

Storm Helene on track to hit Florida as major hurricane

September 25 2024



People secure their boats ahead of the arrival of Hurricane Helene in Cancun, Quintana Roo state, Mexico.

The US state of Florida on Tuesday was preparing for the arrival of Storm Helene, due to make landfall later in the week as a powerful

Category 3 hurricane.

Helene, currently churning over the Caribbean with maximum sustained winds of 50 miles (85 kilometers) per hour, is projected to rapidly strengthen through the Gulf of Mexico before slamming into the Florida coast on Thursday, according to the National Hurricane Center.

Ron DeSantis, governor of the southeastern state, has expanded a state of emergency to 61 of the state's 67 counties and mobilized the National Guard.

As of Tuesday evening, ten counties along the gulf coast have announced partial evacuation orders.

"There is a significant threat of storm surge, [coastal flooding](#) and erosion, [heavy rainfall](#) and flash flooding, and damaging winds," an executive order signed by DeSantis on Monday said.

Alongside warnings across Florida, the NHC has issued a [hurricane warning](#) for communities along the eastern part of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula and a hurricane watch for Cuba's Pinar del Rio province.

If the NHC's forecasts are confirmed, Helene—with sustained winds of more than 110 miles per hour—would be the highest-category hurricane to hit the United States in more than a year.

Idalia, a Category 3 storm, hit northwestern Florida in August 2023.

Helene is set to make landfall in the same region as both Idalia and Hurricane Debby, the Category 1 hurricane that hit Florida last month.

The 2024 Atlantic hurricane season, which began on June 1 and will end on November 30, has been less busy than expected.

Researchers say climate change likely plays a role in the rapid intensification of storms, because there is more energy in a warmer ocean for them to feed on.

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