

Tropical Storm Tomas could re-intensify into rare November hurricane

Tropical Storm Tomas could linger longer over as it moves across the Caribbean, but forecasters said the storm could become a hurricane again by Thursday.

As of 11 p.m. Monday, the center of Tomas was about 365 miles (590 kilometers) south-southeast of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. It had maximum sustained winds of 45 mph (75 kph), with higher gusts, and was moving west at 12 mph (19 kph).

No coastal watches or warnings were in effect associated with Tomas, according to the Miami, Florida-based National Hurricane Center. But the center urged residents of Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Haiti to keep an eye on the storm, which is expected to continue westward over the next day or two and slow down.

Tracking maps show that Tomas could take a sharp turn to the west-northwest Wednesday and approach Haiti later in the week, possibly as a Category 1 hurricane. The storm could deal another blow to the island nation, which is still recovering from a devastating January earthquake and currently battling a cholera outbreak. But "Tomas could still hit anywhere from the Dominican Republic to eastern Cuba," CNN meteorologist Taylor Ward said.

Tropical storm-force winds extend out 140 miles (220 kilometers) from Tomas' center, mainly to the northeast, the Hurricane Center said.

Tomas is expected to continue weakening, but "restrengthening could begin by late Tuesday," forecasters said.

The forecast track for Tomas, a storm which formed in late October, is typical for November hurricanes, CNN meteorologist Bonnie Schneider wrote on a blog for HLN's "Morning Express."

Although hurricanes are less likely to form in November, "the month isn't always hurricane-free," Schneider said. "Two fairly recent November hurricanes include Hurricane Lenny in 1999 and Hurricane Michelle in 2001."

September is usually the most likely month for tropical storm formation, according to Schneider. But "often this time of year, the westerly wind is strong enough to steer the storms out to sea into the Atlantic, rather than northwestward into the Gulf of Mexico."

The Atlantic hurricane season ends November 30.

Tomas lashed the Caribbean island of St. Vincent as a hurricane over the weekend, prompting about 1,000 people to enter shelters. Two people were injured, including one critically, when they tried to repair roof damage during the storm, said Michelle Forbes, acting director of National Emergency Management. Tomas also left downed trees that blocked many roads, Forbes said, and large areas of the island lacked power. More than 100 homes sustained roof damage, she said, and authorities expected the number to rise.