



# Verisk Weather Solutions Forecast Narrative

## Hurricane Isaias

October 8, 2026 Update



### Executive Summary

- Isaias rapidly strengthened into the first Atlantic hurricane of the 2026 season, ending a record-long wait to start a season, and is forecast to continue strengthening through early Friday.
- The current consensus favors Isaias peaking near Category 2 strength over the central Gulf on Friday before encountering stiff wind shear shortly ahead of landfall late Friday or early Saturday near the Alabama-Florida border. This makes for unusually high uncertainty in landfall intensity, with outcomes ranging from a high-end tropical storm to a low-end Category 2 hurricane depending on how significantly wind shear disrupts its inner core.
- Damaging winds, life-threatening storm surge up to 7 feet, 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 America that had been tracked as Invest 92L over the Bay of Campeche and had been assigned high odds of development. Early yesterday morning, the depression strengthened further and was upgraded to Tropical Storm Isaias, becoming the ninth named storm of the 2026 Atlantic hurricane season.

Isaias developed in the midst of a very quiet season that has been suppressed by what is expected to be a record-strong El Niño. Three earlier named storms (Arthur, Bertha, and Edouard) affected the Gulf Coast states with heavy rainfall, but none reached hurricane strength. Isaias, however, strengthened steadily over very warm Gulf waters on Wednesday, and Hurricane Hunter aircraft found hurricane-force winds late Wednesday night, leading the NHC to upgrade Isaias to a hurricane at 10:30pm CDT. This ended the longest wait on record for the first hurricane of this Atlantic season.

As of the 7:00 AM CDT advisory from the NHC, Isaias is a Category 1 hurricane moving east-northeast at 9 mph with maximum sustained winds of 80 mph. It is located about 175 miles north-northwest of Progreso, Mexico and 385 miles south-southwest of the mouth of the Mississippi River. Reconnaissance aircraft measured a central pressure of 975 mb, continuing a steady drop as the storm intensifies. Hurricane-force winds extend outward only about 15 miles from the center, while tropical-storm-force winds reach out as far as 90 miles in the northeast and northwest quadrants, making Isaias a relatively compact but strengthening system. Multiple Hurricane Hunter and NOAA aircraft continue to sample the storm throughout the day.

## Forecast

Isaias will continue to move east-northeast today, passing just north of the Yucatan Peninsula, before turning northeast later today and then north on Friday. This turn is driven by a deepening trough over the south-central United States and a strengthening subtropical ridge over the western Atlantic, which together will draw the hurricane toward the northern Gulf Coast and cause it to accelerate. Heavy rain and gusty winds are possible across the northern and western Yucatan today. The NHC forecast continues to lean toward the faster and eastern side of the guidance, closer to AI-based models, and has shifted east compared with earlier forecasts. The official NHC track now brings the center of Isaias to the coast near the Alabama-Florida border late Friday night or early Saturday.

Conditions favor additional strengthening through early Friday. Gulf water temperatures are well into the 80s Fahrenheit, the atmosphere is very humid, and wind shear is currently only moderate. Isaias has already intensified rapidly, and given its small size and developing inner core, further rapid intensification is a distinct possibility. The NHC forecast lies on the high end of the intensity guidance and peaks Isaias at 95 kt (110 mph), just shy of major hurricane (i.e., Category 3) status, over the central Gulf on Friday morning, when it is also forecast to cross a

pool of deep, warm water. There is a non-trivial chance that Isaias becomes a major hurricane, as a majority of members in at least one well-performing AI-based ensemble reach that threshold. The primary limiting factor is wind shear, which is forecast to increase markedly on Friday (to 20 – 30 kt) as a secondary trough merges with a larger trough over the central United States, and should cause some weakening on approach to the coast. Even so, Isaias is expected to remain a dangerous hurricane through landfall.

