

Title: **Palmetto Breezeturns intoshuttle tosafety**
 Author: BY REBECCA LURYE rlurye@islandpacket.com
 Size: 81.68 column inches
 Beaufort, SC Circulation: 11269



Palmetto Breeze turns into shuttle to safety

BY REBECCA LURYE
 rlurye@islandpacket.com

Helen Masters took a lot of phone calls on Wednesday.

From the Bluffton headquarters of Palmetto Breeze Transit, she answered an ever-ringing phone to tell Beaufort County's residents where they could go to be evacuated ahead of Hurricane Matthew, what shelters

they'd be heading to, who they could call to hang on to their

dog or cat, and what would happen if they missed the bus. The answers were a variation of the same theme: "Bless your heart," Masters would say. "Don't panic. It's going to be OK, baby."

Hour after hour, callers with no ride or no place to go learned

SEE BUS RIDE, 8A

FROM PAGE 1A

BUS RIDE

there were dozens of pick-up locations from Lady's Island to Hilton Head; there was room for thousands of people in shelters from Ridgeland to Hampton; kind-hearted animal control employees were taking in animals for the duration of the storm; and if you miss the bus, it'll come around again.

Masters, a longtime dispatcher, even talked to one man who was very, very upset with Gov. Nikki Haley, who ordered the mandatory evacuation of all coastal counties on Tuesday afternoon ahead of the storm, which has devastated Haiti and is expected to remain a Category 2 by the time it strikes the Lowcountry on Saturday.

"Oh," she said after hanging up, "he is not happy that there is not a Beaufort County shelter. But if I only have one person turning me in, that's pretty good."

For Masters, and most Palmetto Breeze employ-

ees, Wednesday was a first-time experience assisting an evacuation. Still, by the end of the day, the fleet of eight buses and 10 vans managed to evacuate about 100 people in need. Most were taken to Ridgeland-Hardeeville High School, which has been converted to an American Red Cross shelter.

One driver, Tyrone Drayton, said it was humbling to help people from all walks of life.

On his rounds of Hilton Head on Wednesday, he evacuated Spanish-speaking families from Cordillo Courts, international workers for the island's tourist spots, locals trying to make their way to family in Hampton and a homeless man who'd spent the past month in the hospital with pneumonia and a broken leg.

The international contingent — a group of Filipino interns evacuating from Hilton Head Resort — were even more surprised by the experience.

"Where there's a hurricane in the Philippines, we don't do like this," said 20-year-old John Aureus, who works at Salty Dog Cafe and arrived on the island two months ago. "We stay in the house."

The group's advice to South Carolinians, so unused to the Category 2 conditions barreling toward us?

"Stay safe," Aureus said. "And pray! I have my rosary in my pocket."

Someone at Holy Family Catholic Church must have had something similar in mind. Each child who boarded a Palmetto Breeze evacuation van at the Pope Avenue pick-up spot had been given a small card with a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

One little girl dressed in a mermaid T-shirt absentmindedly flipped the cardboard around as they drove to Hilton Head Island Airport, the staging area for assisted evacuations in southern Beau-

fort County.

In the next seat over, her older brother and sister draped their plush blanket over their laps and held tight to the bags that contained their snacks: Halloween candy, Goldfish and PopTarts.

And for entertainment, "We brought my mom's phone, so that has games in it," 10-year-old Katie

Morales said.

Like several families evacuating from the south end of the island, the Morales family doesn't have a car. So that morning, they'd hoisted their belongings off the floor in case of flooding, packed bags for at least three days in a shelter and went outside to wait for the bus.

Lurye: 843-706-8155,
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Finding shelter

The following four shelters have a combined capacity of more than 4,000 people.

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Contact the American Red Cross for more information.

Colleton County

- Colleton County Middle School, 1739 Mighty Cougar Drive, Walterboro

Hampton County

- Estill High and Middle School, 1450 Columbia Highway North, Estill
- Hampton Elementary School, 505 S. Hoover St., Hampton

Jasper County

- Ridgeland North Campus, 250 Jaguar Trail, Ridgeland

“

OH, HE IS NOT HAPPY THAT THERE IS NOT A BEAUFORT COUNTY SHELTER. BUT IF I ONLY HAVE ONE PERSON TURNING ME IN, THAT'S PRETTY GOOD.

