

Sunday, September 9, 2018 – 8:00 pm

From the National Hurricane Center (NHC) 5pm update, Florence is now a CAT1 hurricane with 85mph winds. Confidence is high that Florence will be a CAT4 (130mph+ winds) within 48 hours. Current forecast guidance has Florence as a very major hurricane at time of landfall. Hurricane winds currently extend 25 miles from the center and tropical storm force winds extend 125 miles from the center. The model guidance is also significantly increasing the size of Florence's wind field over the next few days - the official forecast reflects this trend.

Hampton Roads currently has a 48% chance of seeing tropical force winds (39+mph) in the next 4-5 days, a 15% chance of seeing strong tropical force winds (58+mph) winds in the next 4-5 days and a 7% chance of hurricane force winds in the next 4-5 days. Areas between Wilmington NC and Florence SC currently have the highest chances of seeing the strongest hurricane force winds. It's of note that Richmond and Charlottesville currently have wind chances very similar to Hampton Roads; and Danville has the highest wind chances in the state (these percentages are a result of the assumption of a SC/NC landfall with a track going inland and then northward turning northward track from assumption).

Based on updates from the National Hurricane Center (NHC) and National Weather Service (NWS):

Forecast Confidence - still significant difference in the forecast models regarding track of the storm. Confidence is increasing that Florence will continue to strengthen and will be a major hurricane as it nears the southeast coast by late this week.

Local impacts - While it is still too soon to determine the exact location, magnitude and timing of specific impacts for the local area, forecast confidence is slowly improving. Hampton Roads remains in the NCH forecast error cone. The actual track of Florence could go anywhere in the error cone - don't concentrate too closely on the NCH forecast center line. As the forecast is refined, it is HIGHLY likely that we will see changes to the center line forecast in every update - what we are looking for is the narrowing of the error cone which helps tie down track possibilities.

Even assuming we don't take a direct hit (and a direct hit is not currently the most likely scenario), there is a concern for heavy rainfall and prolonged, significant (moderate to major category) coastal flood impacts for Hampton Roads. Worst case, she tracks near us (don't think this is the most likely scenario, but still a possibility that needs to be considered and prepared for). We hope that we will start to see better insight on impacts by tomorrow evening's NHC update.

Now is the time to be preparing for potential impacts by late Weds (current forecast timing of likely very earliest we'd see tropical storm type conditions here). Timing for us is more likely sometime Thursday morning. It's important to note that these timings refer to when we might see tropical storm winds begin - not when the system may have actually have made

landfall. Current forecast has actual landfall late Thursday/early Friday. Also important to note, timing of winds will likely continue to fluctuate as the forecast is refined.

Concern: Beyond the obvious concerns about having a CAT4 hurricane making landfall anywhere on the east coast, the current forecast shows a strong possibility that Florence may slow down significantly or stall in day 4-5 of the current. If this happens, impacts from prolonged winds and heavy rains will be magnified.

