

# Hurricane Irene continues path towards New York, Philadelphia, Boston and the rest of the Northeast

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*Hurricane Irene continued its trek towards the Northeast and threatens the most serious hurricane activity to hit the region since at least 1991. As the Capital Weather Gang's Andrew Freedman [reported](#) :*

Millions of people from Philadelphia northward to Maine are bracing for what may be their closest encounter with a [hurricane](#) since at least 1991. Depending on the exact path and strength of Irene at its closest pass, the storm has the very real potential to sock New Jersey, Southeastern New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts with the region's fiercest hurricane or strong tropical storm in many years. In fact, most New Yorkers have never seen a hurricane pass over or just to the west of the city, a track that would bring a dangerous storm surge into highly populated and pricey real estate.

Even if Irene loses some of its punch as works its way up the coast, moderate to major impacts — including flooding, downed trees and significant power outages — are still anticipated in the heart of the urban corridor from Philadelphia to Boston, especially near and east of I-95.

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Replay

As detailed by [New York City's Department of Emergency Management](#), most of the hurricanes that have caused damage in the city have passed east of Manhattan, over Long Island or Southeast Massachusetts. There was a hurricane that made a direct hit on Manhattan in 1821, however. That example does not bode well:

“The tide rose 13 feet in one hour and inundated wharves, causing the East River to converge into the Hudson River across lower Manhattan as far north as Canal Street. However, few deaths were attributed to the storm because flooding was concentrated in neighborhoods with far fewer homes than exist today,” the city Web site states.

*Residents of the Outer Banks of North Carolina face the choice of evacuation or hunkering down to wait out Hurricane Irene as it passes through. As the Post's Shyamantha Asokan [explained](#):*

On a normal day in the August peak season, Cahoon's Market wouldn't be able to sell its deck chairs, beach toys and beers fast enough. But over the past 48 hours, this general store on North Carolina's vulnerable coast has mostly been selling water, crackers and batteries to its remaining few customers.

“We've managed to get a bit of business today – but that's because we're the only store still open,” said Brad Donnan, the store's manager, as he glanced around the quiet aisles. “I've lived here for 22 years and this one might be the worst one I've ever seen.”

[As Hurricane Irene nears the Outer Banks](#), a thread of land just off the state's main coastline, tourists have been hurriedly vacating its popular beaches. Residents have been hunkering down for what could be northeast coast's most serious tropical storm in the past 50 years. Previous hurricanes have left roads blocked and homes without electricity here for over a week.

Irene is expected to hit the Outer Banks overnight Friday and [then move up the shoreline to Washington, New York and points north](#) over the weekend.

By Friday afternoon, Nags Head was a ghost town. Almost all of the motels and swimwear shops on the main thoroughfares were closed. Several were boarded up. The weather was cloudy and humid.

Local ocean rescue officials, armed with walkie-talkies in case cellphone signals go down during and after the storm, had placed red flags in the sea to warn people that swimming was already unsafe. Police officers were going to door-to-door to remind residents that the county-wide mandatory evacuation orders did not just apply to tourists.

*President Obama urged residents in the path of Hurricane Irene to take the necessary precautions in advance of its arrival, and then took his own advice, cutting short his vacation to return to Washington Friday evening. As Washington Post White House reporter David Nakamura [reported](#):*

President Obama is cutting his vacation short.

Obama told his staff that he would return from Martha's Vineyard to Washington Friday evening, a day earlier than planned, to monitor the progress of Hurricane Irene, a Category 2 storm that will move up the eastern seaboard after making landfall Friday in North Carolina.

The president's wife and two daughters will remain on the island until Saturday, White House officials said.

Obama read a three-minute statement to reporters Friday discussing his administration's preparations for the storm.

"I cannot stress this highly enough: If you are in the projected path of this hurricane, you have to take precautions now. Don't wait. Don't delay," he said. "We all hope for the best, but we have to be prepared for the worst. All of us have to take this storm seriously."

Obama had [disregarded critics](#) who had said his 10-day vacation on a 28-acre compound on the tony island would send the wrong signal at a time when 14 million Americans are out of work.

He played at least three rounds of golf and spent parts of at least three days at the beach, according to press pool reports. He also [hit a local bookstore](#) and spent time [visiting wealthy donor friends](#).

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