



Verisk Weather Solutions Forecast Narrative

Tropical Storm Isaias

October 7, 2026 Update



Executive Summary

- Tropical Storm Isaias formed overnight in the southwestern Gulf of Mexico and is forecast to rapidly intensify over the next 24 – 36 hours, likely becoming the first hurricane of the 2026 Atlantic season by Thursday.
- The current consensus favors Isaias attaining Category 1 or 2 strength before making landfall late Friday or early Saturday somewhere between southeastern Louisiana and the western Florida Panhandle.
- Damaging winds, storm surge, and possibly a few tornadoes, will impact coastal communities near and to the east of the ultimate landfall location, with heavy rainfall and flash flooding spreading well inland across the Southeast into the weekend

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History

On Tuesday, October 6, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) initiated advisories on Tropical Depression Nine, an area of low pressure over the western Gulf of Mexico that had been tracked as Invest 92L over the Bay of Campeche and had been assigned high odds of development. Early this morning the depression strengthened further and was upgraded to Tropical Storm Isaias, becoming the ninth named storm of the 2026 Atlantic hurricane season.

Isaias develops in the midst of a very quiet season that has been suppressed by what is expected to be a record-strong El Niño. No hurricane has formed yet this year in the Atlantic basin, a record-long wait that Isaias is expected to end. Three earlier named storms (Arthur, Bertha, and Edouard) affected the Gulf Coast states with heavy rainfall, but none reached hurricane strength. Isaias has been moving slowly and generally eastward since its formation while organizing over very warm Gulf waters.

As of the 5am ET advisory from the NHC, Isaias is moving east-northeast at 8 mph with maximum sustained winds of 40 mph and is located about 285 miles west of Progreso, Mexico and 580 miles southwest of the mouth of the Mississippi River. Tropical-storm-force winds extend only about 45 miles from the center, making Isaias a small system at this stage. The first Hurricane Hunter reconnaissance flight into the storm is scheduled for later today and should help clarify the storm's structure and intensity.

Forecast

Isaias will continue to move slowly east-northeast today and tomorrow, passing just north of the Yucatan Peninsula. Heavy rain and gusty winds are possible across the northern and western Yucatan as the system passes nearby, although no coastal watches or warnings are currently in effect. By Thursday, Isaias is expected to begin turning northeast and then north as the storm is drawn toward the northern Gulf Coast by the sagging jet stream to its north. The storm is then forecast to accelerate on Friday as it approaches the coast. The NHC notes there is significant uncertainty regarding exactly where and when this turn occurs and how fast Isaias moves afterward; a stronger storm will likely move faster. The latest official track has also shifted somewhat east compared with earlier guidance, placing more of the Florida Panhandle at risk.

Conditions favor rapid strengthening over the next two days. Gulf water temperatures are well into the 80s, and there was a notable increase in intensity guidance this forecast cycle. The NHC now forecasts Isaias to become a hurricane on Thursday and reach a peak intensity of 95 kt (110 mph), just shy of major hurricane status, over the central Gulf by Friday morning. Because Isaias is currently a small system, it is prone to quick bouts of strengthening and weakening, and the NHC specifically notes that there are skillful models showing a stronger storm than the official forecast. The primary limiting factor is wind shear. With the jet stream positioned unusually far south, vertical wind shear is forecast to increase dramatically over the final 24 hours before Isaias reaches the coast, which should cause weakening on approach. How much weakening occurs will depend on how quickly Isaias moves; a faster-moving storm will have less time to be impacted by the hostile environment.

Model track guidance is generally clustered from southeastern Louisiana to the Alabama-Florida state line, though with landfall still more than two days away the full range of possible outcomes

extends from eastern Louisiana to the western Florida Panhandle, a stretch of coast that includes the New Orleans, Mississippi Gulf Coast, Mobile, Pensacola, and Panama City areas. Landfall timing is currently expected between late Friday and early Saturday, and the combination of timing and speed differences leads to a range of landfall intensities. Forecast landfall intensity is currently Category 1 to Category 2 strength, but with a risk of a major hurricane (i.e., Category 3 or stronger) if shear is less hostile than forecast. In any case, it is likely that Isaias makes landfall as a hurricane along the northern Gulf Coast.

