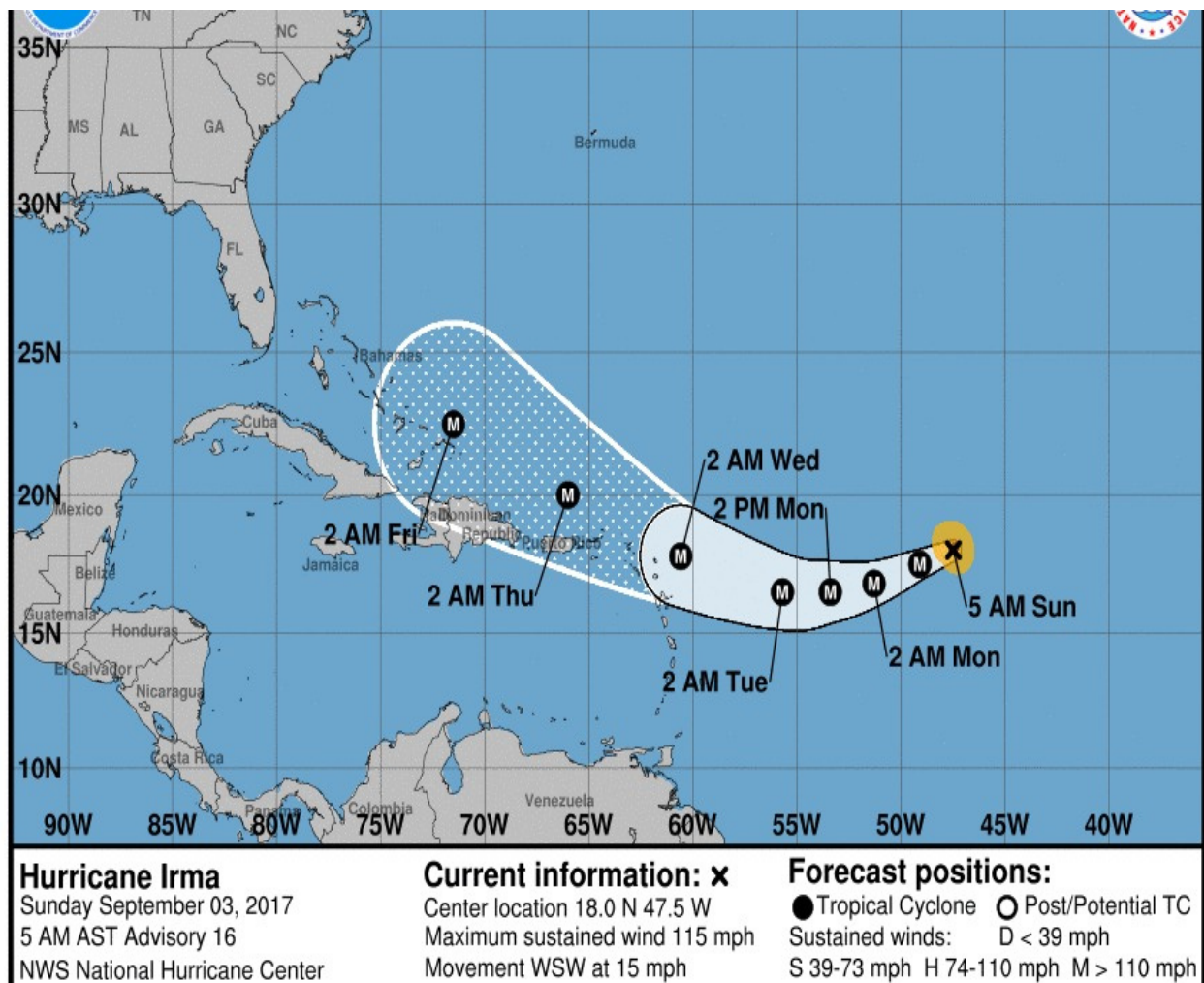


The Virgin Islands Consortium

Irma Restrengthens To 115 Mile-Per-Hour Cat. 3 Hurricane On Track To Lesser Antilles

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Hurricane Irma continues to fluctuate in strength and has restrengthened into a category 3 hurricane after losing some steam on Saturday. The storm is expected to gain strength through Monday, as it heads towards the Lesser Antilles, which includes the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, among other islands.

