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Over 2 Million Left Without Power, Homes Carried Away by Flooding, Destroyed by 150 MPH Winds as Ian Batters Florida

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Woman surveys damage caused by Hurricane Ian in Davie, Florida. By. JOE CAVARETTA/SOUTH FLORIDA SUN-SENTINEL

The storm system named Ian impacted Florida after 3:00 p.m. Wednesday, making landfall as a Category 4 hurricane with winds of near 150 mph, walloping the state before being downgraded to a tropical storm with winds near 65 miles per hour early Thursday. Florida has large population of U.S. Virgin Islanders.

Early footage point to a weather system leaving vast destruction in its wake, with video showing entire houses being displaced by flooding and being carried away by raging water. Other footage

show the wind force of the storm ripping apart roofs violently, uprooting palm trees and causing other forms of destruction.

The hurricane left 2.4 million Floridians without power as of early Thursday, and that number is expected to increase. Most of the outages so far have impacted southwest and central Florida, according to poweroutages.us, a tracking site.

The storm also caused widespread transportation disruptions, with 2,160 flights canceled as of Wednesday, according to FlightAware, a flight data tracking firm.

Ian was downgraded to a tropical storm by the National Hurricane Center early Thursday and the storm is expected to reemerge in the Atlantic Ocean, gathering itself somewhat before moving toward South Carolina and coastal Georgia.

At 5:00 a.m. today, NHC said Ian was moving toward the northeast slowly near 8 mph. A turn toward the north-northeast is expected later today, followed by a turn toward the north and north-northwest with an increase in forward speed Friday and Friday night.

On the forecast track, the center of Ian is expected to move off the east-central coast of Florida later today and then approach the coast of South Carolina on Friday. The center will move farther inland across the Carolinas Friday night and Saturday.

Maximum sustained winds have decreased to near 65 mph (100 km/h) with higher gusts, NHC said. Some slight re-intensification is forecast, and Ian could be near hurricane strength when it approaches the coast of South Carolina on Friday. Weakening is expected Friday night and Saturday after Ian moves inland.

Tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 415 miles (665 km) from the center. A WeatherFlow station at New Smyrna Beach recently reported a sustained wind of 61 mph (98 km/h) and a gust to 77 mph (124 km/h).