After landfall, Isaias is expected to weaken quickly and get pushed well inland over the Southeast. The NHC cautions that the wind field of Isaias could expand considerably as it approaches the coast, with impacts spreading hundreds of miles from the center and most threatening areas to the east of wherever the center makes landfall. As the remnants of Isaias move inland over the weekend, moisture from the system will spread northward into the Appalachians and potentially as far as the Ohio Valley and mid-Atlantic, where it could produce heavy rainfall.

Impacts

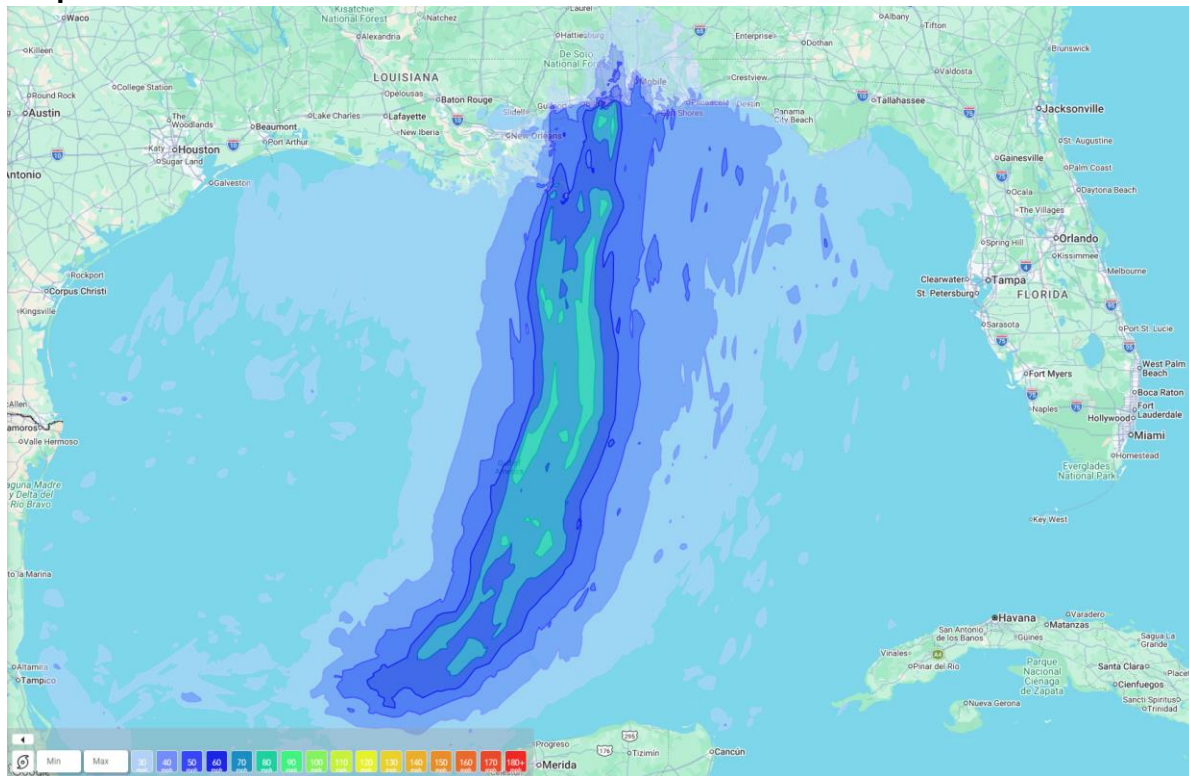
Below is a peril-specific summary of forecast impacts from Isaias:

