

U.S.

# Hurricane Harvey Slams Texas With Devastating Force

Officials report two deaths; storm weakened to tropical-storm status after lashing coast with rain and winds of more than 100 miles an hour

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Floodwaters from Tropical Storm Harvey surround homes and businesses in Port Arthur, Texas, on Thursday. GERALD HERBERT/ASSOCIATED PRESS

1 of 21

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*By Dan Frosch, Erin Ailworth and Russell Gold*

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ROCKPORT, Texas—Hurricane Harvey pounded Texas on Saturday with torrential rain and high winds, threatening catastrophic flooding, though the storm was gradually losing strength after hitting the coast late Friday.

By midday Saturday, after a night of rattling winds and sheets of rain, Harvey had been downgraded to a tropical storm from a Category 4 hurricane, according to the National Hurricane Center. The center continued to warn of catastrophic flooding as the storm hovered over the state.

Local officials in Rockport, Texas, the small coastal city near where Harvey made landfall Friday night, said they knew of one death but declined to give details. Damage to the town was extensive, they said, and 40% of the city's approximately 20,000 residents had decided to stay and ride out the storm.

A second person died in flooding in Houston, the Associated Press reported. Jason Wiersema of the Harris County medical examiner's office told the AP late Saturday that his office had been notified one person had died, but did not have any details on the death.

The storm hit between Port Aransas, just outside Corpus Christi, and Port O'Connor to the north, and was expected to settle in over South Texas for several days. Forecasters warned it could bring up to 40 inches of rain in some places and potentially cause devastating flooding in cities like Houston.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said Saturday that while the storm's winds have subsided, the worst of the damage could be yet to come as rains and floods take their toll.

"Now that the hurricane has come on shore, our primary concern remains dramatic flooding," said Mr. Abbott. More than a foot of rain has already fallen on the coastal area between Corpus Christi and Houston, and another 20 to 30 inches is expected.

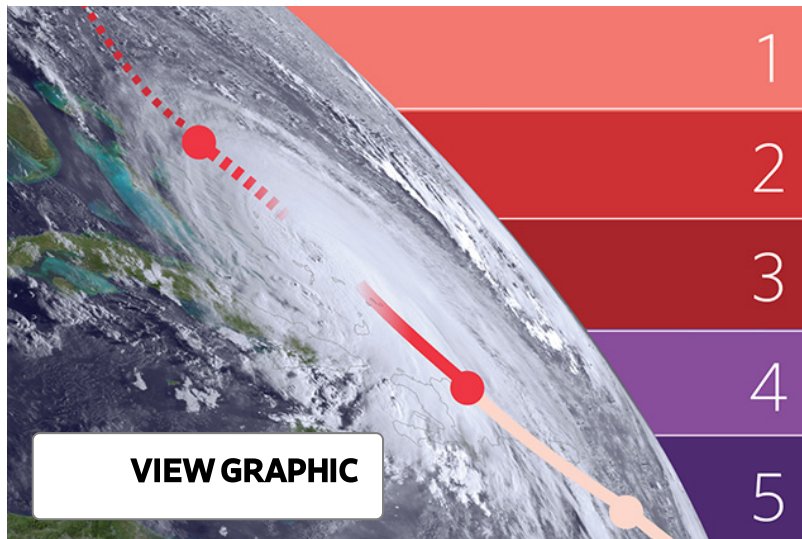
"That is coming down on already saturated ground and already filled up waterways, whether they be creeks, bayous or rivers. There is the potential for very dramatic flooding," Mr. Abbott said.

The sheer volume of water was already beginning to push waterways above their banks. On Saturday morning, Fort Bend County officials ordered a mandatory evacuation around the San Bernard River and issued a voluntary evacuation around the Brazos River, according to Mr. Abbott.

High winds have left 338,000 homes without power and Mr. Abbott said it would be "several days, perhaps, before those outages can be addressed."

