

Storms Spook Church Into Postponing Halloween Outreach

Forecasts for heavy rain and strong winds spooked dozens of U.S. cities and towns into postponing Halloween trick-or-treating on Thursday as a storm system that flooded parts of Texas churned north toward the Great Lakes.

Local officials in parts of at least four states in the path of the storm—Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee—said they decided to put off the customary practice of children in costumes going from house to house collecting candy.

“I think it’s a good idea,” said Tara Dudzik, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Indianapolis. “Winds of up to 60 mph (miles per hour), and lightning—those are the main threats we’d be concerned about.”

Low pressure with a trailing cold front is pushing turbulent weather from the Gulf states north through the Mississippi Valley and toward the Great Lakes, said Myron Badgett, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Wilmington, Ohio.

The cities of Indianapolis and Muncie, Ind., postponed trick-or-treating, local officials said. Toledo and at least 30 cities in central Ohio put it off until Friday or as late as Sunday, according the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission’s website.

At Fort Campbell in Kentucky, the children of soldiers will not be deployed to the streets of the residential area. “Operation Friendly Ghost” has been put off until Friday.

Crievewood Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., said it canceled a “Halloween Break Station” which was planning to offer parents and children hot dogs, chips, water and games

along the trick-or-treating routes. The decision was made because so few children were expected to be out, it said.

Cincinnati, where the National Weather Service is reporting a 100 percent chance of precipitation and wind gusts of 34 mph, remains undaunted. The city announced that trick or treating will go on but warned residents to take care.

According to a Cincinnati TV station (12 WKRC), the city has not canceled or delayed trick-or-treat in 20 years because of snow or thunderstorms, and city authorities think it would be difficult to effectively inform the public and motorists about any postponements.

In Nashville, trick-or-treating has not been put off, but Mayor Karl Dean is urging caution.

"We want everyone to pay close attention to the weather, especially if any thunderstorm or tornado warnings are issued," Dean said. "We know families want to have fun this evening, but most importantly, everyone needs to be safe and make good decisions for themselves and their family members."

Several school systems west of Nashville dismissed classes early to get the children home before the bad weather hits, and some after-school activities were canceled, officials said.

Mississippi emergency management officials put out a warning asking parents to be mindful.

Trevor Boucher, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Nashville, said his office was getting a lot of calls from city and county officials who were trying to decide whether to proceed with Halloween activities.

The storm was expected to move northeast from Texas well before evening, but it left behind flooding that caused some evacuation of low-lying areas.

Overnight rains of up to 15 inches in some areas swelled rivers and washed out low-lying crossings in a swath of more than 100 miles around Austin, Texas, according to Jon Zeitler, meteorologist with the National Weather Service Austin-San Antonio office.

“For certain areas, it looks like this will be in their Top 10 (flood events) of all time,” Zeitler said. No injuries had been reported but entire neighborhoods near rising creeks were being evacuated.

The storm was caused in part by Hurricane Raymond, which dissipated in the Pacific Ocean on Tuesday. Its remnants pulled heavy weather across the western United States.

That combined with warm, humid, low-lying air from the Gulf of Mexico and cooler air at higher altitudes to produce the floods—conditions expected to return next week with more potential for flooding from a tropical storm brewing in the same region, Zeitler said.

Additional reporting by Karen Brooks in Austin, Texas, Susan Guyett in Indianapolis, Kim Palmer in Cleveland, Brendan O’Brien in Milwaukee, Suzi Parker in Little Rock, Kathy Finn in New Orleans, Colleen Jenkins in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and Kevin Murphy in Kansas City; Writing by Kevin Murphy; Editing by Greg McCune and Gunna Dickson

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