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Coastal and Marine Hazards Pose Threats to Puerto Rico and Northern USVI

Offshore and nearshore areas brace for rough seas and strong winds through Tuesday

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The National Weather Service has issued warnings for coastal and marine hazards impacting the offshore and nearshore Atlantic waters, including the coastal areas of northwestern Puerto Rico, both Mona and Anegada Passages, and extending to the northern US Virgin Islands.

Expected to persist through Tuesday morning, these conditions have led to advisories being issued, cautioning against hazardous seas for small craft and warning of dangerous swimming conditions due to high surf across these regions.

Starting from Monday, April 1, seas are forecasted to range from 6-8 feet with breaking waves hitting heights of 7-11 feet. While the seas are expected to calm as the week progresses, initial conditions will be particularly rough, presenting substantial risks to small vessels. Mariners across both Puerto Rico and the USVI are advised to exercise caution, especially in the afternoon when the marine conditions are predicted to be most severe.

Wind forecasts for the week indicate speeds of 15 to 20 knots with gusts reaching up to 25 knots on Monday, slightly decreasing in intensity as the week advances but still maintaining significant gusts. These windy conditions contribute to the rough seas and support the issuance of advisories in the affected areas.

A significant concern is the high risk of life-threatening rip currents along the north coastline of Puerto Rico, from Rincon to Ceiba, and extending to Culebra and the northern USVI. This high risk is expected to continue through midweek, with rip currents potentially pulling even the strongest swimmers away from shore into deeper waters, making it difficult to return to safety. By Thursday, April 4, the risk is anticipated to decrease to moderate; however, life-threatening rip currents will still be possible.

The cause of these hazardous conditions is attributed to northerly swells and moderate to fresh trade winds. Although the current northerly swell will gradually subside, another long-period northerly swell is expected to reach the Atlantic waters by midweek, possibly extending the duration of dangerous conditions. Impacts of these conditions include hazardous seas for small craft, dangerous surf and swimming conditions, along with potential localized coastal flooding and beach erosion in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Residents and visitors of the affected areas in both Puerto Rico and the USVI are urged to pay close attention to advisories and exercise extreme caution near the water.