The AI-based models remain faster and farther east than the physics-based models. While the NHC forecast landfall is near the Alabama-Florida border, with landfall still more than a day away the range of possible outcomes extends from the Mississippi Gulf Coast to the western Florida Panhandle, a stretch of coast that includes the Pascagoula, Mobile, Pensacola, Destin, and Panama City areas. Landfall timing is currently expected late Friday night or early Saturday. Forecast landfall intensity is likely to be Category 1 to Category 2 strength, although Category 3 or a high-end Tropical Storm are lower confidence possibilities depending on how Isaias is impacted by the strengthening wind shear on Friday. This will be a determining factor in how quickly Isaias begins to weaken just before landfall.

After landfall, Isaias is expected to weaken quickly as it moves rapidly north across Alabama on Saturday, becoming a tropical storm and then a post-tropical low over the Tennessee Valley by Saturday night. The inland track was shifted west in the latest forecast as more models show Isaias being captured by a cutoff low over the southeastern United States. The NHC cautions that the wind field of Isaias will expand considerably as it approaches the coast, and combined with its fast forward speed this will allow gusty winds to extend well inland after landfall. Impacts will be most severe to the east of where 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

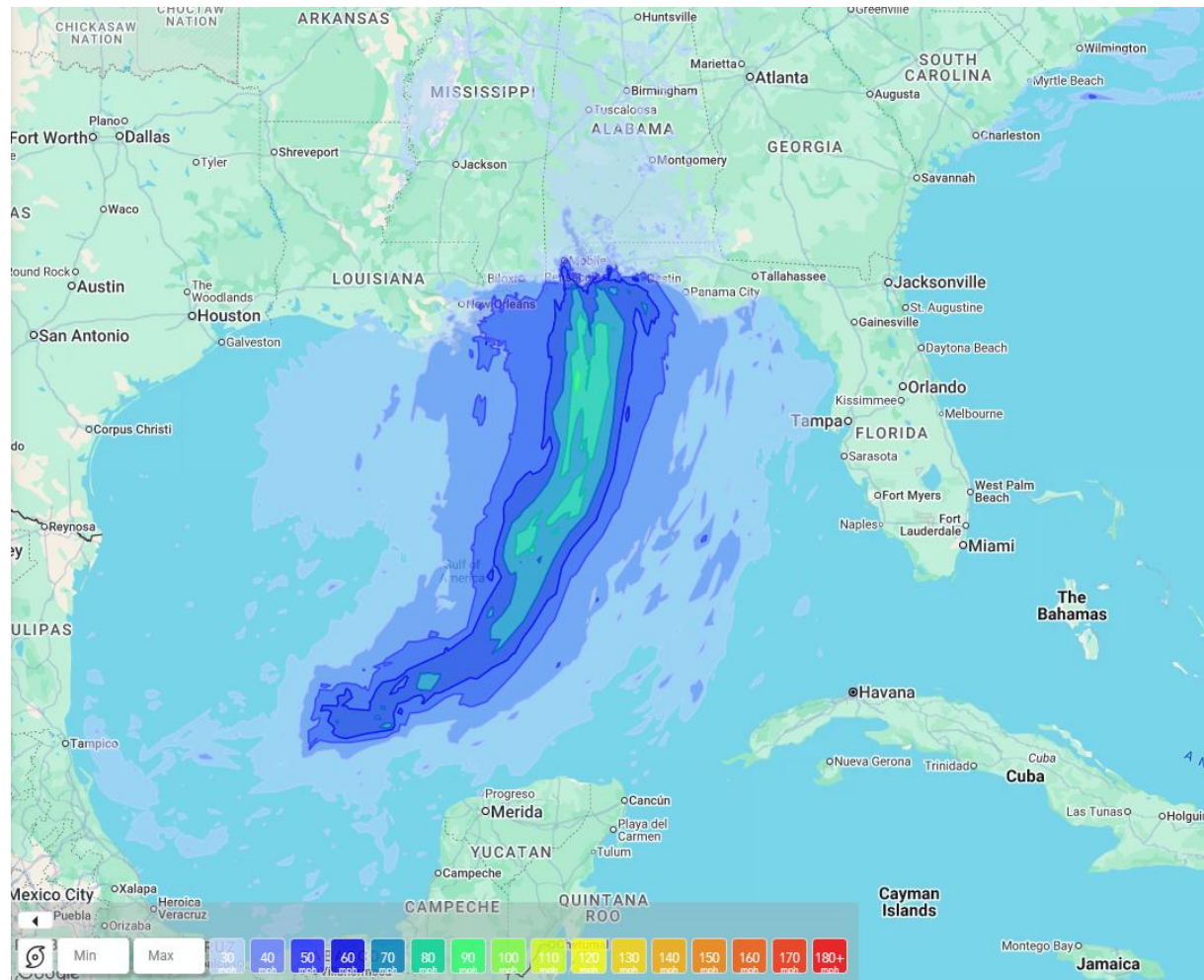
Below is a peril-specific summary of forecast impacts from Isaias:

