is possible," it said.

The storm killed one person on St. Lucia, according to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency. A 15-year-old boy and a 75-year-old woman died Saturday in separate events in the Dominican Republic after walls collapsed on them, according to a statement from the Emergency Operations Center.



Home Depot department supervisor, Arnaldo Gonzalez, loads water bottles into Elena Arvalo's shopping cart as shoppers prepare for possible effects of tropical storm Elsa in Miami on Saturday, July 3, 2021. Elsa fell back to tropical storm force as it brushed past Haiti and the Dominican Republic on Saturday and threatened to unleash flooding and landslides before taking aim at Cuba and Florida. Credit: Al Diaz/Miami Herald via AP

Elsa was a Category 1 hurricane until Saturday morning, causing widespread damage on several eastern Caribbean islands Friday as the first hurricane of the Atlantic season. Among the hardest hit was Barbados, where more than 1,100 people reported damaged houses, including 62 homes that completely collapsed. The government promised to find and fund temporary housing to avoid clustering people

in shelters amid the pandemic.

Downed trees also were reported in Haiti, which is especially vulnerable to floods and landslides because of widespread erosion and deforestation. Haiti's Civil Protection Agency said Sunday that three people had been injured by downed trees.

A tropical storm warning was in effect for much of Cuba, Jamaica and the Florida Keys from Craig Key westward to the Dry Tortugas. A hurricane watch was issued for the Cuban provinces of Camaguey, Granma, Guantanamo, Holguin, Las Tunas, and Santiago de Cuba. Some of those provinces have reported a high number of coronavirus infections, raising concerns that the storm could force large groups of people to seek shelter together.



Antony Exilien secures the roof of his house in response to Tropical Storm Elsa, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Saturday, July 3, 2021. Elsa brushed past Haiti and the Dominican Republic on Saturday and threatened to unleash flooding and landslides before taking aim at Cuba and Florida. Credit: AP Photo/Joseph Odelyn



An electrical pole felled by Hurricane Elsa leans on the edge of a residential balcony, in Cedars, St. Vincent, Friday, July 2, 2021. Elsa strengthened into the first hurricane of the Atlantic season on Friday as it blew off roofs and snapped trees in the eastern Caribbean, where officials closed schools, businesses and airports. Credit: AP Photo/Orvil Samuel

Elsa is the earliest fifth-named storm on record and also broke the record as the tropic's fastest-moving hurricane, clocking in at 31 mph Saturday morning, said Brian McNoldy, a [hurricane](#) researcher at the University of Miami.

Portions of Cuba were forecast to get rainfall of 5 to 10 inches (13 to 25 centimeters) through Monday, with isolated maximum amounts of 15 inches (20 centimeters). Jamaica was expected to get 4 to 8 inches (10 to 20 centimeters), with maximum totals of 15 inches (38 centimeters).

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