

Hurricane Fiona causes catastrophic flooding in Puerto Rico

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Hurricane Fiona made landfall along the extreme southwestern coast of Puerto Rico, near Punta Tocon?

San Juan, September 19 (RHC)-- Hurricane Fiona made landfall along the extreme southwestern coast of Puerto Rico, near Punta Tocon, at 3:20 p.m. local time on Sunday with winds of 85 mph, according to the National Hurricane Center.

The hurricane caused catastrophic flooding as it moved just west of Puerto Rico and headed for the Dominican Republic. The hurricane center is forecasting 12-18 inches of rainfall with a local maximum of 30 inches, particularly across eastern and southern Puerto Rico.

Nearby in the northern and eastern parts of the Dominican Republic, 4-8 inches of rainfall is expected, with a local maximum of 12 inches possible along the northeast coast.

“These rains will produce life-threatening and catastrophic flash and urban flooding across Puerto Rico and the eastern Dominican Republic, along with mudslides and landslides in areas of higher terrain,” the hurricane center said.

A flash flood emergency was issued for Sector San Felipe and Mosquito in Salinas County Sunday night as heavy rainfall pounded the region, where 10-15 inches of rain have already fallen, and another 2-4 inches are possible, according to the National Weather Service.

All of Puerto Rico lost power earlier Sunday, according to PowerOutage.us, as the Category 1 storm approached the islands. Many rivers on the eastern side of the territory are in moderate to major flood stage. One river in the southeast has risen over 12 feet in less than seven hours and is now over 25 feet, breaking the previous record of 24.79 feet set in 2017 during Hurricane Maria.

Hurricane Fiona is the third of the 2022 Atlantic Hurricane Season and forecast to become a major hurricane – a storm of Category 3 or higher – in about 48 hours, east of the Bahamas.

The island-wide power blackout -- which followed hours of progressively worsening power outages -- comes five years after Puerto Rico's power grid was devastated by Hurricane Maria in September 2017, leaving many residents without electricity for months.

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