

Hurricane Irma downgraded to Category 3 storm, expected to strengthen before hitting Florida

Published September 09, 2017

Fox Extreme Weather Center: Tracking Hurricane Irma

Hurricane Irma was downgraded to a Category 3 storm shortly before noon Saturday after its maximum sustained winds weakened to 125 mph, but it was expected to strengthen before moving toward southwest Florida on Sunday.

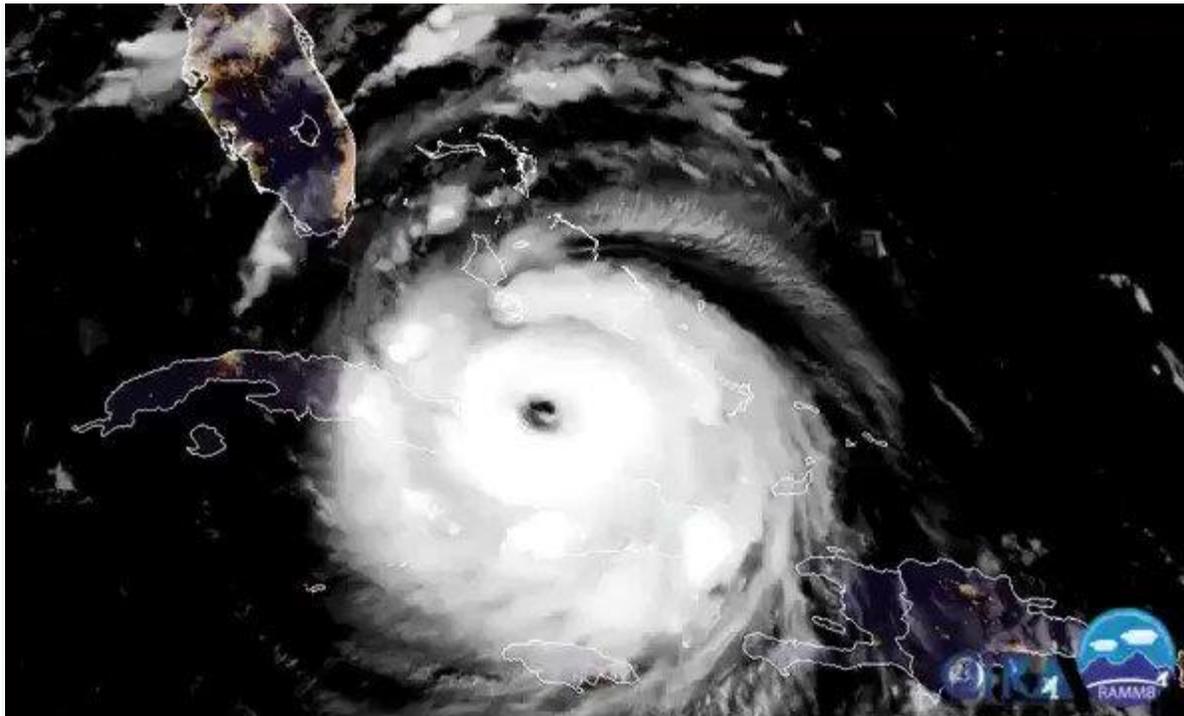
The National Hurricane Center said Irma was continuing to slam the north coast of Cuba Saturday but had weakened slightly. As of 2:00 p.m. EDT, the storm was located about 145 miles southeast of Key West, Fla.



Hurricane Irma approaching Cuba and Florida with Hurricane Katia, left, and Hurricane Jose, right, in the Atlantic Ocean. (AP)

The storm's center was expected to pass through the Florida Keys around 8 a.m. ET Sunday. The center said there were threats of brief tornadoes.

The center warned that major hurricane-force winds were expected to in the Florida Keys Sunday morning. The storm was expected to dump about 8 to 15 inches of rain in some areas.