On Saturday, Rockport, a small fishing and resort community that bore the brunt of Harvey, was left crippled by the storm. Tangles of power lines and the carcasses of hulking oak trees that had

## Tracking Hurricane Harvey's Wrath



fallen Friday night cluttered the town's narrow streets. Roofs, garage doors and in some cases entire homes were crumpled. Coffee cans, bed lamps and sneakers spilled out onto flooded roads, The stench of gas hung over the town, as emergency crews picked through the rubble, the belching of toads echoing from the muck.

The storm was the first substantial hurricane to hit Texas since Hurricane Ike struck the

Gulf Coast in 2008. The last Category 4 storm to hit Texas was Hurricane Carla in 1961, according to the National Weather Service.

Utilities were reporting widespread power outages on Saturday, some of which could last for days, emergency officials said.

More than 300,000 customers were without power early Saturday morning, according to Electric Reliability Council of Texas, which manages the state's power grid, said Saturday.

Larry Sinclair, a commander with the Rockport Police Department, said damage in at least some parts of city was significant. He and officers and emergency workers were trying to assess the extent of the damage to buildings and checking to see whether anyone was trapped inside. He said wind conditions were making it difficult to evaluate the level of devastation the city and its residents had suffered.

"We were pretty much ground zero," he said.

Early Saturday, Corpus Christi officials warned residents to reduce the use of toilets and faucets as the power outage had affected the city's wastewater-treatment plant. A boil advisory was in effect for water use in the city, which has about 325,000 residents.

In some areas around the city, warped power lines teetered toward the ground, toppled trees and palm leaves were strewn across streets and some street signals dangled lifelessly with no power. Several roads leading into the city were littered with broken street signs, which had been uprooted and tossed from their moorings.

As steady rain fell at noon Saturday, Anselmo “Ace” Calvillo, 53, and his girlfriend, Aime Dimas, were outside their yellow bungalow a few blocks from the beach on Causeway Boulevard, in Corpus Christi North Beach, grilling chicken and ribs. They lost power around 2 a.m.

The couple, who have lived in Corpus for 11 years, said they decided to weather the storm at home for fear of looters. They boarded the windows with scrap wood and settled in. Ms. Dimas said she was scared as the storm raged, creating a sound “like a train.” “The bedroom window, that’s where we sat and watched everything,” Mr. Calvillo added. “The sound shook the ground.” Their home made it through largely unscathed.

Local officials expressed relief that the storm hadn’t made a direct impact here on Friday night. Most of Nueces County was still standing, said County Judge Loyd Neal.

“We’re very fortunate,” he said, adding, that the county hadn’t received any reports of fatalities, which he called “amazing.”

According to the National Hurricane Center, Harvey was moving slowly over the state and would continue to produce torrential rains. In a Saturday morning bulletin, the center said that catastrophic flooding was expected over the next few days.

The path of the storm and its expected precipitation posed problems for Houston, the nation’s fourth-largest city with more than 2.3 million residents. Houston has been prone to deadly flooding due to poor drainage.

The National Weather Service had recorded more than a foot of rain in several places along the Gulf Coast. The highest total through Saturday afternoon was 15.1 inches in Austwell, Texas, slightly northeast of Rockport, where Hurricane Harvey made landfall. Parts of Houston have received more than 7 inches of rain through Saturday afternoon. As the storm remained parked over the area, government forecasters said the area between Corpus Christi and Houston could expect another 15 to 20 inches.

Officials were concerned that Harvey’s storm surge would push water from the Gulf of Mexico up against the coast near Galveston, blocking floodwaters from flowing out to sea, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said in an interview at the region’s emergency center Friday.

“It can back up,” Mr. Turner said.

Houston-area police and fire officials began preparing evacuation boats, high-water rescue vehicles and supplies in anticipation. Officials said Friday that no mass evacuations would be called for the region. Residents were urged to have a week’s worth of food and water on hand.