Yet, how close the hurricane will come to the Lesser Antilles is still uncertain; a more westerly than northwest track is expected from Monday through Wednesday, which may keep the core of the storm to the north of the Lesser Antilles. Irma has been classified as a small, yet powerful storm, but because of its size, hurricane force winds only extend 80 miles from the center, and that leaves open the possibility for the Leeward Islands to

remain clear of even tropical storm force winds if Irma follows a track down the center of its cone of uncertainty.

Remember, however, that anything in the cone of uncertainty risks a direct hit from Irma, so it's not prudent to assume that the storm will miss to the north, although that's the most likely outcome.

According to the National Hurricane Center, at 5:00 a.m. today, the eye of Hurricane Irma was located near latitude 18.0 North, longitude 47.5 West. Irma is moving toward the west-southwest near 15 mph (24 km/h), and this course at a slightly slower forward speed is expected through tonight. A turn toward the west is forecast on Monday.

Maximum sustained winds have increased to near 115 mph (185 km/h) with higher gusts. Irma is a category 3 hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale. Some additional strengthening is forecast through Monday night.

Hurricane-force winds extend outward up to 25 miles (35 km) from the center, and tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 80 miles (130 km). The estimated minimum central pressure is 969 mb (28.62 inches).

Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency Director Mona Barnes, on Saturday encouraged the community to remain vigilant and to monitor weather reports on Hurricane Irma. In the event the U.S. Virgin Islands is placed under a hurricane watch or warning, the community is advised to ensure safety is paramount. Ms. Barnes strongly encouraged boaters and beachgoers to exercise extreme caution beginning today.

"Adequate preparation is critical. Ensure you and your family are informed and prepared. Your plans should also include family members with access and functional needs, as well as pets," she said. "Don't wait for a hurricane watch or warning to prepare. Now is the time to stock up on emergency supplies and medications. Prepare disaster kits, make sure everyone in your home knows what to do in an emergency and stay informed about the weather using credible sources of information. As a territory, we continue to do our very best to ensure the safety of the residents of the Virgin Islands."

The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority said late Saturday that it's in "good shape" in terms of the preparations of its power plants and electrical and water distribution systems should Irma threaten the Virgin Islands.

"Over the last several days, we have been tracking the developing storm system, Hurricane Irma. Aside from regular discussions about the storm's possible threat with officials at V.I.T.E.M.A. [Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency], our management team has had readiness meetings with our on-site contractors about potential demobilization and work stoppage. We have also had discussions with our LPG terminal operators, VITOL, about their preparedness plans," Mr. Rhymer said.

Other preparations have been specific to the two power plants, in Krum Bay on St. Thomas and at Estate Richmond on St. Croix. "Our plant personnel have ensured there is an adequate supply of fuel required to generate electricity and are confident with the state of the two power plants to maintain functionality and be in a position to quickly resume power generation once a storm has passed," Mr. Rhymer said.

Mr. Rhymer noted that the authority remains in a state of readiness at all times for not only wind storms but any man-made or natural disaster that may impact W.A.P.A.'s facilities. "We continue to regularly review our emergency plans to ensure all is go for any response and recovery that may be required in the aftermath of a storm system befallen the territory," he said.

Mr. Rhymer said more specific messaging about W.A.P.A.'s operations during a storm, recovery of service after a storm incident and general safety reminders for the public will be issued as conditions warrant. "Right now, we are watching this powerful hurricane and preparing to launch our storm operational plan as circumstances require," he said.