Helen Masters, a longtime dispatcher



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Katie Morales, right, takes a Palmetto Breeze bus to evacuate from Hilton Head Island.

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Palmetto Breeze Transit employees, right to left, Jessica Johnson, Yazmin Winston-Black and Laura Atkinson work to answer calls Wednesday and plan evacuation assistance from the system's Bluffton headquarters ahead of Hurricane Matthew.

Title: Weatheraffectswhethertoplay
Author: Staff Reports
Size: 40.3 column inches
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HURRICANE MATTHEW

Weather affects whether to play

Decision on USC-Georgia game will be made later

Staff Reports

A decision regarding Saturday night's South Carolina football game at home against Georgia will be made later this week in consultation with state and local officials, according to a university release on Tuesday.

But South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley didn't sound so confident that the game will take place without a hitch.

The governor, in a news conference Tuesday to declare a state of emergency because of Hurricane Matthew, said the ultimate decision on whether

'It's a complete decision based on the schools,' Haley said. 'As of now, I can't imagine that happening but certainly we're going to continue to watch this. I would love nothing more than to see this take a right-hand turn and go out to sea. As it looks right now, we're looking at Friday afternoon into Saturday being pretty brutal.'

The game is set for 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Williams-Brice Stadium.

SEE DECISION, 3B

SOUTH CAROLINA AND THE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT ARE CURRENTLY MONITORING THE MOVEMENTS OF HURRICANE MATTHEW. WE ARE IN COMMUNICATION WITH THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE SEC REGARDING POTENTIAL WEATHER ISSUES.'

Statement from the University of South Carolina

the USC-Georgia game happens as scheduled is up to the school and the SEC.



THE UNIVERSITY OF

FROM PAGE 1B

DECISION

USC said earlier Tuesday it's monitoring the progress of Hurricane Matthew.

'Once forecasts call for action, we will use all means necessary to inform the public,' according to a statement.

The updated forecast track for the hurricane projects a possible brush with the coast near the Carolinas' border Saturday morning.

USC's downtown Columbia campus will close Wednesday in preparation for Hurricane Matthew.

USC expects classes to remain canceled the rest of the week, according to a news release sent Tuesday afternoon.

Gamecocks coach Will Muschamp said Tuesday at his news conference, 'Our administration is handling all that through the SEC office. All of my energy is

game planning for the game. Whatever happens, happens. I'm not the least bit worried about it.

'I know our fans will be ready to go regardless of what the weather is,' he said.

Georgia athletics director Greg McGarity, when approached at Tuesday's practice by a reporter from the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, didn't seem overly concerned, and said the

decision rests with South Carolina officials.

He also said he didn't know what a contingency plan would be.

In anticipation of Hurricane Matthew, USC's equestrian and volleyball matches versus Georgia, scheduled for Friday, have been postponed.

Title: **Storm won't affect SC voter registration deadline Saturday**
 Author: BY BRISTOW MARCHANT bmarchant@thestate.com
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Storm won't affect SC voter registration deadline Saturday

BY BRISTOW MARCHANT
bmarchant@thestate.com

Even if you're forced to evacuate from your home because of Hurricane Matthew, you need to be sure you will be able to vote by the time you get back.

The deadline to register to vote for November's election is Saturday, and that won't be changed by the emergency evacuation called for Tuesday by Gov. Nikki Haley. Anyone living within

100 miles of the coast is being asked to move farther inland as Hurricane Matthew approaches.

"Citizens along South Carolina's coast need to make sure they are registered now in advance of the approaching storm

SEE VOTING, 7A

FROM PAGE 3A

VOTING

and impending deadline," the S.C. Election Commission said in a news release issued ahead of the evacuation order.

Complicating that, voter registration offices in many counties are expected to close ahead of Saturday's deadline because of the storm. Still, voters have other ways to ensure they are registered.

Voters can:

- Register online at SCVotes.org before midnight on Saturday; this requires a S.C. driver's license or Department of Motor Vehicles-issued ID card

- Register using the My SCVotes mobile app, available in the Apple and Google Play stores; this also requires a SC driver's license or DMV ID card.

