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Hurricane Erin Prompts North Carolina State of Emergency

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A tropical storm warning is in effect for North Carolina as Hurricane Erin, a large Category 2 storm, moves north along the U.S. East Coast. The National Hurricane Center issued the alert, warning of dangerous coastal conditions.

As of its 11 a.m. EDT update Wednesday, the storm was located approximately 365 miles south-southeast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. It possessed maximum sustained winds of 110 mph and was moving north at 13 mph. Hurricane-force winds extend 90 miles from Erin's center, with tropical-storm-force winds reaching 265 miles outward.

North Carolina Governor Josh Stein declared a state of emergency for the entire state, urging residents to take the storm seriously. “Conditions can deteriorate quickly,” Stein emphasized during a press conference.

The hurricane is forecast to turn north-northeast on Wednesday, tracking over the western Atlantic Ocean between the U.S. coast and Bermuda. Its closest pass to the United States is expected on Thursday, bringing the strongest onshore winds. The primary impacts for North Carolina will be coastal flooding from massive waves, tropical-storm-force winds, significant storm surge, and life-threatening rip currents. Heavy rainfall is predicted to remain offshore.

“Regardless of the track of the center of the storm, dangerous conditions can be felt far from the eye, especially with a system as large as Erin,” stated North Carolina Emergency Management Director Will Ray.

The tropical storm warning area extends from the North Carolina-Virginia border to Chincoteague, Virginia. A storm surge warning is also active from Cape Lookout to Duck, North Carolina, where water levels could rise 2 to 4 feet above normal tide.

Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin noted on social media that the storm’s offshore track is “bringing dangerous water conditions to Virginia’s coast,” including hazardous rip currents and rough surf beginning Wednesday evening. He warned residents to expect tidal flooding during high tide, unsafe surf, and beach erosion through Friday.

The National Hurricane Center predicts Erin could strengthen slightly on Wednesday and Thursday before beginning to weaken by Friday. Officials consistently warn that the storm’s immense size means hazardous conditions will affect a wide area, regardless of the storm’s precise path. Beachgoers are strongly advised to stay out of the water due to the high risk of rip currents.