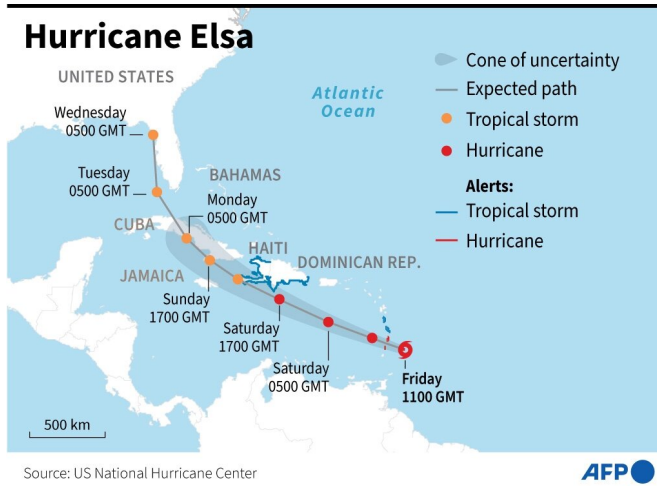


Hurricane Elsa threatens Caribbean

2 July 2021



Location and predicted path of the Hurricane Elsa.

Hurricane Elsa churned through the Caribbean Friday, bringing powerful winds and threatening to pile further misery on violence-wracked Haiti.

The Category 1 storm strengthened slightly on Friday afternoon and was packing maximum sustained winds of 85 miles (140 kilometers) per hour as it moved northwest near St Vincent and the Grenadines in the eastern Caribbean at around 5:00 pm (2100 GMT), the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

The center said Elsa could bring a tidal surge of as much as six feet (two meters) above normal on Cuba's southern coast; up to four feet on the southern coast of Hispaniola, which is made up of Haiti and the Dominican Republic; and up to three feet on the coast of Jamaica.

Rainfall, storm surges and strong winds from Elsa could affect the Florida Keys and parts of the Florida peninsula early next week, but this depends on how the storm behaves this weekend when it hits large Caribbean islands, the NHC said.

Hurricane-related weather would be bad news for the Florida town of Surfside, near Miami, as it tries to dig out a collapsed condo building in search of survivors and bodies.

Elsa is forecast to move near the southern coast of Hispaniola on Saturday, and Haitian authorities expressed worry Friday that they lack emergency supplies such as food and water.

A good part of the emergency resources the government did have were used in another crisis: the evacuation of thousands of people from their homes in Port-au-Prince because of raging gang violence.

Many of these people are staying in gyms, schools or other public buildings, and some of the supplies that had been earmarked for the hurricane season have been used on these evacuees, said Jerry Chandler, director of the Haitian civil protection agency.

As the hurricane approached, authorities declared a weather alert Friday.

Authorities want to ship emergency supplies to the southern coast, which is most threatened. But heavily armed gangs control part of the only road leading from the capital to the south, and they do not let everything through.

To reach these threatened areas, Chandler said, "we have to go through red zones," referring to gang-held territory.

In 2016, Hurricane Matthew killed more than 500 people in southern Haiti and caused nearly \$2 billion in damage.

By Sunday, Elsa is forecast to move near Jamaica and portions of eastern Cuba, the US center said.

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APA citation: Hurricane Elsa threatens Caribbean (2021, July 2) retrieved 9 December 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-07-hurricane-elsa-threatens-caribbean.html>

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