### Wind

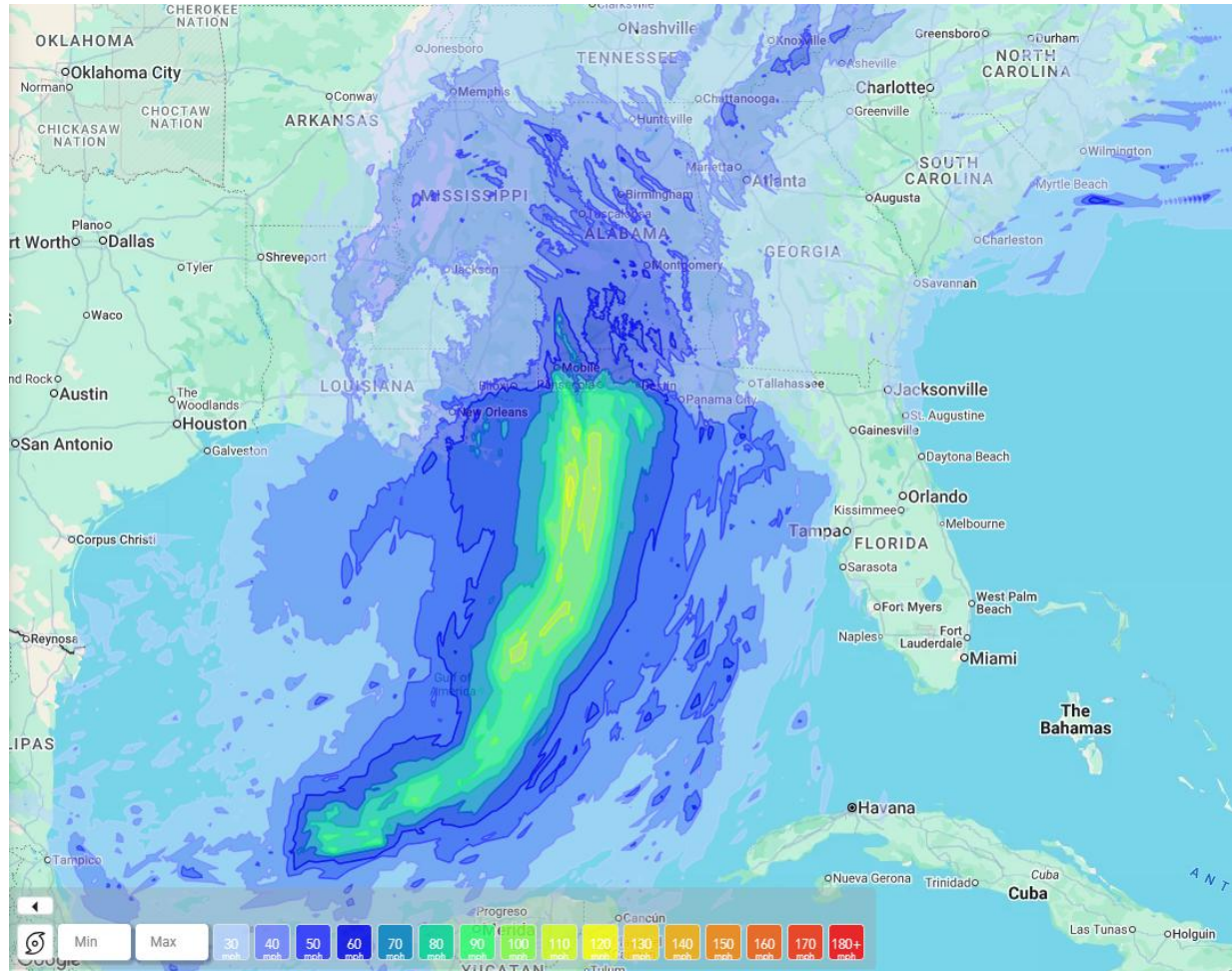
A Hurricane Warning is in effect from Ocean Springs, Mississippi to the Bay/Gulf County line in Florida. A Tropical Storm Warning extends from the Jefferson/Plaquemines Parish line, Louisiana to west of Ocean Springs, Mississippi, and from east of the Bay/Gulf County line to the Aucilla River, Florida. The NHC continues to stress that preparations to protect life and property along the warning area "should be rushed to completion today." Wind impacts along the coast should begin Friday and increase through Friday night as Isaias approaches and makes landfall. Hurricane-force winds are expected over portions of the Florida Panhandle, southern Alabama, and southern Mississippi, with damaging gusts possible well inland across the Southeast as the storm's wind field expands and Isaias pushes inland. Power outages could last several hours to multiple days in the hardest-hit areas. Florida's governor has declared a state of emergency for more than two dozen counties, and Alabama's governor has done the same for 40 counties.

