
Hurricane Matthew death toll rises as it approaches Florida

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Hurricane Matthew has killed at least 39 people, the death toll in struggling Haiti alone rising to 35, local officials said, as the storm headed northward Thursday, battering the Bahamas en route to Florida.

Haiti's civil protection service put the toll in the impoverished Caribbean nation at 23 dead, many killed by falling trees, flying debris and swollen rivers. The interior ministry and a local mayor confirmed 12 other deaths to Reuters across Haiti.

Four people were killed earlier in the neighboring Dominican Republic.

Matthew is the strongest hurricane in the Caribbean since Felix struck in 2007. On Tuesday and Wednesday, it whipped Cuba and Haiti with 140-mph winds and torrential rain, pummeling towns and destroying livestock, crops and homes.

The devastation in Haiti prompted authorities to postpone a presidential election originally planned for Sunday.