

Hurricane Beryl pummels Caribbean, strengthens to Category 5

July 2 2024, by Chandan KHANNA



Damaged fishing boats pile up against each other after Hurricane Beryl in Bridgetown, Barbados.

Hurricane Beryl has strengthened into a top-level category 5 storm after it swept across several islands in the southeastern Caribbean, dumping

heavy rain and unleashing devastating winds.

Beryl is now the earliest category 5 [storm](#) in the Atlantic on record and has developed into a "potentially catastrophic" [hurricane](#), the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

The NHC said in its latest update early on Tuesday that Beryl was "still intensifying," with recent data showing maximum sustained winds had increased to almost 165 miles (265 kilometers) per hour.

Grenada's Carriacou Island took a direct hit from the storm's "extremely dangerous eyewall" early Monday, with sustained winds at upwards of 150 mph (240 kph), the NHC said.

Nearby islands, including St. Vincent and the Grenadines, also experienced "catastrophic winds and life-threatening storm surge," it said.

"In half an hour, Carriacou was flattened," Grenada's Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell told a news conference.

"We are not yet out of the woods," Mitchell said, noting that while no deaths had been reported so far, he could not say for sure that none had occurred.

Video obtained by AFP from St. George's in Grenada showed heavy downpours with trees buffeted by gusts.



A pier during a high tide after the passage of Hurricane Beryl in Oistins near Bridgetown, Barbados.

Mitchell said later on social media the government was working to get relief supplies to both Carriacou and the island of Petite Martinique on Tuesday.

"The state of emergency is still in effect. Remain indoors," he wrote on Facebook.

Rare early strong storm

Beryl became the first hurricane of the 2024 Atlantic season on Saturday

and quickly gathered strength.

Experts say that such a powerful storm forming this early in the Atlantic hurricane season—which runs from early June to late November—is extremely rare.

It is the first hurricane since NHC records began to reach the Category 4 level in June, and the earliest to reach Category 5 in July.

"Only five major (Category 3+) hurricanes have been recorded in the Atlantic before the first week of July," hurricane expert Michael Lowry posted on social media platform X.



A flooded parking lot is seen after the passing of Hurricane Beryl in Worthing, Christ Church, Barbados.

Barbados appeared to be spared the worst of the storm but was still hit with [high winds](#) and pelting rain, although officials reported no injuries so far.

Barbados seems to have "dodged a bullet," Minister of Home Affairs and Information Wilfred Abrahams said in an online video, but nonetheless "gusts are still coming, the storm-force winds are still coming," he said.

Homes and businesses were flooded in some areas and fishing boats were damaged in Bridgetown.

The storm prompted the cancellation of classes on Monday in several of the islands, while a meeting this week in Grenada of the Caribbean regional bloc CARICOM was postponed.

Jamaica has issued a hurricane warning ahead of the storm's expected arrival on Wednesday, with the NHC forecasting it would bring "life-threatening winds and storm surge."

A tropical storm warning was also issued for the south coast of the Dominican Republic, where authorities placed two provinces on red alert.

The NHC warned the Cayman Islands and areas on the Yucatan Peninsula to monitor the storm's progress.



A boat ended up in a tree after the passage of Hurricane Beryl in Barbados.



View of a damaged restaurant on the beach near the Richard Haynes Boardwalk after the passage of Hurricane Beryl in Hastings, Christ Church, Barbados.

Extreme weather

A Category 3 or higher on the Saffir-Simpson scale is considered a [major hurricane](#).

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said in late May that it expects this year to be an "extraordinary" hurricane season, with up to seven storms of Category 3 or higher.

The agency cited warm Atlantic Ocean temperatures and conditions related to the weather phenomenon La Niña in the Pacific for the

expected increase in storms.

Extreme weather events including hurricanes have become more frequent and more devastating in recent years as a result of climate change.

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