Wind

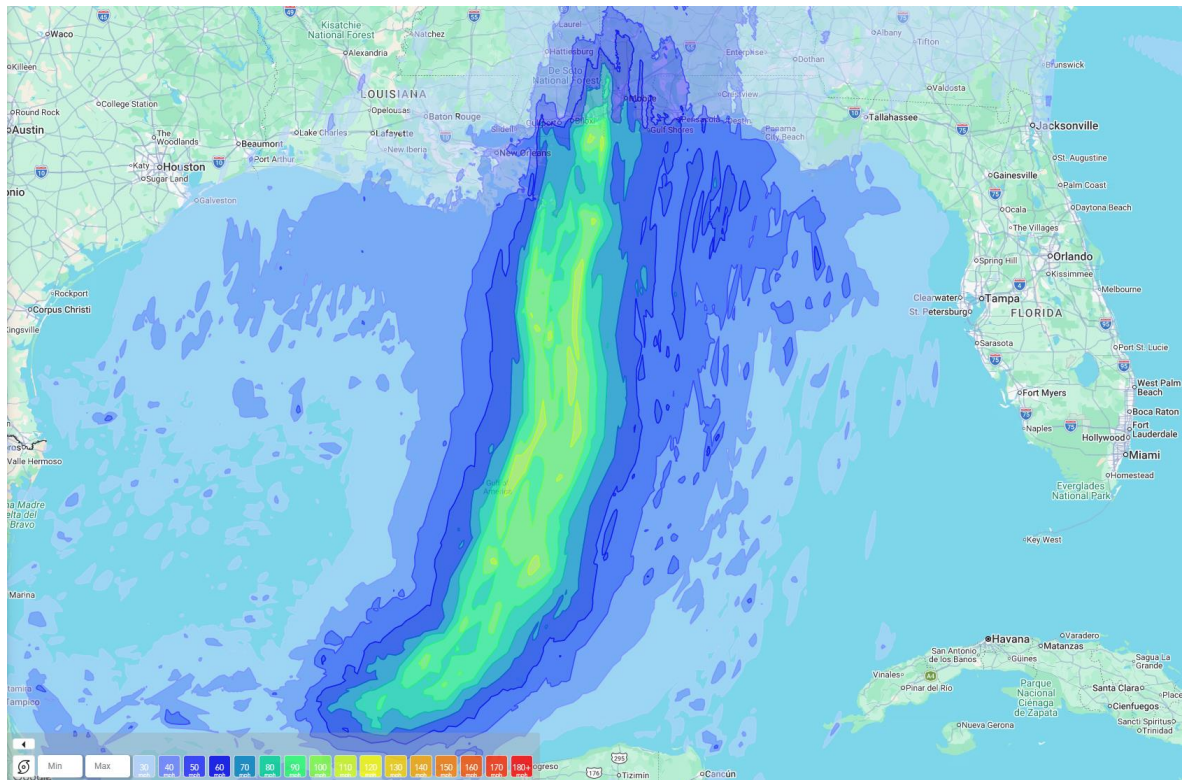
No coastal watches or warnings are in effect as of this morning, but the NHC has indicated that Hurricane Watches will likely be required for a portion of the northern Gulf Coast later today. Wind impacts along the coast should begin on Friday and increase through Friday night as Isaias approaches and makes landfall. The strongest winds will occur near and to the east of the landfall location, but it remains too early to pinpoint the area of strongest winds given the uncertainty in track, forward speed, and intensity at landfall. Because the wind field is forecast to expand, damaging winds are possible well away from the center, including across the Florida Panhandle, Alabama, and farther inland across the Southeast as Isaias moves inland. Power outages could last several hours to multiple days in the hardest hit areas. Florida's governor has already declared a state of emergency ahead of the storm.

The latest Respond Hurricane forecast (below) depicts a scenario where Isaias strengthens to a Category 1 hurricane over the central Gulf on Friday morning, then weakens somewhat as it encounters increasing wind shear before making landfall near the Mississippi/Alabama border. Isaias would then weaken as it moves inland across the Southeast. It should be noted that this scenario is well within the realm of possibilities, but uncertainty remains regarding exact landfall location and intensity. Under this scenario, strong, gusty winds of 70+ mph would be felt in extreme southeastern Mississippi and southwestern Mississippi, perhaps including Mobile, AL. Stronger gusts of 90+ mph are mostly confined to the area near and to the east of the landfall location near the head of the Pascagoula River.