Hurricane Harvey is having a big impact on flights to Texas. Airlines have canceled 1,031 flights as of Saturday and are reporting a similar number of delays, according to flight tracking website

FlightAware.com. The site said Houston's two airports along with airports in Austin and San Antonio were the most affected.

Thousands of inmates are being evacuated from three prison units near a river in Brazoria County, Texas, and moved to facilities further inland, Texas state officials said Saturday morning.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice said it was relocating 4,500 prisoners by bus "as the Brazos River continues to rise because of considerable rainfall from Hurricane Harvey." The inmates will be moved to facilities in East Texas, the department said.

Late Friday, Gov. Abbott said the Federal Emergency Management Agency had granted his request for a presidential disaster declaration in response to Harvey. President Donald Trump tweeted that he had signed the declaration, making more federal aid available to the state.

Earlier in the day, thousands of people fled inland, leaving behind deserted coastal communities with boarded-up homes and businesses and barren grocery stores. But others stayed behind, prompting fears from local officials as the hurricane grew more powerful.

The mayor of Rockport, frustrated that some people had chosen not to leave, told a local television station Friday that residents who don't evacuate should use a marker to write their names and Social Security numbers on their arms.

The U.S. Coast Guard said Saturday it was responding to some mayday notifications from tug boats in the Lydia Ann Channel in Port Aransas. Helicopters were en route from Coast Guard Air Station Corpus Christi to assess the situation, said Petty Officer Third Class Ryan Dickinson. On Friday, the Coast Guard rescued a dozen people aboard a commercial diving vessel that was taking on water near Port Mansfield. Aircrews lifted the people to safety, according to a statement from the Coast Guard.

Major ports were closed, and oil operations along the Texas coast were suspended. There are more than 800 oil platforms in the path of the storm and more than 100 refineries and terminals on the shore that could be disrupted, according to the consulting firm Riskpulse.

The U.S. Geological Survey forecast that the storm's power could significantly impact 65% of the state's coastline.

Mandatory evacuations were ordered for residents of Calhoun and Victoria counties along the coast. In Brazoria County, near Houston, officials had issued a mandatory evacuation order for areas including Surfside Beach and Treasure Island, a county spokeswoman said.

Charles Wagner, the Brazoria County sheriff, had a blunt warning for residents who disobeyed the orders: "You're on your own until after the storm is over with," he said. "I'm not going to risk the

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## Hurricane Harvey's Progress

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### Hurricane Tracker

TRACKING                      WIND                      INTENSITY  
SPEEDS



lives of my people to go in there for somebody that voluntarily stayed and then all of a sudden wants to come out.”

In Corpus Christi, city officials had strongly encouraged people in low-lying areas to leave, but officials didn’t issue a mandatory evacuation order. Mayor Joe McComb defended the city’s decision not to order people out, saying he had consulted at length with local officials.

Rockport residents Carroll and Elaine Overturf weathered Harvey inland Friday night, at a hotel in Alice, Texas. On Saturday, they worried about the condition they would find their home in when they were able to return.

Their tan one-story house is close to a high school and an H-E-B grocery store that were reportedly damaged when the storm made landfall nearby.

“I’m very weepy,” said Elaine Overturf, 79. “We just don’t know.” “We expect to hear the worst and

kinda view today as the first day of recovery,” Carroll Overturf, 82, added.

Bob Berg, a 78-year-old former federal prosecutor, was among those who stayed. Mr. Berg said he has lived in his Corpus Christi home for 35 years and never left for any of the previous storms that have hammered that part of Texas. He said he had no plans to leave now.

Mr. Berg, whose wife died 10 years ago, said his daughter, a doctor in Galveston, has called him to check in. But he laughed it off, instead giving her advice on how to keep his grandchildren safe during the storm.

“I wish it were a good day, so I could work on my boat,” he said, gesturing toward a wooden boat he has been building. “What can we do? It’s Mother Nature. We just wait it out until it’s over with.”

—*Erica E. Philips and Alexa Corse contributed reporting to this article.*

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