

Fiona, a Category 3 hurricane, batters Turks and Caicos

September 20 2022



This undated handout photo shows members of the National Guard providing hurricane assistance in Puerto Rico.

Hurricane Fiona, a powerful Category 3 storm, was battering the Turks and Caicos islands on Tuesday after leaving two people dead and

triggering major flooding and power outages in the Caribbean.

"Hurricane Fiona has proven to be an unpredictable storm," Anya Williams, the deputy governor of the British Overseas Territory, said in a broadcast.

Williams said no casualties or serious injuries had been reported in the Turks and Caicos overnight as heavy rain and strong winds lashed the islands but she urged residents to continue to shelter in place.

Blackouts had been reported on Grand Turk and several other islands in the archipelago and 165 people had been admitted to shelters, she said, adding that Britain's Royal Navy and the US Coast Guard are standing by provide assistance if needed.

The US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said Fiona was packing maximum winds nearing 115 miles (185 kilometers) per hour, making it a major hurricane, and is expected to become even stronger.

"Heavy rains around the center of Fiona impacts the Turks and Caicos through this afternoon with continued life-threatening flooding," the NHC said.

Fiona has left two people dead so far: one man whose home was swept away in the French overseas department of Guadeloupe and another in the Dominican Republic who died while cutting down a tree.



A young person rides his bicycle in Nagua, Dominican Republic.

Dominican Republic President Luis Abinader has declared three eastern provinces to be disaster zones: La Altagracia—home to the popular resort of Punta Cana—El Seibo and Hato Mayor.

Several roads were flooded or cut off by falling trees or electric poles around Punta Cana where the power was knocked out.

Footage from local media showed residents of the east coast town of Higüey waist-deep in water trying to salvage personal belongings.

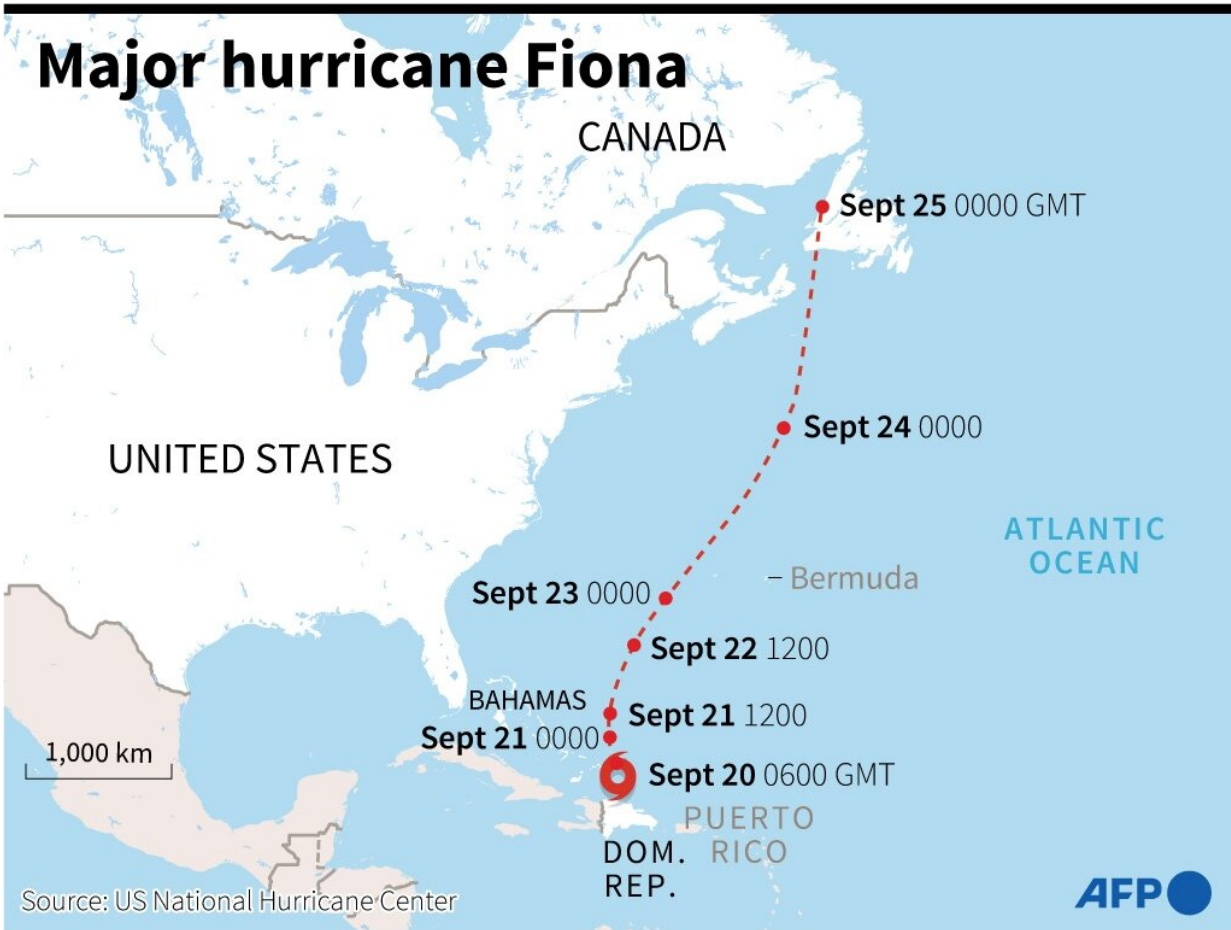
"It came through at high speed," Vicente Lopez, in the Punta Cana beach

