



METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE

Branch of the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation

Telephone: 876-924-8055/924-8404

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***** TROPICAL STORM RAFAEL STRENGTHENING WHILE MOVING CLOSER TO JAMAICA... TROPICAL STORM WARNING REMAINS IN EFFECT *****

As Tropical Storm Rafael moves close to the southern coastline of Jamaica and strengthens, the **TROPICAL STORM WARNING** remains in effect for the island. This means that tropical storm conditions, including strong winds, heavy rainfall and minor coastal flooding are expected today.

At 4:00 a.m. the centre of Tropical Storm Rafael was located near latitude 17.0 degrees North, longitude 78.0 degrees West. This is about 170 kilometres (105 miles) southwest of Kingston, 88 kilometres (55 miles) south of Treasure Beach and 130 kilometres (80 miles) southeast of Negril Point, Jamaica.

Rafael is moving toward the northwest near 20 km/h (13 mph) and a generally northwestward motion is anticipated over the next few days. On the forecast track, the storm is expected to move near Jamaica this morning, be near the Cayman Islands tonight, and be near or over western Cuba on Wednesday.

Maximum sustained winds have increased to near 95 km/h (60 mph) with higher gusts. Steady to rapid intensification is forecast over the next 24 to 36 hours, making Rafael a hurricane near the Cayman Islands, with further strengthening before it makes landfall in Cuba. Tropical-storm-force winds extend outward up to 165 kilometres (105 miles) from the centre.

Based on the current forecast track, expect periods of heavy rainfall, measuring 75-150 millimetres (3-6 inches), to continue to spread across Jamaica today, producing flash flooding in flood-prone areas island-wide. Higher amounts are likely in higher elevations and landslides should also be anticipated in vulnerable sections of the island. Coastal flooding is also possible along with strong, gusty winds, reaching tropical storm force, as Rafael passes near the southwest coast of Jamaica this morning.

Small craft operators are reminded to remain in safe harbour until all warning messages have been lifted and wind and sea conditions have returned to normal. The Meteorological Service continues to monitor the progress of Tropical Storm Rafael, and all interests are encouraged to pay special attention to further Releases.

The next Bulletin on this system will be issued at 8:00 a.m. today.

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