- Download a voter registration form from SCVotes.org. Complete and return the form to your county voter registration and elections office either by mail — postmarked by Saturday, or by fax or email attachment — received by Saturday.

- Register in person at your county voter registration and elections office if it is still open.

You must register by Saturday if you are not currently registered in your county of residence, have moved from another state or have moved to a different county within South Carolina.

Bristow Marchant:
 803-771-8405,
 @BristowatHome,
 @BuzzAtTheState



Title: HURRICANEMATTHEW AND SOUTH CAROLINA
Author:
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HURRICANE MATTHEW AND SOUTH CAROLINA

SCHOOLS CLOSED: Gov. Nikki Haley ordered schools in 25 counties, including Richland and Lexington, to close starting Wednesday. The University of South Carolina's Columbia campus also is closed Wednesday and expects to be closed Thursday and Friday.

PRICE GOUGING: Attorney General Alan Wilson said South

Carolina's price-gouging statute is in effect. While many South Carolinians will assist each other if Hurricane Matthew impacts the state, 'We may also see some looking to unfairly take advantage of the situation through price gouging of food, gasoline, lodging, water' and other goods and services, Wilson said. The price-gouging law, in effect for the next 15 days, prohibits 'unconscionable'

prices during times of disaster, according to a news release from Wilson's office. Violators can be fined \$1,000 and/or jailed for 30 days.

FILL UP WITH GAS: If the hurricane approaches South

SEE SC, 7A

ONLINE

Check thestate.com on Wednesday for

the latest information about Hurricane Matthew and its impact on South Carolina. You can also sign up for mobile alerts at thestate.com/mobile.

MORE INSIDE

Matthew slams Haiti, moves toward the Bahamas, 4A
Prep football games postponed; fate of USC-Georgia game to be determined later this week, 1B

FROM PAGE 1A

SC

Carolina, Haley urged all motorists to fill up with gas.

USC-GEORGIA FOOTBALL: USC officials are monitoring Hurricane Matthew in regard to the USC-Georgia game, scheduled for 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, and will make a determination 'once forecasts call for action.'

NO HIGH SCHOOL

FOOTBALL: All high school football games scheduled for this week in Richland and Lexington counties have been postponed. Some games might be made up Monday.

SWIMMING POSTPONED: The South Carolina state swimming championships have been pushed back a week to

Oct. 14-15.

LANE REVERSALS: If state officials decide to reverse lanes around South Carolina, then all lanes of I-26 will be reversed from the interchange of I-26 and I-526 in Charleston to the I-26 crossover to I-77 in Lexington County. The lane reversals could begin at 3 p.m. Wednesday. For

details about all South Carolina lane reversals, visit thestate.com.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

CLOSED: Several local governments have closed their offices through Friday. They include the cities of Columbia and West Columbia, Lexington County and Richland County.

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MIC SMITH Associated Press

Gayle Brown fills up her car after waiting in line Tuesday at a gas station in Mount Pleasant. Brown said she experienced nightmare traffic while evacuating from Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

Title: SC braces as storm moves toward coast
Author: BY SAMMY FRETWELL, JAMIE SELF AND CASSIE COPE sfretwell@thestate.com.
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HURRICANE MATTHEW

SC braces as storm moves toward coast

Matthew most powerful storm to threaten Southeast coast in years

BY SAMMY FRETWELL, JAMIE SELF AND CASSIE COPE

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COASTAL RESIDENTS SCRAMBLING

Unless the storm changes course, Gov. Nikki Haley will order evacuations of coastal communities

South Carolina braced Tuesday for the onslaught of Hurricane Matthew, a powerful storm that some forecasters said could be as dangerous as any the South Atlantic coast has seen in years.

Gov. Nikki Haley declared a state of emergency and told people along the coast to pre-

TRAFFIC COULD BE SNARLED

State officials plan to reverse lanes on Interstate 26 from Charleston to I-77 in Columbia on Wednesday afternoon

pare to evacuate as Matthew picked up steam and blustered toward Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas. More than 1 million people could be evacuated from South Carolina's coast from the Myrtle Beach area to Charleston and Hilton Head Island.