FLORIDA-

Visit <http://FloridaDisaster.org/info> to find shelters, road closures, & evacuation routes.
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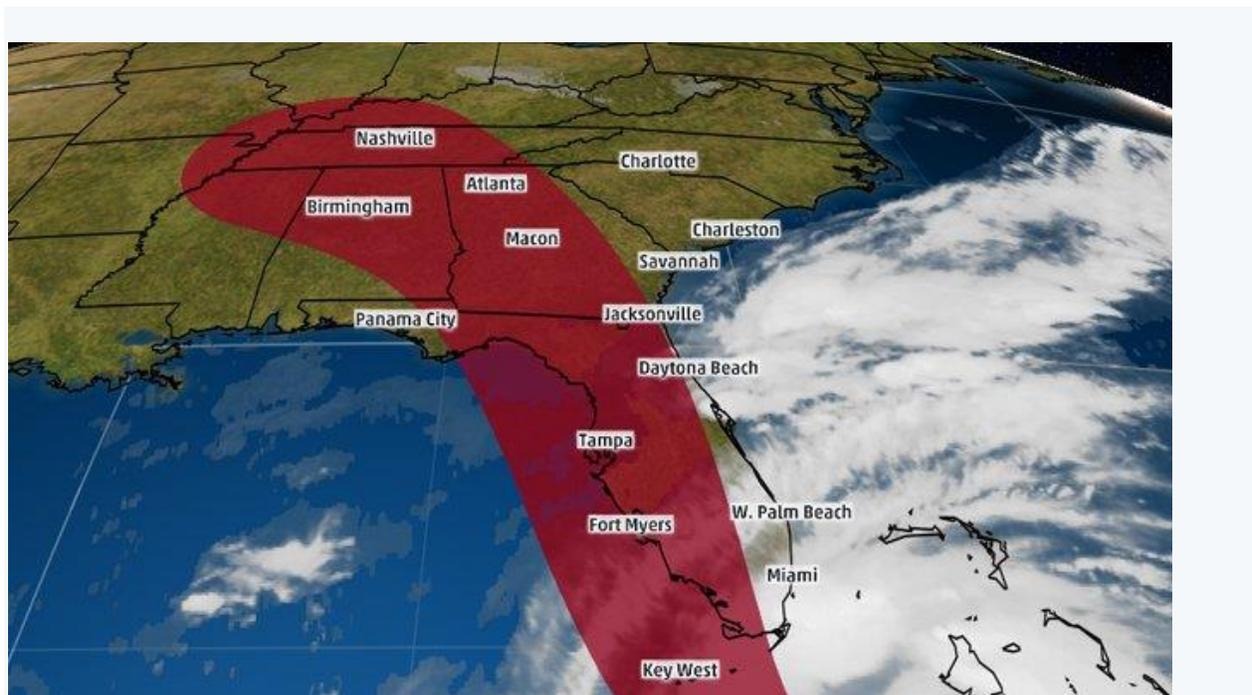
Meanwhile, Florida Gov. Rick Scott warned residents Saturday that the storm surge from Hurricane Irma could "cover your house" and ultimately kill you as he urged Floridians to evacuate immediately.

Scott warned residents that a storm surge of up to 12 feet in places will inundate houses.

Residents in western Florida were told they have until 12 p.m. ET Saturday to leave.

The governor said Saturday that more than 70 shelters were opening. There were currently 50,000 shelters opened in Florida ahead of the storm.

Scott said all members of the Florida National Guard have been deployed ahead of the storm. The governor said 1,000 volunteer nurses were needed to help at disability shelters.

