

1 Million+ Without Power as Hurricane Beryl Slams Texas

MATAGORDA, Texas (AP) – Power outages are mounting along the Texas coast after Beryl came ashore Monday and lashed Houston with heavy rains and powerful winds as the storm moved inland.

More than 1 million homes and businesses were without power hours after Beryl made landfall, according to CenterPoint Energy in Houston. Rising waters quickly began to close streets across Houston and flood warnings were in effect across a wide stretch of the Texas coast.

The National Weather Service expected Beryl to weaken to a tropical storm Monday and a tropical depression Tuesday, forecasting a turn to the northeast and increase in speed Monday night and Tuesday. The storm reached the U.S. after leaving a trail of destruction over the last week in Mexico and the Caribbean.

The storm's center hit land as a Category 1 hurricane around 4 a.m. Central Standard Time about 85 miles southwest of Houston with top sustained winds of 80 mph (128.7 kph) while moving north at 12 mph (19.3 kph), the National Weather Service reported.

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High waters quickly began closing roads around Houston, which was again under flood warnings after heavy storms in recent months washed out neighborhoods and knocked out power across the nation's fourth-largest city.

More than 1,000 flights have been canceled at Houston's two airports, according to tracking data from FlightAware.

Beryl dumped soaking rains across Houston after coming ashore and was expected to bring damaging winds into East Texas, near Louisiana, as the storm pushed north after making landfall.

“Beryl’s moving inland but this is not the end of the story yet,” said Jack Beven, senior hurricane specialist at the National Hurricane Center.

Beryl strengthened and became a hurricane again late Sunday. The storm had weakened after leaving a path of deadly destruction through parts of Mexico and the Caribbean.

A hurricane warning remains in effect for the Texas coast from Mesquite Bay north to Port Bolivar, the center said.

The storm’s center is expected to move over eastern Texas on Monday and then through the lower Mississippi Valley into the Ohio Valley on Tuesday and Wednesday, the weather service said.

People on the Texas coast boarded up windows and left beach towns under an evacuation order. As the storm neared the coast Sunday, Texas officials warned of power outages and flooding but also expressed worry that not enough residents and beach vacationers in Beryl’s path had heeded warnings to leave.

“One of the things that kind of trigger our concern a little bit, we’ve looked at all of the roads leaving the coast and the maps are still green,” said Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who is serving as the state’s acting governor while Gov. Greg Abbott is travelling overseas. “So we don’t see many people leaving.”

Tropical storm winds extended 115 miles (185 kilometers) from the center and the hurricane center warned residents to be prepared for possible flash flooding in parts of middle, upper and eastern Texas as well as Arkansas as the storm gradually turns to the north and then northeast later Monday.

Along the Texas coast, many residents and business owners took the typical storm precautions but also expressed uncertainty about the storm's intensity.

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In Port Lavaca, Jimmy May fastened plywood over the windows of his electrical supply company and said he wasn't concerned about the possible storm surge. He recalled his business had escaped flooding in a previous hurricane that brought a 20-foot (6-meter) storm surge.

"In town, you know, if you're in the low-lying areas, obviously, you need to get out of there," he said.

At the nearby marina, Percy Roberts showed his neighbor Ken Waller how to properly secure his boat as heavy winds rolled in from the bay Sunday evening.

"This is actually going to be the first hurricane I'm going to be experiencing," Waller said, noting he is a little nervous but feels safe following Roberts' lead. "Pray for the best but expect the worst, I guess."

The earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic, Beryl caused at least 11 deaths as it passed through the Caribbean on its way to Texas. The storm ripped off doors, windows and roofs with devastating winds and storm surge fueled by the Atlantic's record warmth.

Three times during its one week of life, Beryl has gained 35 mph (56 kph) in wind speed in 24 hours or less, the official weather service definition of rapid intensification.

Beryl's explosive growth into an unprecedented early whopper of a storm indicates the hot water of the Atlantic and Caribbean and what the Atlantic hurricane belt can expect for

the rest of the storm season, experts said.

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