To make evacuations easier,

SCHOOLS, GOVERNMENT OFFICES CLOSE

Midlands schools and government offices will close for the remainder of the week

Lexington, more than 150 miles inland, were ordered closed and major relief agencies prepared to provide food and supplies should the hurricane blast South Carolina. Officials also made preparations to open shelters

SEE STORM, 7A

FROM PAGE 1A

STORM

across eastern South Carolina for those fleeing the coast. Residents concerned about the storm descended on grocery stores, stocking up on supplies such as bottled water and bread.

Officials at the University of South Carolina said the school will close Wednesday and, maybe, County: Richland

the rest of the week. They were discussing how the storm might affect plans for Saturday night's football game between the Gamecocks and the University of Georgia.

Greenville County, in the Upstate, is sending 235 regular school buses and 108 special needs school buses to help move resi-

dents out of Charleston ahead of the storm, The Greenville News reported.

"I know the first thought is well, maybe, this storm will shift," Haley said during a news conference Tuesday. "I hope that too, but you don't want to get caught in this."

Haley said the possibility of extensive coastal

flooding and high winds means "this is not something that we want to play with. ... If you don't get out in time, you might get stuck."

Haley urged residents evacuating coastal communities to get at least 100 miles away from the coast and make sure to fill up on gasoline. The evac-

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uation is to begin at 3 p.m. Wednesday for Beaufort, Jasper, Colleton, Charleston, Dorchester, Berkeley, Horry and Georgetown counties.

Despite the caution, state officials said they will re-evaluate the storm and evacuation plans Wednesday morning. Haley and state officials will hold a news conference at 9 a.m. Wednesday.

Tuesday's evacuation plans were announced on the one-year anniversary of a major storm and flood that hit South Carolina's Lowcountry and Columbia with extensive rainfall. That system caused billions of dollars in damage and killed nine people.

Hurricane Matthew, carrying winds of up to 140 mph, was taking a path reminiscent of Hurricane Floyd, which swamped the state in 1999. Floyd moved up the Florida coast, ran off the shore of South Carolina and hit North Carolina, dumping massive rainfall. Rain-swollen rivers then flooded eastern South Carolina, including areas west of Myrtle Beach near

Conway and Longs.

In contrast, Hurricane Hugo - the worst storm felt in South Carolina in the past half century - took a direct bead on the state, smacking Charleston and the northern coast, before roaring through Columbia to Charlotte.

"Matthew could be one of the worst storms we've seen in South Carolina in years," National Weather Service meteorologist Michael Stroz said Tuesday. "There is potential for major impacts across the area. It's been quite a while since South Carolina has seen a major hurricane."

Before moving toward the southeast coast, Hurricane Matthew tore through Haiti, smacking the poor island nation with massive winds and flooding.

The storm was on track to run along the South Carolina coast and make landfill in southeastern North Carolina about 2 p.m. Saturday, according to a late afternoon forecast from the National Hurricane Center.

Earlier in the day, forecasts called for Matthew to

target South Carolina. But even if Matthew does not hit South Carolina directly, the storm stands to do considerable damage along the beaches.

"It's still a dangerous situation," National Weather Service forecaster Tina Morrison said.

Hurricane force winds and heavy rain are expected. Charleston could get more than 10 inches of rain by Saturday night along with hurricane force winds, which begin at 74 mph. Myrtle Beach could see the same conditions, with more than 7 inches from Thursday night until Saturday evening, according to the National Weather Service.

Impacts also were expected in the Columbia area. Wind gusts of 30 to 40 mph could occur in the Midlands and up to 5 inches of rain could fall on Orangeburg County, Morrison said. If the hurricane stays on its Tuesday course, it could be a category 2 or 3 hurricane by the weekend with storm surges of five to seven feet, Haley said.

Interstate 26 eastbound will be reversed starting at

3 p.m., with traffic heading away from the coast until the intersection of I-26 and I-77 in Columbia, said Derrec Becker with the S.C. Emergency Management Division.

