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# Hurricane Ernesto will cause dangerous beach conditions for East Coast this weekend

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Ernesto is delivering a blow to Bermuda and is ramping up coastal danger for much of the United States' Eastern Seaboard after it thrashed [Puerto Rico](#) and the Virgin Islands, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without power.

Powerful winds from the large Category 2 hurricane extend hundreds of miles from its center and started to thrash Bermuda with strong gusts Friday afternoon, well before making its closest pass to the island Saturday. A hurricane warning is in effect for the island.

Ernesto's strength late this week was fueled by the [extremely warm waters](#) of the Atlantic — a phenomenon that's becoming [more frequent](#) in a world warming due to fossil fuel pollution — but dry air interacting with the system prevented explosive strengthening.

The center of the hurricane will track near or over Bermuda on Saturday, but drenching rain and tropical storm-force wind gusts were already underway Friday over the tiny island, which is about a third of the size of Washington, DC.

More powerful winds and torrential rainfall will likely arrive late Friday or early Saturday. Ernesto could unload 6 to 12 inches of rain over the island through Saturday night, with potential for isolated totals to approach 15 inches.

"This may result in considerable life-threatening flash flooding," the National Hurricane Center warned Thursday.

Dangerous storm surge and significant coastal flooding will also unfold as Ernesto makes its closest approach to the island Saturday.

## Dangerous surf for Eastern Seaboard

Ernesto will have wide-reaching impacts despite remaining so far from large land masses.

The hurricane will create massive waves — perhaps up to 40 feet high — in the open Atlantic that will spread hundreds of miles away. These elevated wave heights will bring rough seas and [dangerous rip currents](#) to the US East Coast, the Bahamas and parts of the Caribbean into early next week.

For a majority of the US Atlantic coast, the most dangerous coastal conditions will unfold over the weekend, coinciding with the time many people flock to the beach. Ernesto "will result in very dangerous rip currents (Saturday and Sunday)," the National Weather Service in Mount Holly, New Jersey, warned Thursday.

Rip currents can exhaust even the strongest swimmers and [turn deadly](#). At least [29 people](#) have been killed in rip currents this year in the US and its territories, according to the National Weather Service.

Beyond Bermuda, Ernesto will pass close to Atlantic Canada early next week and potentially bring some rain, wind and rough seas.

## Outages linger after Ernesto

Ernesto's center never made landfall over Puerto Rico or the US Virgin Islands but the system's strong winds still knocked out power to hundreds of thousands of people in total.

In Puerto Rico, about half of all customers on the island were at one point without power Wednesday, according to [LUMA Energy](#), the private company that operates the transmission and distribution of power in Puerto Rico. By Friday morning, more than 200,000 were still in the dark.

In the US Virgin Islands, just over 10,000 customers were still without power Friday morning, about 20% of the island's tracked customers, according to [PowerOutage.us](#).

Heavy rain soaked the Virgin Islands late Tuesday and Wednesday. More than half a foot of rain drenched much of Puerto Rico and caused widespread flash flooding. Some locations recorded nearly a foot of rain from Ernesto: Just over 10 inches of rain fell over a 24-hour period in the mountain town of Barranquitas, according to a preliminary weather service report, while Villalba saw around 9.5 inches.

Intense rainfall and flooding caused several rivers to overflow their banks in Puerto Rico and [interrupted water filtration](#) processes at a number of water processing plants to varying degrees, according to the island's water authority.

Even as Ernesto moved a few hundred miles away from Puerto Rico Wednesday night, water issues worsened. More than [250,000 water customers](#) – about 20% of total customers – were without drinking water Friday morning, according to the island's emergency portal system.

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