

At least 5 dead, more than 13,000 homes destroyed as historic Hurricane Dorian batters Bahamas



Miami, September 2 (RHC)-- At least five people have died in the Abaco Islands in the wake of Hurricane Dorian, Bahamas Prime Minister Hubert Minnis said Monday evening. Hurricane Dorian continues to pound the region as a Category 4 storm.

Minnis said that there are also people in Great Bahama island in serious distress. Rescue crews will respond to calls for help as soon as weather conditions allow. "We are in the midst of a historic tragedy," Minnis said.

Hurricane Dorian stalled over the northern Bahamas on Monday, pounding the islands with heavy rains, storm surge and howling winds before the storm directs its rage toward the U.S. coast.

As of 5 p.m. EDT, Dorian's advance westward along the archipelago slowed to a crawl while top sustained winds eased slightly to 145 mph, according to the National Hurricane Center, causing Dorian to slip from a Category 5 to Category 4 – still a brutal storm.

The hurricane will continue its assault on Grand Bahama Island into the night, the center said. Some areas could see up to 2 feet of rain, and storm surge could reach 23 feet, forecasters warned. Heavy rains capable of creating life-threatening flash floods over the northern part of the Bahamas are expected through Friday.

Everyone there should remain sheltered and not venture into the eye, the center said Monday evening. Emergency responders were already overwhelmed. An estimated 13,000 homes have been destroyed, according to the Salvation Army, which has volunteers stationed in the group of islands.

Power and communications outages made damage assessment difficult. The few videos that have emerged from the Abaco Islands show destroyed homes, flooded roads and residents pleading for help and prayers.

Florida and the U.S. East Coast remained a target. The storm will move "dangerously close" to the Florida east coast late Monday through Wednesday night, the center said. Dorian is forecast to turn toward the northwest, roaring parallel to Florida about 30 to 40 miles offshore, before continuing north along the East Coast deep into the week.

Dangerous surge and hurricane winds are expected on parts of Florida's east coast and the coastal South Carolina and Georgia, the center said Monday evening. The risk of life-threatening surge in North Carolina continues to increase. Heavy rains that could cause flooding are expected in the lower mid-Atlantic and the coastal southeast of the United States through Friday as well.

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