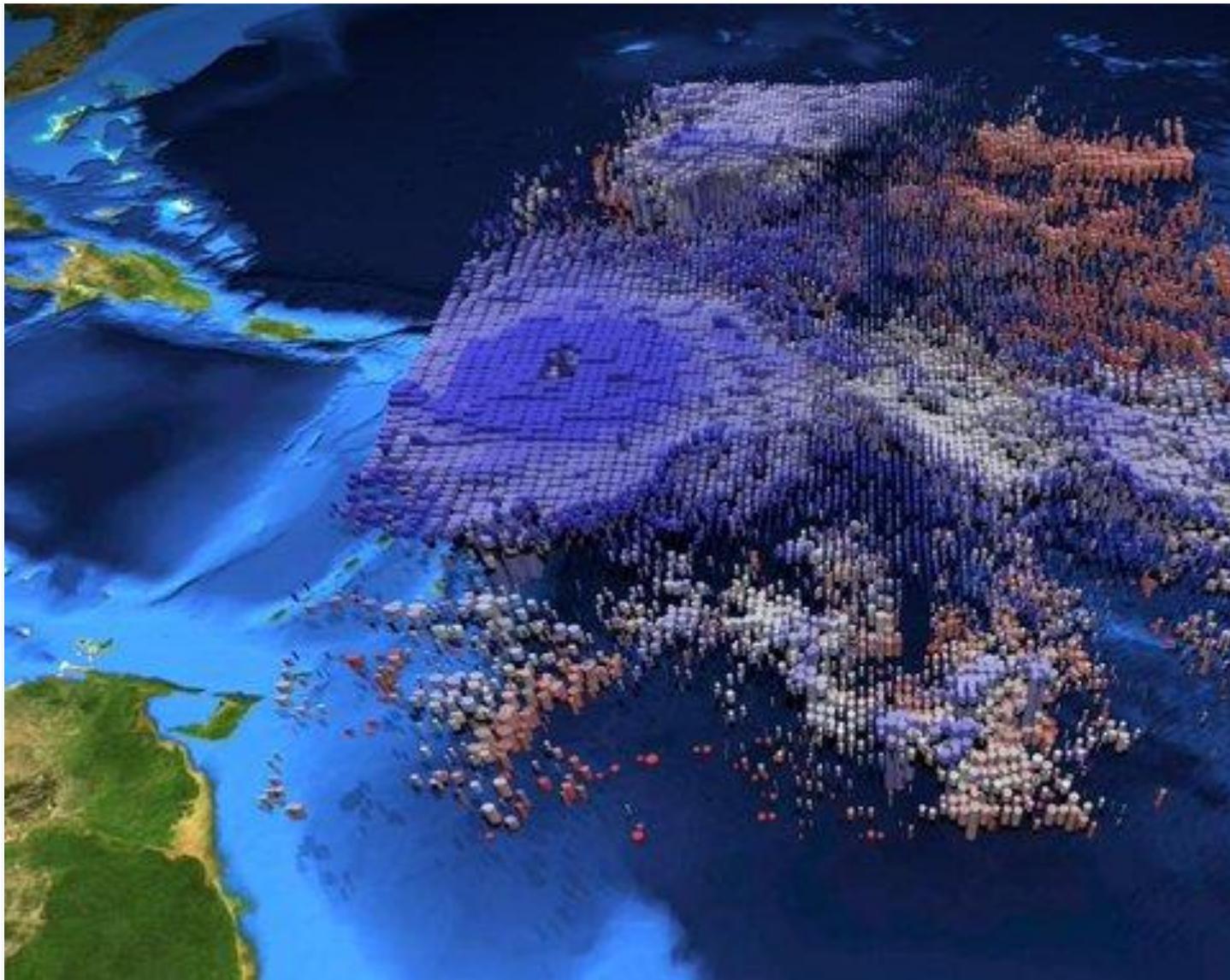


[The Weather Channel](#)

#Hurricane #Irma city-by-city timing of winds, high tides, surge and rainfall forecasts 9:17 AM - Sep 9, 2017

Hurricane Center spokesman and meteorologist Dennis Feltgen said Saturday that while Miami would not get the core of Irma it would get life-threatening hurricane conditions.

Forecasters said the track of the storm was shifting west, unlike previous reports that had the storm hitting southern Florida. The National Weather Service said that damaging winds were moving into the southern part of the state, including Key Biscayne, Coral Gables and South Miami.



