

Milton takes turn to target Florida on ‘destructive’ path

BY RICHARD TRIBOU
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ORLANDO, FLA. — Hurricane Milton began its turn toward Florida on Tuesday still a powerful Category 4 hurricane with a forecast landfall near Tampa Bay and projected path that will cut through Central Florida.

The powerful hurricane surged Monday into a monster Category 5 storm with 180 mph winds in the Gulf of Mexico, but lost some steam overnight as it moved over the waters just north of Mexico’s Yucatan peninsula.

“While fluctuations in intensity are expected, Milton is forecast to remain an extremely dangerous hurricane through landfall in Florida,” said NHC senior hurricane specialist John Cangialosi. “Milton has the potential to be one of the most destructive hurricanes on record for west-central Florida.”

As of 8 a.m. Tuesday, the National Hurricane Center said Milton had maximum-sustained winds at 145 mph located 545 miles southwest of Tampa moving east-northeast at 12 mph north of the Yucatan peninsula.

The latest forecast track ranges from Cape Coral in southwest Florida’s Gulf Coast north up to Yankeetown, but the consensus path remains targeted at Tampa Bay with landfall after midnight Thursday still a major Category 3 hurricane with 125 mph winds and 155 mph gusts.

The forecast track has it passing south of Lakeland and Kissimmee headed toward Cape Canaveral, never losing hurricane status as it crosses the state into the Atlantic.

Its hurricane-force winds only extend out 30 miles, but tropical-storm-force winds have begun to expand, now out 105 miles, the result of an eyewall replacement cycle, Cangialosi said.

“Milton is still a rela-



ZACK WITTMAN NYT

Debris from Hurricane Helene on the sidewalks as residents prepare for Hurricane Milton, in St. Petersburg, Fla., on Monday. Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida warned residents of the state’s weary west coast to brace for a “ferocious” storm.

tively compact hurricane, but the wind field is expected to continue to grow in size as it approaches Florida, he said.

The forecast shows both hurricane- and tropical-storm-force winds roughly doubling in size by landfall.

“Therefore, damaging winds, life-threatening storm surge, and heavy rainfall will extend well outside the forecast cone,” he said. “It is worth emphasizing that this is a very serious situation and residents in Florida should closely follow orders from their local emergency management officials.”

In Florida, a hurricane warning is in effect for the west coast from Bonita Beach north to the mouth of the Suwannee River including Tampa Bay and on the east coast from the Indian River/St. Lucie county line north to Ponte Vedra Beach.

Inland hurricane warnings are in place for parts of the southern Florida peninsula including Central Florida’s Brevard, Lake, Marion, Orange, Osceola, Polk, Seminole, Sumter and Volusia counties.

Updated storm surge predictions now call for 10-15 feet from the Anclote River north of Tampa south down to Englewood including Tampa Bay in the core projected landfall area.

“We’re talking about

storm surge values higher than the ceiling,” said Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Kevin Guthrie. “Please. If you’re in the Tampa Bay area, you need to evacuate. If they have called for your evacuation order, I beg you, I implore you, to evacuate. Drowning deaths due to storm surge are 100% preventable if you leave.”

Evacuations on much of Florida’s west coast barrier islands have already begun.

“We had situations where people died of drowning in Hurricane Ian. Had they just gone across the bridge from Estero Bay, Sanibel Island and so on, just across the bridge to the first available shelter that had capacity, they’d still be alive today,” he said.

It’s forecast to continue its turn to the east-northeast on Tuesday and Wednesday and approach Florida’s Gulf Coast by Wednesday night.

With mass evacuations from the Gulf Coast underway, gas stations have been running out of fuel, but the state has already begun to deploy emergency supplies since Monday night.

The state still has 268,000 gallons of diesel and 110,000 gallons of gasoline, and another 1.2 million gallons of both diesel and gasoline headed to the state.

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BAND

Tickets will go on sale at 10 a.m. Thursday; details are at www.concertforcarolina.com. Prices were not immediately available. Ticketmaster lists 5 p.m. as the start time for the Oct. 26 show.

The release said additional featured artists will be announced in the coming days.

WHERE WILL CONCERT FOR CAROLINA FUNDS GO?

All proceeds from the event will be split evenly between Combs and Church’s Chief Cares Foundation, to be distributed to organizations of their choosing in support of relief efforts across “the Carolina region.”

The 34-year-old Combs — born in Huntersville and raised in Asheville — announced that his dedicated charities will be Samaritan’s Purse, Manna Food Bank, Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest NC, and one more organization to be revealed soon.

Church’s Chief Cares will help “established charities and organizations that are well managed, organized and can expedite aid directly to the families affected by Hurricane Helene.”

Of the four men atop the bill, only Combs has headlined BofA stadium before. In July 2023, he sold it out on back-to-back nights.

Church, 47, just last

week released a new song, “Darkest Hour,” that the Granite Falls native said was dedicated to “the unsung heroes, the people who show up when the world’s falling apart.” He plans to donate all of his publishing royalties for the track to hurricane relief efforts.

In a separate statement on Monday morning, Church called North Carolina “my home.”

“It’s in every fiber of who I am,” he said. “Our family members, friends, neighbors and communities are in dire need. I’m honored to share the stage with an incredible lineup in order to help meet those needs. Through the dark, light will shine.”

Taylor, a 76-year-old Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, has a long association with Chapel Hill and has written many songs influenced by his childhood experiences in North Carolina — most famously, “Carolina in My Mind.”

Meanwhile, Strings is the baby of the group at 32, but has built an impressive resume over the past decade. His album “Home” won the Grammy Award for Best Bluegrass Album in 2021. Although he’s not from the area, Monday’s news release stated that “Strings’ life and career has been deeply impacted by the state of North Carolina both personally and professionally, as it is home to some of his most passionate and supportive fans.”

HOW CONCERT FOR CAROLINA CAME TOGETHER

“Concert for Carolina” — presented by Explore Asheville and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority — will be hosted by ESPN’s Marty Smith and Barstool Sports’ Caleb Pressley.

“This concert took so much planning, work, and coordination from so many people,” Combs posted on X alongside the announcement. “I’m so thankful to everyone who helped make this a possibility on such short notice.”

David Tepper (owner of the Carolina Panthers, Charlotte FC and Bank of America Stadium) and his wife, Nicole Tepper, said in a statement that it was Combs who first approached them about the idea for the event, adding, “We felt compelled to open the doors of Bank of America Stadium for this special moment.”

“Every day,” they said, “we are more inspired by the strength and resolve of our Carolina community, and we are grateful to join Luke, Eric and our fellow Carolinians as we embark on the road to recovery together.”

The David and Nicole Tepper Foundation — along with the Teppers’ two local sports organizations — already have distributed \$3.85 million to provide immediate assistance to those impacted by the deadly storm that swept through the Carolinas on Sept. 26 and 27.

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