Respond Hurricane Wind – Sustained Wind



Respond Hurricane Wind – Maximum Wind Gust

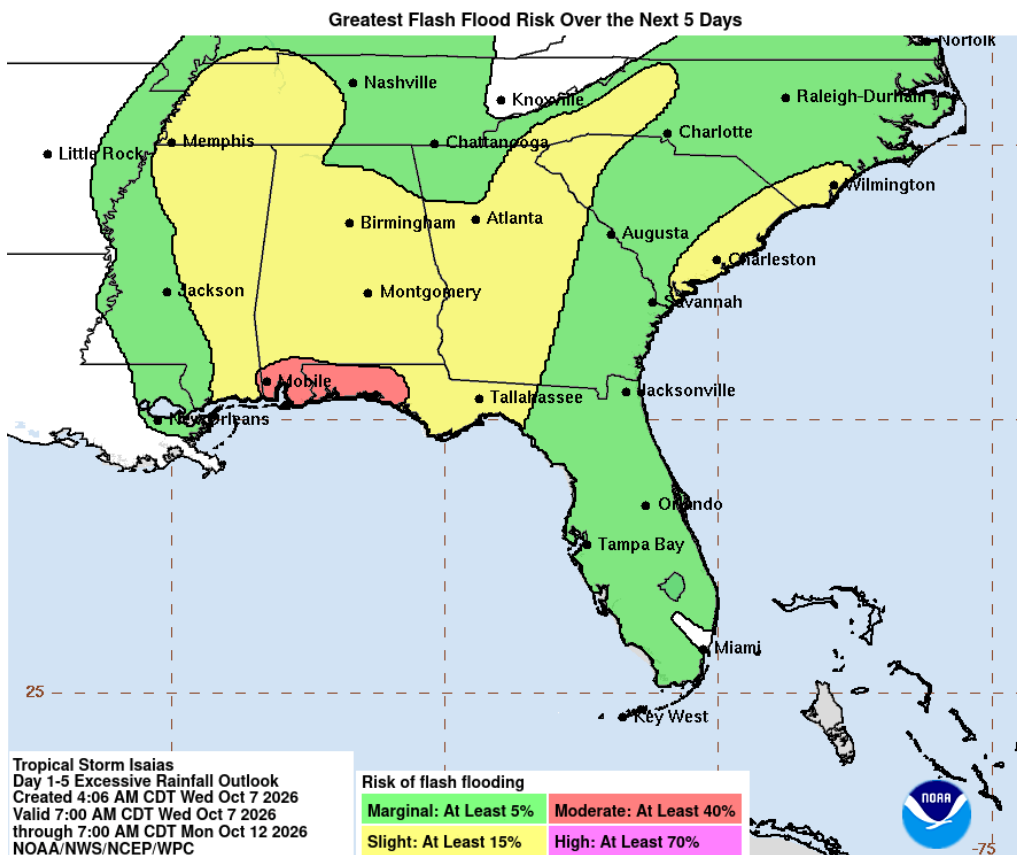
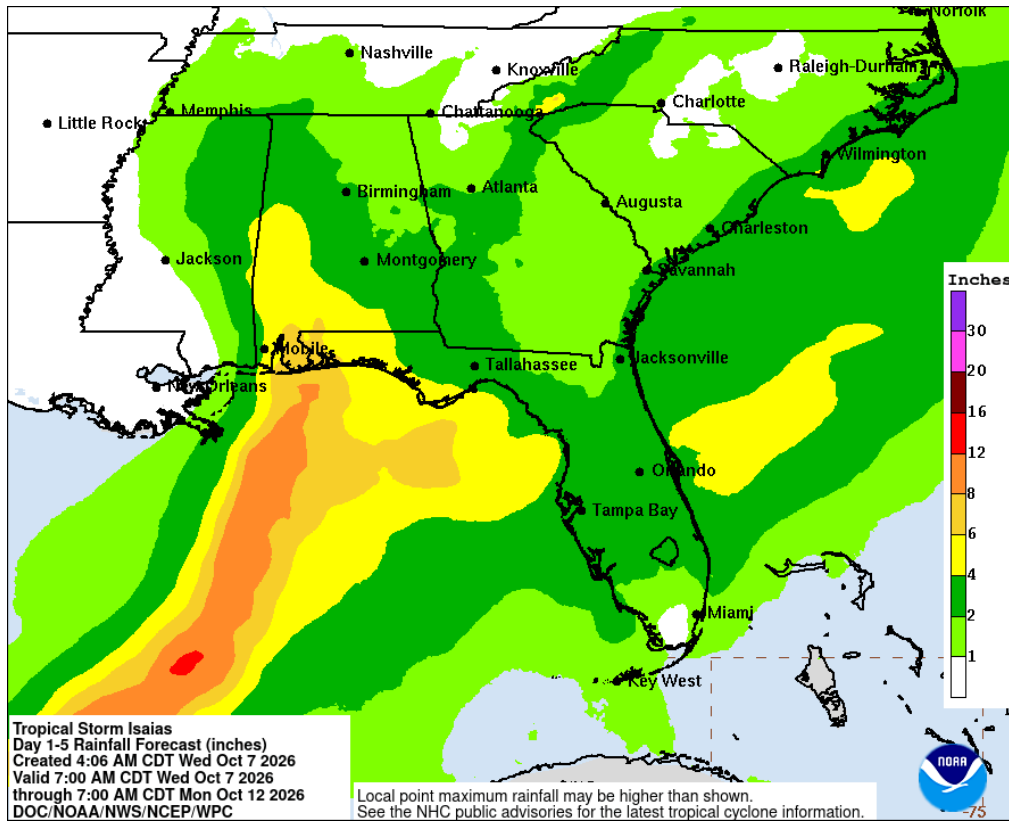