[NASA](#)

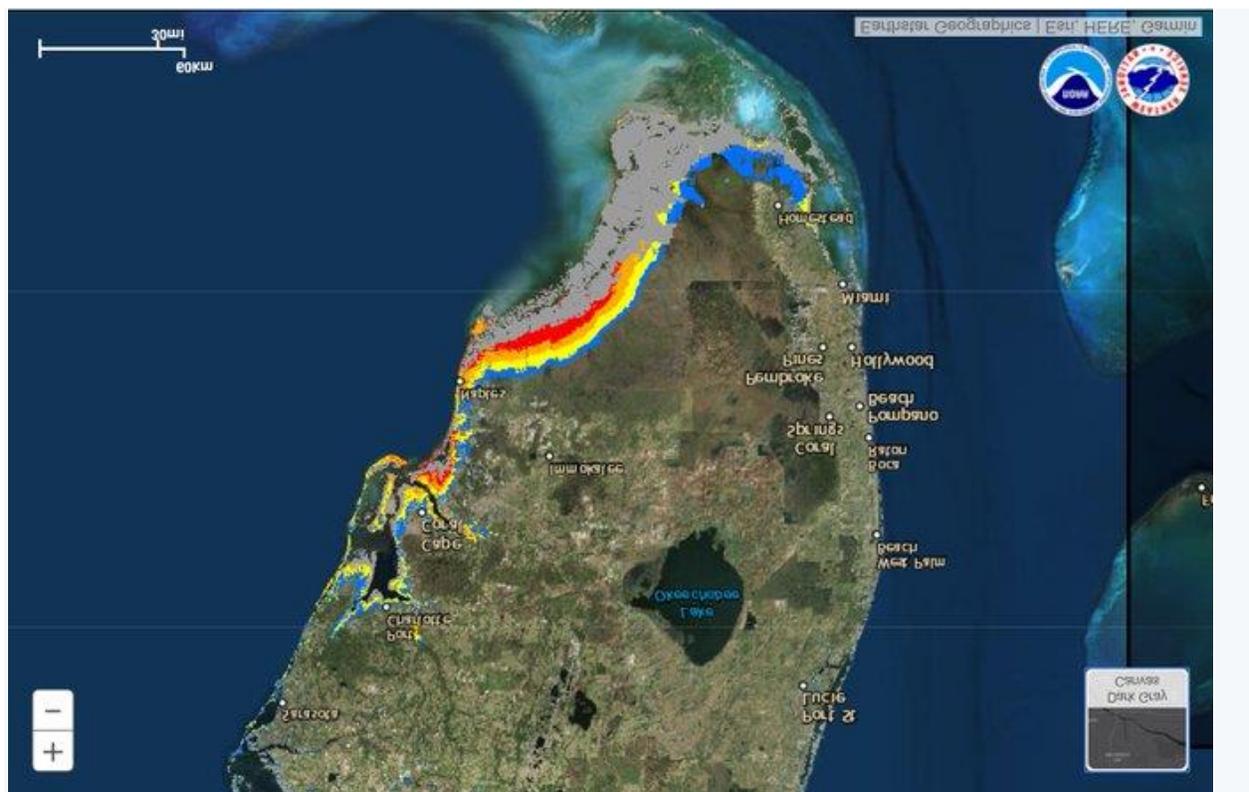
Look at Hurricane #Irma's 3-D cloud structure showing the large-scale structure of clouds in & around the storm:

[1:38 PM Sep 9, 2017](#) [privacy](#)

The latest forecast track predicts the center of the storm will move along Florida's Gulf Coast through Monday.

Forecasters expected the storm to reach the Keys on Sunday morning and approach the state's southwest coast by that afternoon.

Cuban officials said the hurricane has damaged crops in the rural eastern part of the country. The extent of the damage was not immediately known. There were no immediate reports of casualties.



