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Melissa on Track for Direct Hit to Jamaica as Storm Strengthens Toward Major Hurricane Status

A strengthening TS Melissa is moving slowly toward Jamaica, now directly in the storm's projected path. The NHC warns of rapid intensification into a hurricane today, with catastrophic flooding and landslides expected across Jamaica and southern Haiti.

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A NHC forecast map shows Tropical Storm Melissa on track for a direct hit to Jamaica, with the island fully covered by the storm's core wind field and surrounding regions of Haiti, Cuba, and the Bahamas within its impact zone. By. NHC.

Jamaica is bracing for a possible direct hit from Tropical Storm Melissa, which forecasters say is on the verge of becoming a hurricane and could rapidly strengthen into a major hurricane by

Sunday. The National Hurricane Center (NHC) issued a Hurricane Warning for the island, warning residents to complete final preparations as the storm's center appears likely to pass over or extremely close to Jamaica this weekend.

At 5:00 a.m. EDT (0900 UTC), Melissa was located near latitude 16.3°N, longitude 75.0°W, about 165 miles (270 km) southeast of Kingston, Jamaica, and 240 miles (385 km) southwest of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The system is moving northwest at 3 mph (6 km/h) with maximum sustained winds near 70 mph (110 km/h) and a minimum central pressure of 986 millibars (29.12 inches).

Forecasters warned of rapid intensification, with Melissa expected to reach hurricane strength later today and potentially major hurricane status by Sunday. The storm's projected path shows Jamaica directly in its core wind field, with tropical-storm-force winds already extending up to 115 miles (185 km) from the center.

A Hurricane Watch and Tropical Storm Warning remain in effect for Haiti's southwestern peninsula, from the Dominican Republic border to Port-au-Prince. The NHC also advised residents in eastern Cuba, the Bahamas, and the Turks and Caicos Islands to closely monitor the storm, as additional watches could be issued later today.

"Preparations to protect life and property should be rushed to completion," the advisory stated, emphasizing the high likelihood of hurricane-force winds and life-threatening flooding.

Rainfall and Flooding

Melissa is expected to unleash 15 to 25 inches of rain, with localized totals up to 35 inches across southern Haiti and southern Hispaniola through Tuesday. The Tiburon Peninsula of Haiti faces the greatest risk for catastrophic flash flooding and landslides.

In Jamaica, similar rainfall totals are forecast, threatening widespread flash floods and mudslides in mountainous areas. The southern Dominican Republic may also experience severe flooding.

For eastern Cuba, rainfall between 4 and 8 inches, with isolated peaks up to 12 inches, is expected through Tuesday.

"These totals are expected to result in life-threatening and catastrophic flash flooding and landslides," the NHC warned.

A detailed rainfall projection is available through the National Weather Service's Storm Total Rainfall Graphic at hurricanes.gov/graphics_at3.shtml?rainqpf.

Storm Surge and Marine Impacts

Minor coastal flooding is possible along Jamaica's southern coast beginning tonight as tropical-storm conditions arrive. However, forecasters warn of a potentially deadly storm surge as Melissa intensifies. Water levels could rise 5 to 10 feet above ground level near and east of where the storm's center makes landfall, accompanied by large, destructive waves.

Swells from Melissa will also impact Hispaniola, Jamaica, and eastern Cuba, generating dangerous surf and rip currents over the next several days.

Forecast Track and Next Steps

Melissa is expected to continue its slow movement west-northwest through Sunday night before turning north and northeast early next week. On this track, the system's center will likely cross Jamaica this weekend, approach eastern Cuba by midweek, and then curve northeastward toward the Bahamas.

The NHC urged all residents in the warning areas to finalize hurricane preparations immediately and stay informed through local meteorological offices.

With Jamaica appearing to face a direct impact, forecasters are warning of “life-threatening and catastrophic” conditions in the coming days — including hurricane-force winds, storm surge, and devastating flash floods across the central and western Caribbean.

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