The latest Respond Hurricane forecast (06z, below) depicts a scenario where Isaias strengthens to a high-end Category 1 hurricane over the central Gulf on Friday morning, then weakens to a high-end tropical storm as it encounters increasing wind shear near the coast, making landfall near the Alabama-Florida border. Isaias then weakens quickly as it moves inland across the Southeast. This scenario is on the lower end of current guidance, but it is well within the realm of possibilities and relatively high uncertainty remains regarding the intensity of Isaias at landfall. Under this scenario, the strongest gusts (110+ mph) remain offshore, while gusts of 70+ mph spread inland from the coast, impacting Pensacola, FL and Mobile, AL. Importantly, conditions on the ground will be similar whether Isaias makes landfall as a high-end tropical storm or a low-end hurricane.

### Respond Hurricane Wind – Sustained Wind

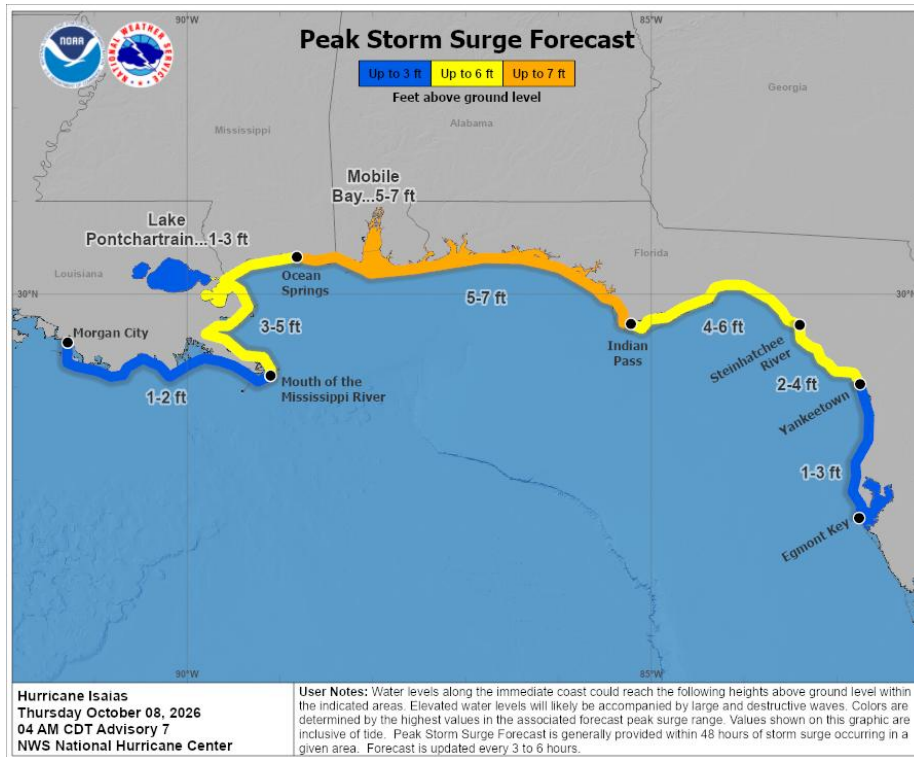


## Respond Hurricane Wind – Maximum Wind Gust



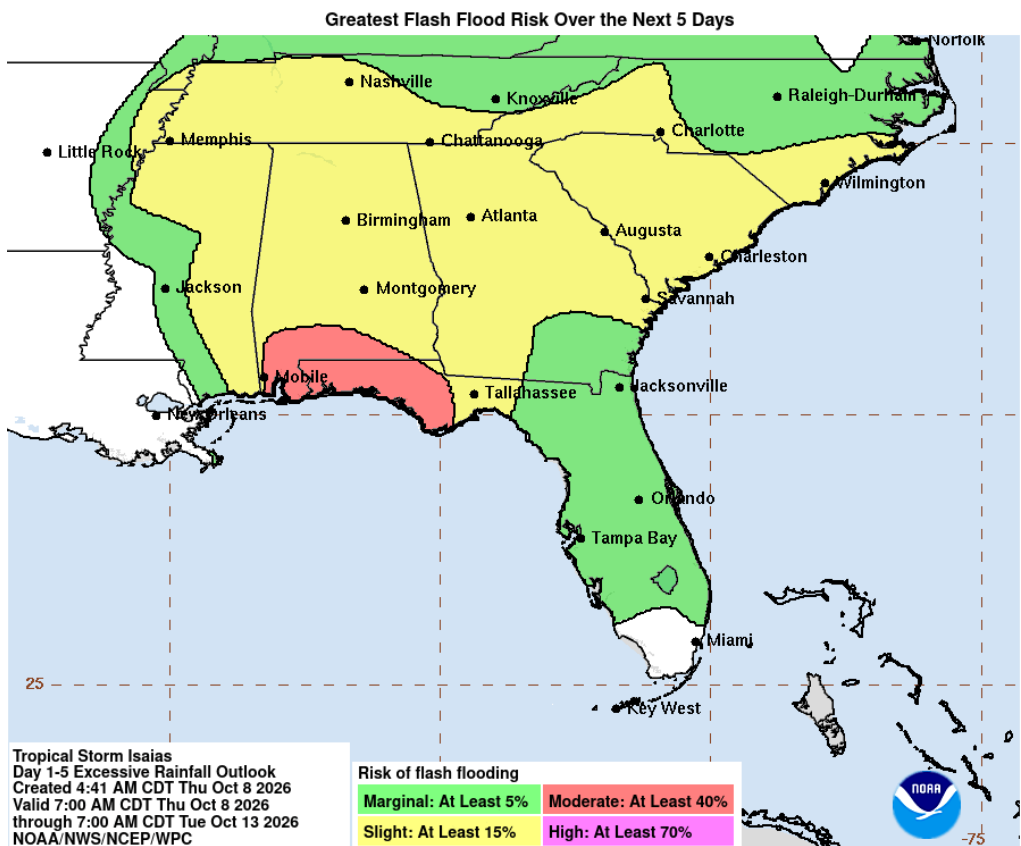
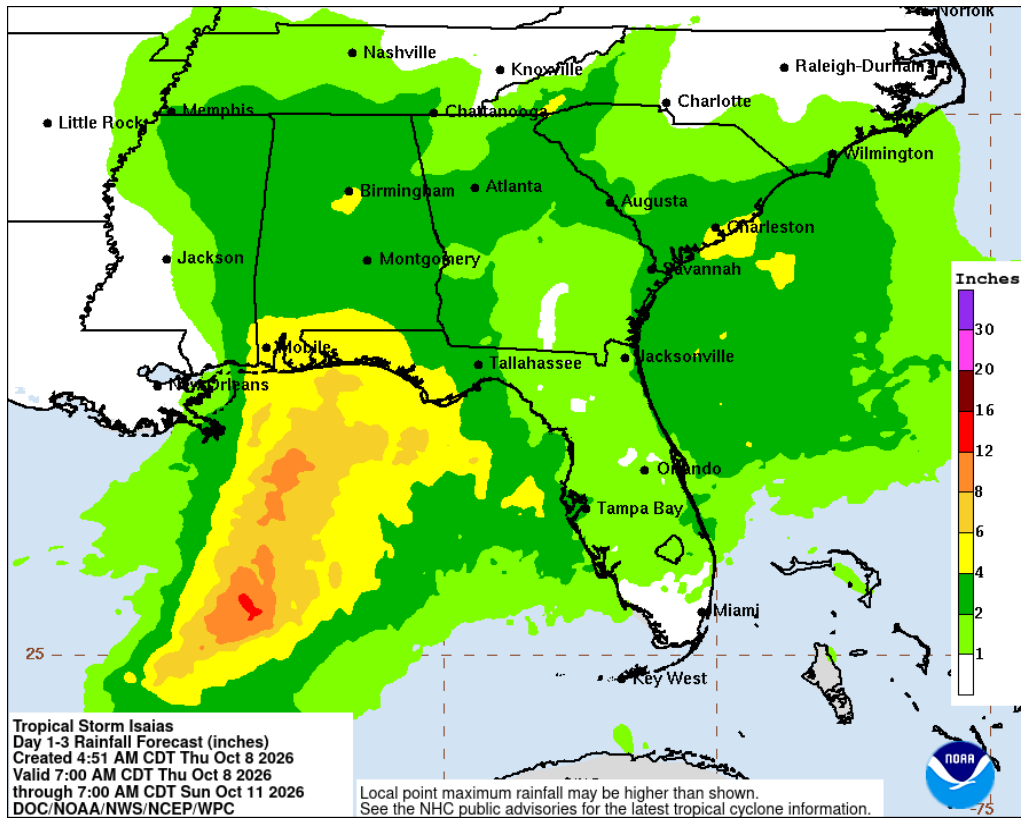
### Storm Surge