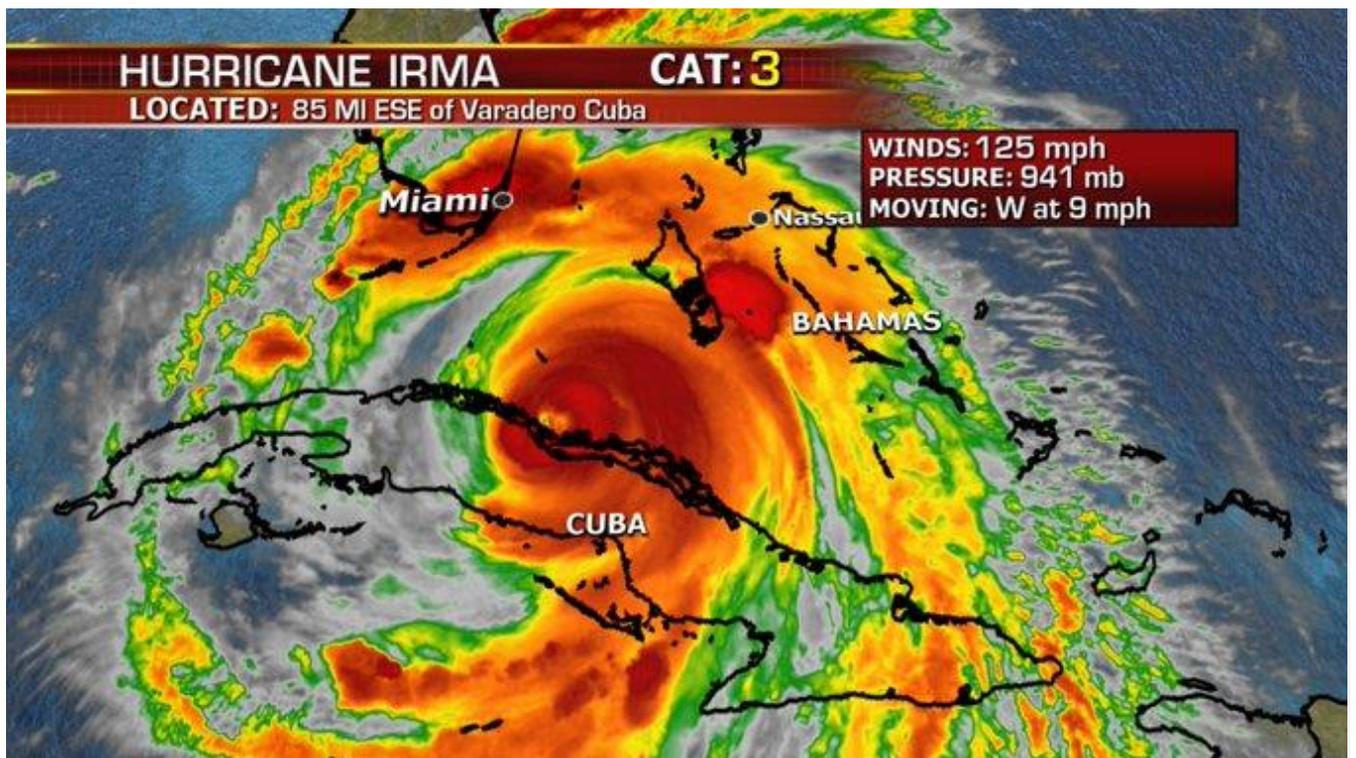
[NWS](#)

