

Hurricane Dorian: 'Extremely dangerous' Category 4 storm heads towards Florida

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A state of emergency has been declared in Florida. US President Donald Trump has authorised the Federal Emergency Management Agency to coordinate disaster-relief efforts.

Hurricane Dorian approaches the coast of Florida, U.S. in this August 30, 2019 NASA handout satellite image. (NASA/Handout via Reuters)

Hurricane Dorian on Friday turned into a Category 4 “extremely dangerous” storm as it headed towards Florida with increasingly powerful winds and drenching rains. The storm is expected to hit Florida on Monday morning.

In a statement, the Miami-based National Hurricane Center said that Dorian was packing maximum sustained winds of 215km/h (130 mph).

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A sea turtle nest is cordoned off on the edge of the beach as bands of rain come in on South Beach. (AP)

The storm has the potential to put millions of people at risk, along with holiday attractions such as Walt Disney World, NASA launchpads along the Space Coast and even Trump’s Mar-a-Lago resort in Southern Florida’s Palm Beach.

Dorian began on Friday over the Atlantic as a Category 2 hurricane on the five-step Saffir-Simpson Wind Scale.

Bahamas urges people to evacuate

In the Bahamas, that lies in Dorian’s path, evacuations are already underway, two days before the hurricane is expected to bring a life-threatening storm surge forecast up to 10 to 15 feet (3 to 4.5 meters) to the northwest of the islands, news agency Reuters reported.

Bahamians prepare for the arrival of Hurricane Dorian in Nassau, Bahamas August 30, 2019. (Reuters)

The Freeport International airport in the Bahamas was shut down on Friday and will not reopen until September 3. Shelters have been set up in churches and schools across the archipelago nation by authorities.

Bahamas Prime Minister Huber Minnis has urged people not to “brave out” the hurricane. “Do not be foolish

and try to brave out this hurricane. The price you may pay for not evacuating is your life," Minnis was quoted as saying by the Associated Press.

Florida remains anxious

It is still unclear where hurricane Dorian will hit the state of Florida as its course remains unpredictable. One of Florida's last major hurricanes, 2017's Irma, swept up the peninsula, instead of hitting the east coast.

Shoppers wait in line to get two cases of bottled water – the limit per customer, at the Costco store in Altamonte Springs, Fla., Friday, Aug. 30, 2019, as central Florida residents prepare for a possible strike by Hurricane Dorian. (AP)

As many as two thousand National Guard troops have been mobilised by Friday, with 2,000 more joining them by Saturday. "We're thinking about Florida evacuations, but it's a little bit too soon. We'll probably make that determination on Sunday," President Trump told reporters.

On Florida's east coast, where Dorian's winds are expected to quickly gather speed, residents were busy stocking bottled water, plywood, and other supplies as fast as they could. Some gas stations are reported to have already run out of fuel. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis urged residents to stock up at least a week's worth of food, water and medicine.

- IE, Inputs from agencies