A Storm Surge Warning is in effect from the mouth of the Mississippi River to the Steinhatchee River, Florida, with a Storm Surge Watch extending from the Steinhatchee River to Yankeetown, Florida. This is a life-threatening situation: significant, potentially fatal inundation from rising water is possible along the warned area as Isaias approaches late Friday into early Saturday. As is typical, the highest surge is expected to the east of the landfall location, where onshore winds are strongest, and will be 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 remain particularly susceptible if the storm tracks in line with current guidance, while the broad, shallow shelf of the Big Bend could also see significant surge if Isaias tracks farther east. High surf, coastal flooding, and rip currents will also be possible well away from the center, including along the upper Texas coast.



## 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. The NHC is forecasting 3 to 7 inches of rain, with locally higher amounts up to 10 inches, across the central Gulf Coast from far southeastern Louisiana to the Florida Panhandle, particularly to the east of the storm track. This will lead to a risk for urban and flash flooding along the Gulf Coast, with the greatest flash flood risk currently centered near Mobile and the Alabama coast. As Isaias moves inland, 1 to 3 inches of rain, with localized amounts up to 5 inches, are possible across much of the Southeast as far north as the Tennessee Valley and the Carolinas, and the threat for flash flooding will expand into the Appalachians, where higher terrain can enhance rainfall totals, and potentially into the Ohio Valley and mid-Atlantic this weekend. Cities such as Mobile, Pensacola, Birmingham, Atlanta, and Nashville should remain weather-aware. Isaias's fast forward speed should limit rainfall totals inland, but exact totals will depend heavily on the track and speed of the system, with a slower-moving storm producing higher totals.



## Tornado

A tornado threat associated with Isaias is likely to begin Friday night along the Gulf Coast as outer rainbands move onshore, with isolated tornadoes possible in coastal Alabama and the Florida Panhandle. The greatest risk for tornadoes is typically in the rainbands to the east and northeast of the center. The tornado threat will persist on Saturday across eastern Alabama, western Georgia, and the Florida Panhandle, though the exact area will depend on the final track. 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.



