

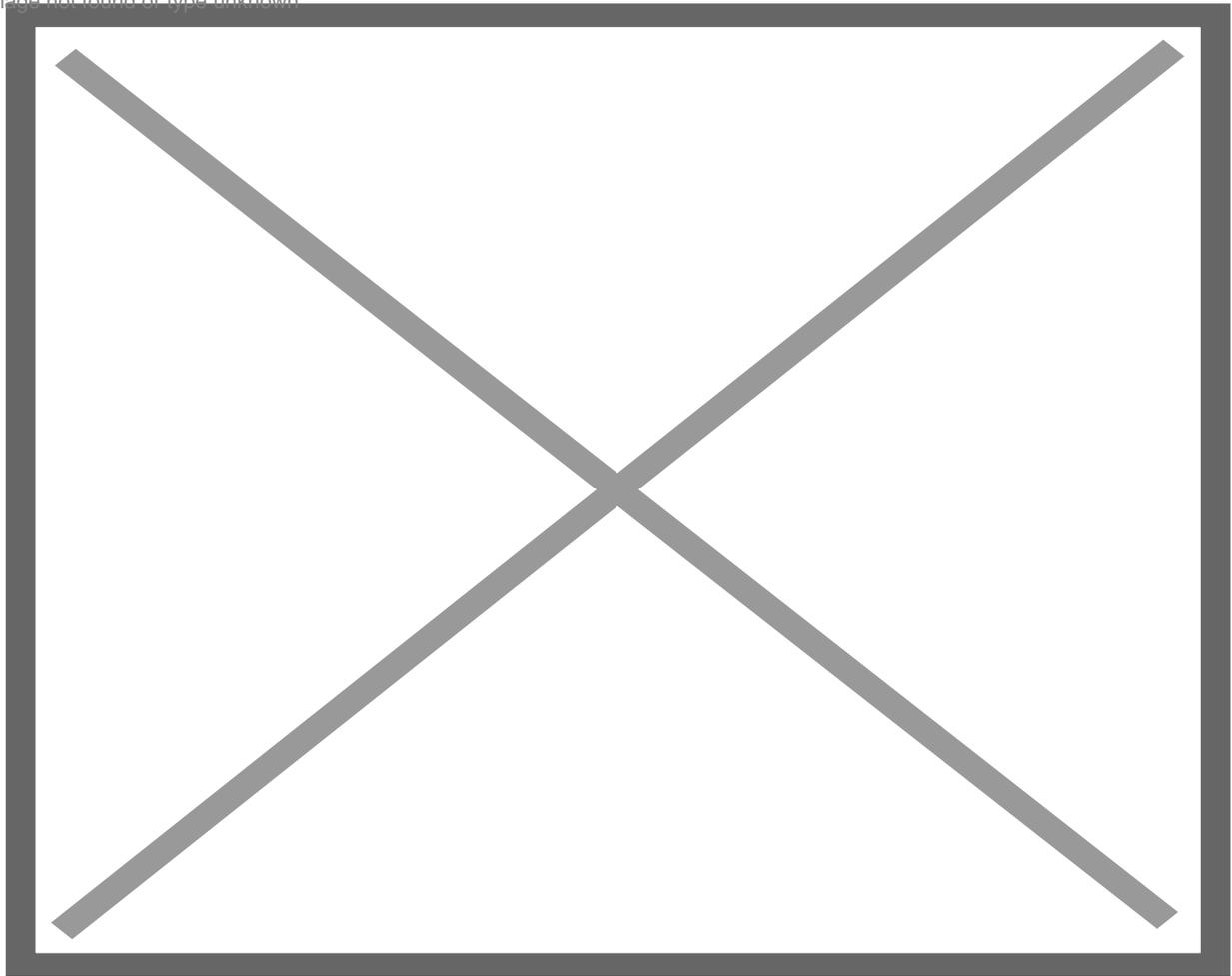
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Isaias, Now a Hurricane, Expected to Impact Portions of The Bahamas Today; Further Strengthening Forecast

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Hurricane Isaias, a system that once struggled to build its core to become a formidable storm, has done just that within the last 24 hours — strengthening into a tropical storm as it moved away from the USVI and Puerto Rico, and as of 5:00 a.m. Friday was packing 80 mph winds as it approaches portions of The Bahamas as a Cat. 1 hurricane.

A hurricane warning is in effect for the Northwestern Bahamas including Andros Island, New Providence, Eleuthera, Abacos Islands, Berry Islands, Grand Bahamas Island, and Bimini. A hurricane warning is also in effect for the Southeastern Bahamas including the Acklins, Crooked Island, Long Cay, the Inaguas, Mayaguana, and the Ragged Islands, Central Bahamas, including Cat Island, the Exumas, Long Island, Rum Cay, and San Salvador.

The National Hurricane Center said interests elsewhere along the southeast coast of the United States should monitor the progress of this system. Additional watches or warnings may be required for a portion of the Florida peninsula later today.

According to N.H.C.'s 5:00 a.m. Friday forecast, the center of Hurricane Isaias was located near latitude 20.9 North, longitude 73.3 West. Isaias is moving toward the northwest near 17 mph (28 km/h), and a generally northwestward motion with some decrease in forward speed is expected for the next couple of days followed by turn toward the north-northwest. On the forecast track, the center of Isaias will move near or over the Southeastern Bahamas today. Isaias is forecast to be near the Central Bahamas tonight and move near or over the Northwestern Bahamas and near or east of the Florida peninsula on Saturday and Sunday.

Maximum sustained winds are near 80 mph (130 km/h) with higher gusts. Some strengthening is possible today, and Isaias is expected to remain a hurricane for the next few days.

Hurricane-force winds extend outward up to 45 miles (75 km) from the center and tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 205 miles (335 km).

The estimated minimum central pressure is 990 mb (29.24 inches).

Hazards affecting land

Storm Surge: A dangerous storm surge will raise water levels by as much as 3 to 5 feet above normal tide levels in areas of onshore winds in the Bahamas.

Wind: Tropical storm conditions will continue across portions of the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and the Turks and Caicos this morning. Hurricane conditions are expected to begin in the southeastern Bahamas this morning and spread into the central and northwestern Bahamas tonight and into Saturday. Tropical storm conditions are possible in the watch area in Florida beginning Saturday.

Rainfall: Isaias is expected to produce the following rain accumulations through Saturday:

Dominican Republic and northern Haiti: 4 to 8 inches, with isolated maximum totals of 12 inches.

Bahamas, Turks and Caicos: 4 to 8 inches.

Cuba: 1 to 2 inches, with isolated maximum totals of 4 inches.

These rainfall amounts will lead to life-threatening flash flooding and mudslides, as well as river flooding. Urban and small stream flooding is expected for the U.S. Virgin Islands and Hispaniola.

From Friday night through Monday:

South Florida into east-Central Florida: 2 to 4 inches, with isolated maximum totals of 6 inches.

These rainfall amounts could result in isolated flash and urban flooding, especially in low-lying and poorly drained areas.