Storm Surge

Significant, life-threatening storm surge is possible along portions of the northern Gulf Coast late Friday into early Saturday, and the NHC has indicated that Storm Surge Watches will likely be issued later today. As of this morning, the NHC has not yet published peak surge forecast values for Isaias, and these will be sharpened considerably once the landfall location becomes more certain. In general, the highest surge occurs to the east of the landfall location, where onshore winds are strongest, and is further amplified within bays, sounds, and estuaries. Low-lying areas along the Mississippi Sound, Mobile Bay, and the Florida Panhandle's coastal bays and communities are particularly susceptible if the storm tracks in line with current guidance, while the broad, shallow shelf of the Big Bend can also produce significant surge if the storm tracks farther east. A worst-case scenario would see a stronger-than-forecast Isaias reach the coast with an expanded wind field, increasing the surge threat across a large stretch of coastline. High surf, coastal flooding, and rip currents will also be possible well away from the center, including along the upper Texas coast, where increasing winds and building seas are expected.

Rainfall

Heavy rainfall from Isaias is expected to begin along the Gulf Coast as soon as Friday and then push well inland through the weekend. Many areas from southern Louisiana to the Florida Panhandle and Big Bend are likely to see 3 to 6 inches of rain, with locally higher amounts up to 10 inches possible, particularly to the east of the storm track. This will lead to a risk for urban and flash flooding along the Gulf Coast. As Isaias moves inland, the threat for flash flooding will expand across much of the Southeast and into the Appalachians, where higher terrain can enhance rainfall totals, and potentially into the Ohio Valley and mid-Atlantic this weekend. Cities such as New Orleans, Birmingham, Atlanta, and Charleston should remain weather-aware. Exact rainfall totals will depend heavily on the track and forward speed of Isaias, with a slower-moving storm producing higher totals.



Tornado

A tornado threat associated with Isaias is likely to begin late Friday along the Gulf Coast as outer rainbands move onshore and continue into Saturday as the system moves inland. The greatest risk for tornadoes is typically in the rainbands to the east and northeast of the center, which would place portions of the Florida Panhandle, Alabama, Georgia, and the Southeast at risk, though the exact area will depend on the final track. Several tornadoes are possible. The threat should diminish as Isaias weakens and moves farther inland, but a risk for a few tornadoes may persist into the weekend across parts of the Southeast.