

Hurricane Dorian kills five in the Bahamas as it moves slowly on to Florida

Kevin Reed
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The government of the Bahamas confirmed the death of five people Monday afternoon as massive Hurricane Dorian lashed both Grand Bahama and Abaco islands and came to a virtual standstill, causing “extreme destruction.”

News reports said that storm surges grew 12 to 18 feet above normal tide levels with winds at 145 mph and gusts of up to 170 mph. Weather analysis showed that the hurricane had moved just 14 miles between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Monday, stubbornly thrashing the northern tier of the Bahamas, a collection of 700 islands, 31 of which have a combined population of 391,000 people.

Bahamian Prime Minister Hubert Minnis said the police confirmed the five deaths on Abaco Island, although no other details were made available. He also reported that “many homes, businesses and other buildings have been completely or partially destroyed” and that “downtown Grand Bahama is under three feet of water.”

The International Federation of the Red Cross reported that as many as 13,000 houses have been severely damaged or destroyed and that flooding is believed to have contaminated wells with salt water on Abaco island.

Sune Bülow, manager of the IFRC Emergency Operation Center in Geneva, said, “We don’t yet have a complete picture of what has happened. But it is clear that Hurricane Dorian has had a catastrophic impact. We anticipate extensive shelter needs, alongside the need for short-term economic support, as well as for clean water and health assistance.”

Family members reported loss of phone contact with their loved ones in the Bahamas. Some residents posted videos of the devastation and reported that roofs had been blown off of homes and others had been

completed destroyed by the high winds and water.

ABC News correspondent Marcus Moore, reporting from Marsh Harbor on Abaco Island, said he saw “Pure hell,” adding, “I have seen utter devastation here in Marsh Harbor. We are surrounded by water with no way out.”

Forecasters said the storm is expected to continue pummeling the Bahamas into Monday night. Ken Graham of the National Hurricane Center (NHC) said in a Facebook video at approximately 6:30 p.m., “We expect to start seeing this northward push overnight tonight and into tomorrow morning.” Graham also warned about the huge wind field, rain bands and storm surges being created that are already beginning to impact the coast of Florida.

Hurricane Dorian was downgraded from a Category 5 to Category 4 with the NHC’s update at 11 a.m. on Monday following its contact with the Bahamas. However, the NHC alert said, “Heavy rains, capable of producing life-threatening flash floods, are expected over northern portions of the Bahamas and coastal sections of the Southeast and lower Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States into Friday.”

In anticipation of the life-threatening conditions, mandatory evacuations had been issued for nine counties along the southern Florida coast with another seven counties issuing voluntary evacuations as well as other counties in Georgia and South Carolina.

As of Sunday, Hurricane Dorian emerged as the most devastating in modern history with winds of 185 mph. The slow pace of its movement—measured at one mile per hour over the Bahamas—has meant that the havoc of the storm has been extended beyond any other event in recent memory.

As with every storm, such as Hurricane Maria that struck Puerto Rico in 2017, the poor and working-class

population of the Bahamas is being impacted most severely by Dorian. This will also be the case once it arrives in Florida and moves northward up the coast with destructive power and unpredictability.



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