of Bibijagua told AFP, bemoaning the destroyed businesses in the area.

The NHC said "heavy rainfall and localized life-threatening flash flooding" would continue over part of the Dominican Republic on Tuesday.

US President Joe Biden has meanwhile declared a state of emergency in Puerto Rico—where the storm hit a day earlier—authorizing the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide assistance in the US island territory.

Governor Pedro Pierluisi said the storm had caused catastrophic damage since Sunday, with some areas receiving more than 30 inches (76 centimeters) of rain.



Map showing the projected path of Hurricane Fiona.

'I have food and water'

Across Puerto Rico, Fiona caused landslides, blocked roads and toppled trees, power lines and bridges, Pierluisi said.

A man was killed as an indirect result of the power blackout—burned to death while trying to fill his generator, according to authorities.

On Monday afternoon, Nelly Marrero made her way back to her home in

Toa Baja, in the north of Puerto Rico, to clear out the mud that surged inside after she evacuated.

"Thanks to God, I have food and water," Marrero—who lost everything when Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico five years ago—told AFP by telephone.

Fiona knocked out power to much of Puerto Rico, an island of three million people, but electricity had been restored for some customers on Monday, the governor said.

The hurricane has also left around 800,000 people without drinking water as a result of power outages and flooded rivers, officials said.

Hurricanes

Saffir-Simpson scale

↓ CATEGORY

1 Winds of **119**
to **153 kph**

Dangerous:
Damage to poorly
constructed homes,
tree branches, power lines



2 **154 - 177 kph**

Very dangerous:
Damage to roofs,
windows, walls.
Shallow-rooted
trees blown down.
Severe power outages



3 **178 - 208 kph**

Devastating:
Damage to
building structures.
Many trees uprooted.
Flooding near coast.
Power and water shortages



4 **209 - 251 kph**

Catastrophic:
Roofs and walls
collapse. Most
trees and power lines
destroyed. Flooding. Areas up
to 10 km from coast evacuated



5 **252 or higher**

Utterly catastrophic:
Buildings
destroyed,
roofs torn off.
Floods. Areas
up to 16 km from
coast evacuated



Source: NHC



The five categories in the Saffir-Simpson hurricane wind scale.

After years of financial woes and recession, Puerto Rico in 2017 declared the largest bankruptcy ever by a local US administration.

Later that year, the double hit from two Hurricanes, Irma and Maria, added to the misery, devastating the electrical grid on the island—which has suffered from major infrastructure problems for years.

The grid was privatized in June 2021 in an effort to resolve the problem of blackouts, but the issue has persisted, and the entire island lost power earlier this year.

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Citation: Fiona, a Category 3 hurricane, batters Turks and Caicos (2022, September 20) retrieved 18 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-09-fiona-category-hurricane-turks-caicos.html>

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