Hurricane Irma: Sept. 5, 2017

Category 5 Storm Bears Down on the Leeward Islands; Path Could Threaten Florida, Southeast U.S.

Hurricane Irma strengthened into a Category 5 hurricane on Tuesday as it bore down on the Leeward Islands.

Currently just under 300 miles east of the islands and moving at about 15 mph, Irma was on a path that would take it through the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, the Bahamas and Cuba before posing a serious threat to Florida and the Southeast U.S. this weekend.

Irma's maximum sustained winds have increased to 175 mph based on data from NOAA and Air Force Hurricane Hunter aircraft. Based on wind speed, Irma is the strongest Atlantic hurricane since 2007, when hurricanes Felix and Dean also reached maximum sustained winds of 175 mph.

Additionally, Irma is just the 17th Atlantic hurricane to have maximum sustained winds of 175 mph or greater, according to Phil Klotzbach, a tropical scientist at Colorado State University.

U.S. Mainland Forecast: Watching Florida, Southeast Closely

While it is still too soon to predict the exact path of Irma's center and eyewall, there is an increasing chance that the storm could strike South Florida, including the Florida Keys, this weekend.

The majority of forecasts indicate Irma will begin to turn to the north sometime this weekend and, according to the latest National Hurricane Center forecast, the center of Irma could track very close to South Florida by Saturday night.

For now, residents along the Southeast coast and eastern Gulf Coast, including Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas, have been warned to monitor the storm's progress closely.

In addition, Irma's wind field will be large. That means dangerous surf and coastal flooding will likely impact the southeastern U.S. coastline even well away from the storm's center.

A State of Emergency was declared by Florida Gov. Rick Scott on Monday.


To Get Help

Florida
- United Way, Dial 2-1-1 or visit http://www.referweb.net/211communityresources/
- Florida Division of Emergency Management: 850.413.9969 or visit http://www.floridadisaster.org/index.asp
- Red Cross North Florida Region: 800.733.2767 or visit http://www.redcross.org/local/florida/north-florida

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.
Guidance Resources®

Shelters

**Florida**

**Estero Community Center**

9200 Corkscrew Palms Blvd., Estero

Road Conditions

Call 511: The Department of Transportation offers its free 511 service for travel information and roadway conditions, including road and bridge closures, toll suspensions and major evacuation routes.

**Florida Department of Transportation**

- 866.374.3368 or visit [https://fl511.com/](https://fl511.com/)

Power Outage

To report an outage, call:

**Florida**

  - 727.443.2641 – Pinellas
  - 407.629.1010 – Orlando
  - 800.700.8744 – Other
- Florida Power and Light Co.: 800.468.8243 or visit: [https://www.fpl.com/account/report-outage.html#outage](https://www.fpl.com/account/report-outage.html#outage)
- Gainesville Regional Utilities: 352.334.2871 or visit [https://www.gru.com/StormCentral/PowerOutageMap.aspx](https://www.gru.com/StormCentral/PowerOutageMap.aspx)

Airport Closures

Passengers are urged to not come to the local airport unless your flight has been confirmed. If your flight has been canceled, please call your airline's customer service telephone number or rebook through your airline's website.


Pets and Animals

**Make a Plan**

Remember, during a disaster what's good for you is good for your pet, so get them ready today.

If you leave your pets behind, they may be lost, injured, or worse. Never leave a pet chained outdoors. Plan options include:

- Create a buddy system in case you're not home. Ask a trusted neighbor to check on your animals.
- Identify shelters. For public health reasons, many emergency shelters cannot accept pets.
  - Find pet friendly hotels along your evacuation route and keep a list in your pet's emergency kit.
  - Locate boarding facilities or animal hospitals near your evacuation shelter.
  - Consider an out-of-town friend or relative

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.
Guidance

• Locate a veterinarian or animal hospital in the area where you may be seeking temporary shelter, in case your pet needs medical care. Add the contact information to your emergency kit.
• Have your pet is microchipped and make sure that you not only keep your address and phone number up-to-date, but that you also include contact info for an emergency contact outside of your immediate area.
• Call your local emergency management office, animal shelter or animal control office to get advice and information.
• If you are unable to return to your home right away, you may need to board your pet. Find out where pet boarding facilities are located.
• Most boarding kennels, veterinarians and animal shelters will need your pet’s medical records to make sure all vaccinations are current.
• If you have no alternative but to leave your pet at home, there are some precautions you must take, but remember that leaving your pet at home alone can place your animal in great danger.

Tips for Large Animals
If you have large animals such as horses, cattle, sheep, goats or pigs on your property, be sure to prepare before a disaster.
• Ensure all animals have some form of identification.
• Evacuate animals whenever possible. Map out primary and secondary routes in advance.
• Make available vehicles and trailers needed for transporting and supporting each type of animal. Also make available experienced handlers and drivers.
• Ensure destinations have food, water, veterinary care and handling equipment.
• If evacuation is not possible, animal owners must decide whether to move large animals to shelter or turn them outside.

Build a Kit
Include basic survival items and items to keep your pet happy and comfortable. Start with this list, or download Preparing Makes Sense for Pet Owners—Emergency Preparedness Pet Kit List (PDF) to find out exactly what items your pet needs to be Ready.
• Food. At least a three day supply in an airtight, waterproof container.
• Water. At least three days of water specifically for your pets.
• Medicines and medical records.
• Important documents. Registration information, adoption papers and vaccination documents. Talk to your veterinarian about microchipping and enrolling your pet in a recovery database.
• First aid kit. Cotton bandage rolls, bandage tape and scissors; antibiotic ointment; flea and tick prevention; latex gloves, isopropyl alcohol and saline solution. Including a pet first aid reference book is a good idea too.
• Collar or harness with ID tag, rabies tag and a leash.
• Crate or pet carrier. Have a sturdy, safe crate or carrier in case you need to evacuate. The carrier should be large enough for your pet to stand, turn around and lie down.
• Sanitation. Pet litter and litter box if appropriate, newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags and household chlorine bleach.
• A picture of you and your pet together. If you become separated, a picture of you and your pet together will help you document ownership and allow others to assist you. Add species, breed, age, sex, color and distinguishing characteristics.
• Familiar items. Familiar items, such as treats, toys and bedding can help reduce stress for your pet.

Resources
• American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)
• American Humane Association

Source: https://www.ready.gov/animals

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.