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USVI Could Experience Hurricane Conditions Tonight From Ernesto; FEMA Urging Residents to Prepare For Power Outages; WAPA Says Crews on Standby

Residents advised to secure emergency supplies and prepare for potential hurricane conditions, extended power outages as Tropical Storm Ernesto strengthens; WAPA assures public that crews are on standby to address any disruptions

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NOAA's NESDIS/STAR GOES-East satellite imagery of Tropical Storm Ernesto at 5:00 p.m. on Tues. Aug. 13, 2024. By. NOAA

The National Hurricane Center at 5:00 p.m. Tuesday said Tropical Storm Ernesto continues to gain strength, and the storm is forecast to intensify into a hurricane tonight while passing northeast

of Puerto Rico.

As of 5:00 p.m., the center of Tropical Storm Ernesto was located near latitude 18.0 North and longitude 64.1 West, approximately 65 miles east-southeast of St. Thomas and 135 miles east-southeast of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Ernesto is moving west-northwest at a speed of 18 mph, with maximum sustained winds of 60 mph and higher gusts. The minimum central pressure is recorded at 1001 mb.

Watches and warnings

The government of Antigua and Barbuda has discontinued the Tropical Storm Warning for Montserrat. Currently, the following warnings are in effect:

- Hurricane Watch: U.S. Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands, Vieques, and Culebra
- Tropical Storm Warning: St. Kitts, Nevis, Anguilla, St. Martin, St. Barthelemy, Sint Maarten, Saba, Sint Eustatius, British Virgin Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Vieques, and Culebra

A Hurricane Watch indicates that hurricane conditions are possible within the watch area, typically within 36 hours. A Tropical Storm Warning signifies that tropical storm conditions are expected within the warning area within 36 hours.

Forecast and expected conditions

Tropical Storm Ernesto is expected to pass near or over the Virgin Islands this evening, moving just northeast and north of Puerto Rico tonight and Wednesday. The storm is forecast to transition into a hurricane by tonight, moving over the western Atlantic later in the week and nearing Bermuda by Friday.

Rainfall

Ernesto is expected to produce 4 to 6 inches of rainfall over the Leeward Islands, from St. Kitts and Nevis to St. Martin, and across the U.S. and British Virgin Islands. Southeastern Puerto Rico could receive 6 to 8 inches of rain, with maximum amounts up to 10 inches. Northwestern Puerto Rico may see 2 to 4 inches of rain.

Wind

Tropical storm conditions are occurring over parts of the northern Leeward Islands and are expected to spread over the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico this evening and tonight. Hurricane conditions are possible over the Virgin Islands, Vieques, and Culebra tonight, NHC said.

Storm surge

A storm surge of 1 to 3 feet above ground level is expected for the eastern coast of Puerto Rico, including San Juan to Guayama, Culebra, Vieques, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Similar surges are anticipated in the British Virgin Islands, accompanied by large and destructive waves.

Surf

Swells generated by Ernesto are currently affecting the Leeward Islands, Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, and will spread to the Dominican Republic tonight. The Turks and Caicos Islands and southeastern Bahamas will be affected by Wednesday, with Bermuda and the rest of the

Bahamas experiencing swells by Thursday. These swells are likely to cause life-threatening surf and rip current conditions.

FEMA advises residents on power outages

FEMA has advised residents in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to prepare for potential extended power outages. An Urban Search and Rescue Team and a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Temporary Power Team have been deployed to assist.

The V.I. Water and Power Authority said it is working to maintain power across the territory and has essential employees on standby to address any disruptions. Updates will be provided through WAPA's website, social media channels, and the Everbridge app.

Residents are encouraged to gather emergency supplies, secure important documents, and stay informed. For more information, visit [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) or [Listo.gov](https://www.listo.gov) in Spanish, and download the free FEMA app for alerts and shelter locations.

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