

10 dead as Irene churns into Virginia

At least 10 people were dead and about 2 million of people were in the dark Saturday night as Hurricane Irene bore down on the Virginia coast and drenched mid-Atlantic states.

Forecasters and authorities warned that the storm's run north to New England from its landfall in North Carolina could be catastrophic. The National Hurricane Center said Delaware Bay, the Jersey shore, New York Harbor and Long Island Sound faced strong storm surges. In Norfolk, Va., officials reported a storm surge Saturday evening of just over 8 feet at the downtown flood gate, about the same size as a surge from Hurricane Isabel eight years ago. Hampton Roads saw 9 inches of rain, but 16 inches reportedly fell to the west on Route 460, Gov. Bob McDonnell said. "Flooding is going to be significant," McDonnell warned. At 11 p.m. EDT, Irene's eye was about 70 miles southwest of Ocean City, Md. as its sustained winds of 80 mph wreaked havoc on the Hampton Roads area of the Virginia coast. With the worst danger past, hurricane warnings were canceled south of Cape Lookout, N.C. Hurricane warnings were in effect from Cape Lookout north to Sagamore Beach, Mass. Irene was moving north-northeast at 16 mph, up from 13 mph a day earlier, and skirting the Delaware-Maryland-Virginia peninsula. Hurricane-force winds covered about 125 miles, with winds of tropical-storm power of up to 240 miles from the eye. Earlier, the hurricane-force winds covered about 190 miles. The leading edge of the storm reached New York City late Saturday, Mayor Michael Bloomberg said. Tropical-storm force winds were expected to reach Long Island and southern New England by sunrise Sunday, with hurricane force winds hitting about noon, the National Hurricane Center said. Winds on the upper floors of high-rise buildings will be significantly stronger than those near ground level, it said. A storm surge raising water levels 4 to 8 feet was expected as far north as Cape Cod. Rainfall of up to 16 inches was reported earlier in a large portion of eastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia. Curfews were in effect until Sunday morning in at least seven communities in Virginia and North Carolina, where Irene first made landfall early Saturday. At 11 p.m. ET, about 450,000 homes and buildings were without electricity in Maryland; 90,000 in Delaware; 90,000 in New Jersey; 864,000 in Virginia; 300,000 in North Carolina; and 5,700 in Long Island, N.Y. Storm wields death

Storm-toppled trees, roiled surf and other effects left at least nine people dead by Saturday night as Irene passed. In Virginia, Captain Kevin Smith of Chesterfield County Police told NBC News that a man in his 60s died after a tree fell on his house. In the afternoon, a tree fell on a car in Brunswick County, killing 67-year-old James Blackwell of Brodnax. The car's driver was taken to the hospital with minor injuries, officials said. In Newport News, high winds knocked a tree into an apartment complex where rescue workers searched several hours before finding a boy's body. Maryland emergency officials said a tree fell on a house in Queen Anne's County, killing one person. Four people were reported dead in North Carolina. Police in Goldsboro, told NBC News that a girl died in a wreck after the car she was in crashed at an intersection where Irene had knocked out power to the traffic lights. One person died in a vehicle crash in Pitt County; a man died after a branch fell on him in Nash County; and a man who died of a heart attack Thursday in Onslow County as he was trying to board up his home. In Florida, the Volusia County Beach Patrol confirmed that a surfer was killed Saturday at New Smyrna Beach, where surfers flocked to take advantage of 10-foot waves kicked up in the wake of Irene. In New Jersey, a Flagler County a 55-year-old visitor drowned in in 4-foot surf while at the beach with his wife, daughter and son. North Carolina Gov. Beverly Perdue said people should not be fooled by Irene's rating as a Category 1 storm, the lowest on the scale. "She may be a One, but she's a mean One," Perdue said in an interview on MSNBC-TV. Tropical storm conditions spread north into Washington, D.C., Maryland and Delaware. With Virginia, they make up the so-called DelMarVa peninsula, where tornadoes were reported. A tornado that ripped through the Sandbridge area of Virginia Beach destroyed five homes and damaged several others. A tornado touched down near Lewes, Del., and damaged 15 buildings, the National Weather Service said. Maryland Police also said they spotted a tornado in a wooded area of the lower eastern shore. Source: msnbc.com