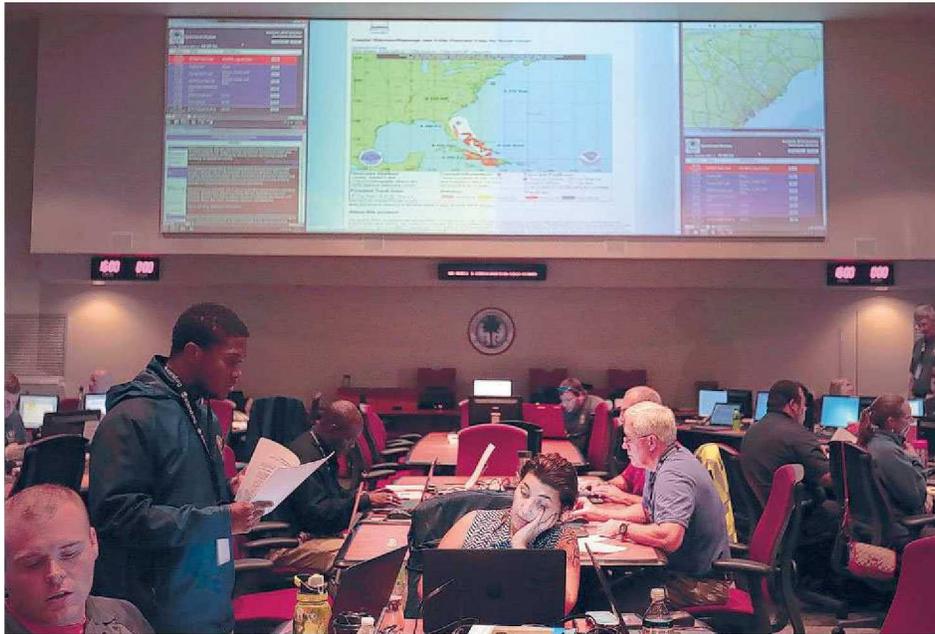
That means commuters in Columbia will not be able to travel I-26 eastbound out of Columbia. However, interstates will be functioning normally northwest of Columbia, Becker said.

Haley said emergency officials have met annually to plan for hurricanes, taking into account the growth in population in the state and the 1999 debacle when commuters fleeing the Lowcountry were stuck in traffic for hours.

Haley called on Midlands residents to understand that traffic will snarl as coastal-area residents head inland. Haley said there will be 3,700 law enforcement officers and more S.C. National Guard members on the road to assist with the evacuation.

The Island Packet
 contributed to this story.

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MATT WALSH

Emergency workers monitor Hurricane Matthew at South Carolina State Emergency Operations Center in Columbia on Tuesday.



Title: **Emergency officials: For best results, leave ahead of ordered evacuations**
 Author: BY STEPHEN FASTENAU sfastenau@beaufortgazette.com
 Size: 42.47 column inches
 Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



Emergency officials: For best results, leave ahead of ordered evacuations

BY STEPHEN FASTENAU
sfastenau@beaufortgazette.com

Beaufort County residents should leave now for the most flexibility ahead of ordered evacuations for Hurricane Matthew, county emergency officials said Tuesday.

For those who choose not to evacuate, take proper caution and you're on your own, they added. Coastal schools will be closed for the remainder of the week and communities along

the coast will begin evacuating Wednesday, Gov. Nikki Haley said.

Once evacuations begin, drivers will have to go where law enforcement directs them,

Beaufort County officials cautioned.

Those skeptical of leaving should be willing to live without

SEE EVACUATION, 7A

FROM PAGE 1A

EVACUATION

water and power, said Lt. Col. Neil Baxley, Beaufort County Emergency Management commander.

"Prepare to endure or get out of the way of this major hurricane," said Baxley, who recommended the Beaufort County Emergency Management phone application for updates and evacuation routes.

Hurricane Matthew presents the biggest threat to the area since Hurricane Floyd in 1999, Baxley and Beaufort County Sheriff P.J. Tanner said. There were traffic delays during that evacuation, and the population has grown considerably since then, Baxley noted.

Tanner noted the size of the hurricane — likening the storm to Floyd and Hurricane Hugo — with the breadth of Texas.

Officials said those who insist on staying should fill their tubs with water to be able to flush toilets, and fill pots, pans and empty

containers with drinking water. A generator and gasoline are a necessity, and residents should be ready to lose their roofs and to deal with flying debris, they said.

HAVE A PLAN

Baxley said that during hurricane-force winds, 911 calls would be logged but that first responders might be hunkered down and unable to reach people until after the storm.

Everyone should have a plan. Residents might believe their home is out of reach of a storm surge but should also consider surrounding roads and other low-lying areas that could affect travel, Baxley said.

