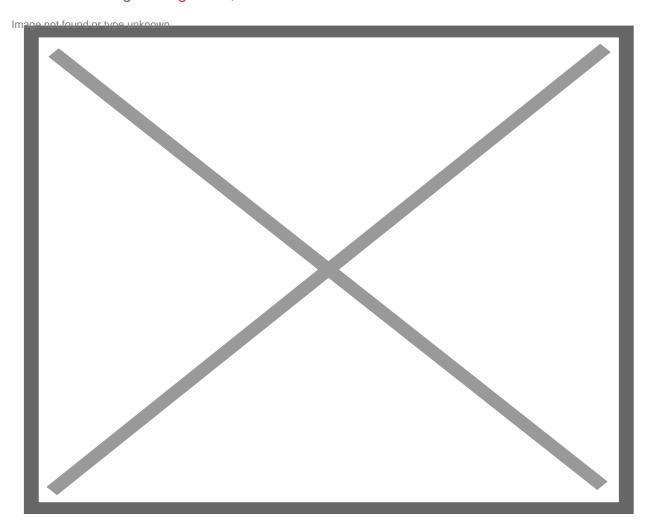
Tropical Storm Erin Forms Off Cabo Verde, Forecast to Strengthen Into Hurricane as Caribbean Watches Closely

Hours after forming off Cabo Verde, Tropical Storm Erin is forecast to become a hurricane by midweek and possibly a major storm by Saturday, with impacts to the Caribbean still uncertain. Residents are urged to update hurricane preparedness plans.

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Hours after the Caribbean region was <u>alerted to the potential development</u> of a new weather system off the coast of the Cabo Verde islands, the area of low pressure has organized into Tropical Storm Erin.

Because the storm is still hundreds of miles away, NHC forecasters say "it is still too early to determine what impacts, if any, Erin may bring to the northern Leeward Islands, Bermuda, or the east coast of the United States."

However, residents in these jurisdictions would be well-served to revise and update their hurricane preparedness plans. The tropical storm has already reportedly caused <u>at least six deaths</u> in São Vincente, Cabo Verde due to intense flooding.

According to current forecasts, Erin is expected to strengthen into a hurricane by Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning, and could become a major hurricane Saturday, by which time it could be in the vicinity of islands in the north-east Caribbean, including the Virgin Islands.

Residents in the region are advised to closely monitor Erin's progress across the Atlantic.

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