

September 5, 2017 - 0958

Still much too early to have any certainty about the impacts Irma could have on Isle of Wight. Irma is currently a Category 5 (CAT 5) major hurricane with winds of 175mph was located about 270 miles east of the Leeward Islands and is moving generally to the west. Some fluctuation in intensity is expected to occur over the next several days, but Irma is forecast to remain a powerful CAT 4 or CAT 5 during the next few days and will likely be at least a very strong CAT 4 when it nears the US mainland.

Overall, the models have continued to trend slightly westward but Irma is still far enough out that a slight deviation in its track now could cause a major change in its path by the time it reaches the US mainland. As noted in the National Hurricane Center's (NHC) 8am update, there is an increasing chance of seeing some impacts from Irma in the Florida Peninsula and the Florida Keys later this week and this weekend. Otherwise, it is still too early to determine what direct impacts Irma might have on the continental United States.

The forecast models mostly agree that Irma is going to make a hard turn to the north at some point. When and where she turns north will be the determining factor on what impacts we could see locally. If Irma turns early, there is a very slim chance that she heads more out to sea (this is not very likely to be the scenario), or more likely she'd glance off Florida and make a more typical run up the coast which could put NC and VA very much into play. If Irma turns a little later, she'll likely track more inland up the spine of Florida – while this is bad for Florida, interaction with that much land as it moves north would probably lessen Irma's punch significantly as she moves north towards NC/VA. If Irma turns north further west, she could track into the Gulf of Mexico and put the Florida panhandle more into play, again this would likely lessen impacts by the time she makes it as far north as NC/VA. The current NHC forecast is leaning less towards an early turn north, but that earlier turn north is still very much a possibility.

Until the turn north actually occurs, we'll be in a wait and see hold for the most part. However, that doesn't mean we should put guard down. Bottom line, until the expected turn north occurs, all the options above are still in play – you should be planning for the worse case this week, while there is still time to do so. We are nearing the peak of hurricane season, now is the time to make sure you are prepared should we have an impact from IRMA. If we luck up and Irma doesn't head our way, you'll be more ready for the storms that may follow her.