Residents unable to evacuate will be transferred to hurricane shelters in other counties using Palmetto Breeze buses.

During the evacuation, one lane will be reversed leaving Hilton Head Island, from Cross Island

Expressway to Moss Creek, Baxley said.

County officials urged residents to secure important documents like deeds, medical records and insurance documents. Loose yard equipment should be secured so as to not become a projectile.

Boarding up windows is a personal preference, but homeowners should check with their insurance carriers, officials said.

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JAY KARR jkarr@islandpacket.com

Larry Davidson, left, and son Nick Davidson prepare to remove their dinghy from Beaufort's Downtown Marina on Tuesday.

Title: **S.C.coastcalled to evacuate for hurricane**
 Author: BYMANDY MATNEY ANDERIN HEFFERNAN mmatney@islandpacket.com eheffernan@islandpacket.com
 Size: 44.33 column inches
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S.C. coast called to evacuate for hurricane

■ Meteorologists are warning residents along the South Carolina coast to evacuate in preparation for Hurricane Matthew as it makes its way up the East Coast later this week.

BY MANDY MATNEY
 AND ERIN HEFFERNAN
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Gov. Nikki Haley declared a state of emergency Tuesday and called for an evacuation for all coastal communities in South Carolina, including Beaufort and Jasper counties, in preparation for Hurricane Matthew.

The governor said highway lane reversals will begin as early as 3 p.m. Wednesday, including U.S. 278 and Highway 21.

Meteorologists warn of major impacts from Hurricane Matthew as the massive storm is expected to approach the East Coast later this week.

The storm is expected to be a Category 2 or 3 hurricane as it approaches the South Carolina

coast between Friday night and Saturday morning, Gov. Haley said in a Tuesday news conference.

The state is preparing for 5- to 7-foot storm surges and up to 100 mph winds, Haley said. State emergency management officials predict 1.1 million people will have to evacuate for the storm.

Matthew made landfall in Haiti on Tuesday as a Category 4 hurricane, with maximum winds of 145 mph and heavy rains as it barreled through the Caribbean. At least nine deaths were blamed on the storm as of Tuesday evening, according to

The Associated Press. Thousands have been forced from their homes.

Matthew is expected to move across the Bahamas on Wednesday night, and the powerful storm system isn't showing signs of weakening as it moves north, according to National Weather Service Meteorologist Michael Stroz.

"Matthew seems to be staying consistently strong," Stroz said Tuesday. "It could lose some strength as it tracks across mountains in Cuba over the

SEE HURRICANE, 7A

FROM PAGE 1A

HURRICANE

next day or so, but could possibly start strengthening after (it hits) the Bahamas."

After the storm moves through Cuba, it may lose some strength as it makes its way up the Florida coast, but not by much, Stroz said.

"Matthew could be one of the worst storms we've seen in South Carolina in years," Stroz said. "There is potential for major impacts across the area. It's been quite a while since South Carolina has seen a major hurricane."

"It's still pretty early, so

it's hard to predict how close to the coast Hurricane Matthew will track," Stroz said.

No matter the track, the South Carolina coast will be impacted, including possible hurricane-force winds, heavy rains, flooding and dangerous sea conditions, Stroz said.

Haley said there will be more than 3,700 National Guard members on hand in the state to assist in the evacuations, and the Department of Health and Environmental Control will begin assisting residents with medical evac-

uations.

"It's not going to be a fast evacuation," she said. "It could take up to several hours," Haley said.

"If you can leave early, do that. The goal is to not leave all at once."

Coastal residents are advised to fill up their cars with gas and get 100 miles away from the coast, Haley said. Residents can find their evacuation routes by going to SCEMD.org.

"Our goal is to save everybody that we can," Haley said Tuesday. "What I will tell those

people who are thinking about not leaving is, if you think you can take care of yourself, then at least think about my law enforcement and my National Guardsmen, because they are going to be the ones who have to go out and try and get you. And you are putting their lives at stake."

The last evacuation of any kind for Beaufort County was in 2004, when Gov. Mark Sanford called for a voluntary evacuation ahead of Hurricane Charley.