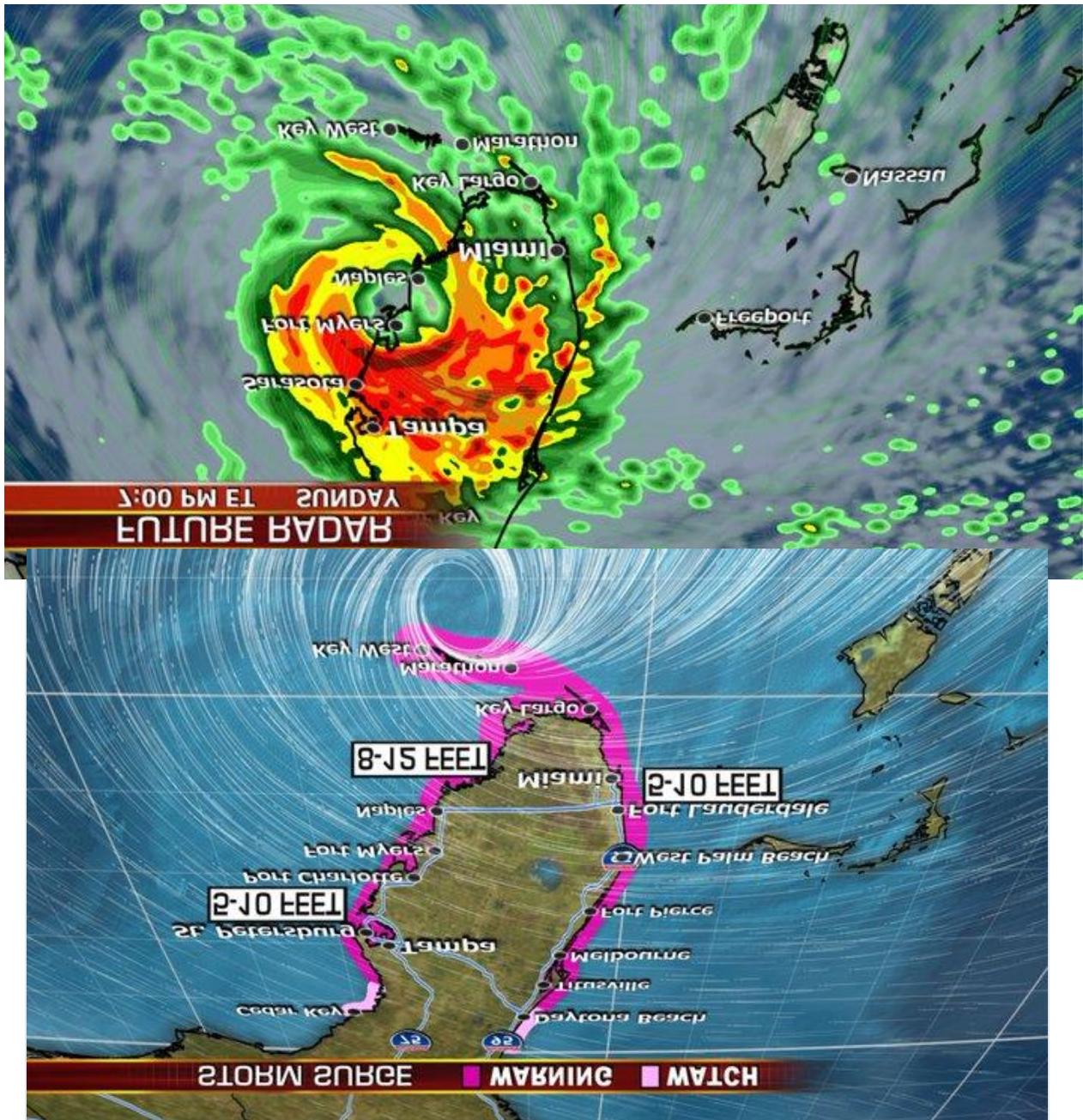
Looking for information on STORM SURGE? Check out our potential storm surge flooding map: [10:05 AM - Sep 9, 2017](#)

Trailing Irma in the Caribbean was Hurricane Jose, which neared Category 5 strength as it followed Irma's path – posing a threat of further damage to small Caribbean islands that were already devastated by Irma.

Meanwhile, Hurricane Katia made landfall late Friday north of Tecolutla, Mexico, and weakened to a tropical depression, with winds reaching 35 mph.

Irma temporarily regained Category 5 strength late Friday, but weakened to a Category 4 hurricane as it moved over Cuba. The storm downgraded to a Category 3 storm Saturday morning.





[Janice Dean](#)

#Irma is now starting to take the northward turn. This storm will strengthen again. Tornado watch and incredible surge threat. @FoxNews [12:43 PM - Sep 9, 2017](#)

In Cuba, Irma lashed the tourist resort areas of the island nation's northern coast.

In Miami Beach, some residents chose to ride out the storm at home instead of heed Gov. Rick Scott's orders to evacuate.

“Where am I going to go?” said Kathleen Paca, 56, in a South Beach bar. “It's not going to be that bad. I'm on the second floor and have impact windows. I've thrown coconuts at my windows and they don't break.”

Updated warnings

The hurricane center's 2 p.m. advisory said that hurricane warnings for the U.S. East Coast were being extended northward to Fernandina Beach.