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Title: **5 THINGSTO KNOW IN ADVANCEOFMATTHEW**
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5 THINGS TO KNOW IN ADVANCE OF MATTHEW

STAFF REPORTS

newsroom@islandpacket.com

- 1.** Gov. Nikki Haley called for an evacuation beginning Wednesday for 1.1 million people along the South Carolina coast. The goal is to make sure residents get 100 miles inland, she said.
- 2.** All public schools will be closed in Beaufort and Jasper counties, along with schools in 23 other counties.
- 3.** At 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Hurricane Matthew was a Category 4 storm with wind speeds of 140 mph. The storm was located over Cuba and was moving north at 9 mph. Visit islandpacket.com to see the latest storm track.
- 4.** Meteorologists say the storm likely will have the greatest impact on the Lowcountry overnight Friday and into the weekend.
- 5.** Find out everything you need to know for evacuation preparations on pages **3A** and **1C**.

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DREW MARTIN Staff photo

A line of cars backs up onto U.S. 278 Tuesday as drivers wait to fill up at the Parker's Gas Station in the Home Depot shopping center in greater Bluffton.

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BY STEPHEN FASTENAU

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S.C. coast called to evacuate for hurricane

■ Meteorologists are warning residents along the South Carolina coast to evacuate in preparation for Hurricane Matthew as it makes its way up the East Coast later this week.

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Gov. Nikki Haley declared a state of emergency Tuesday and called for an evacuation for all coastal communities in South Carolina, including Beaufort and Jasper counties, in preparation for Hurricane Matthew.

The governor said highway lane reversals will begin as early as 3 p.m. Wednesday, including U.S. 278 and Highway 21.

Meteorologists warn of major impacts from Hurricane Matthew as the massive storm is expected to approach the East Coast later this week.

The storm is expected to be a Category 2 or 3 hurricane as it approaches the South Carolina

coast between Friday night and Saturday morning, Gov. Haley said in a Tuesday news conference.

The state is preparing for 5- to 7-foot storm surges and up to 100 mph winds, Haley said. State emergency management officials predict 1.1 million people will have to evacuate for the storm.

Matthew made landfall in Haiti on Tuesday as a Category 4 hurricane, with maximum winds of 145 mph and heavy rains as it barreled through the Caribbean. At least nine deaths were blamed on the storm as of

Tuesday evening, according to The Associated Press. Thousands have been forced from their homes.

Matthew is expected to move across the Bahamas on Wednesday night, and the powerful storm system isn't showing signs of weakening as it moves north, according to National Weather Service Meteorologist Michael Stroz.

"Matthew seems to be staying consistently strong," Stroz said Tuesday. "It could lose some strength as it tracks across mountains in Cuba over the

SEE HURRICANE, 7A

FROM PAGE 1A

HURRICANE

next day or so, but could possibly start strengthening after (it hits) the Bahamas."

After the storm moves through Cuba, it may lose some strength as it makes its way up the Florida coast, but not by much, Stroz said.

"Matthew could be one of the worst storms we've seen in South Carolina in years," Stroz said. "There is potential for major impacts across the area. It's been quite a while since South Carolina has seen a major hurricane."

"It's still pretty early, so

it's hard to predict how close to the coast Hurricane Matthew will track," Stroz said.

No matter the track, the South Carolina coast will be impacted, including possible hurricane-force winds, heavy rains, flooding and dangerous sea conditions, Stroz said.

Haley said there will be more than 3,700 National Guard members on hand in the state to assist in the evacuations, and the Department of Health and Environmental Control will begin assisting residents with medical evacuations.

"It's not going to be a fast evacuation," she said. "It could take up to several hours," Haley said.

"If you can leave early, do that. The goal is to not leave all at once."

Coastal residents are advised to fill up their cars with gas and get 100 miles away from the coast, Haley said. Residents can find their evacuation routes by going to SCEMD.org.

"Our goal is to save everybody that we can," Haley said Tuesday. "What I will tell those people who are thinking

about not leaving is, if you think you can take care of yourself, then at least think about my law enforcement and my National Guardsmen, because they are going to be the ones who have to go out and try and get you. And you are putting their lives at stake."

The last evacuation of any kind for Beaufort County was in 2004, when Gov. Mark Sanford called for a voluntary evacuation ahead of Hurricane Charley.

Mandy Matney:



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