

MIAMI — Hurricane Epsilon has strengthened into a powerful Category 2 hurricane with 110 mph winds, according to an update from the National Hurricane Center.

Forecasters said the storm saw some rapid intensification overnight that continued through Wednesday.

"It is possible that Epsilon could strengthen a little more and become a major hurricane later today before conditions become less conducive tomorrow," forecasters wrote.

In Bermuda, where tropical storm conditions are expected to begin Wednesday evening, the tropical storm watch was upgraded to a warning.

As of 2 p.m. Eastern time, Epsilon was moving west-northwest at 9 mph and was about 365 miles east-southeast of Bermuda with maximum sustained winds at 110 mph with higher gusts, according to the hurricane center. That's a 20 mph leap from the 11 a.m. update.

The storm is large — with hurricane-force winds extending 25 miles out from the center and tropical-storm-force winds extending up to 435 miles from the center, mainly to the north.

On the forecast track, the center of Epsilon is expected to make its closest approach to Bermuda, east of the



island, Thursday afternoon or Thursday evening. The storm is expected to be a strong Category 2 hurricane at that time with maximum sustained winds at 110 mph, according to the National Hurricane Center.

The hurricane is not a threat to the United States, though dangerous surf and rip current conditions are expected to spread to portions of the east coast of the United States and Atlantic Canada during the next couple of days, forecasters said.

the House Health and Social Services Committee earlier this week about the potential for vast community spread to translate into increased strain of the state's healthcare infrastructure.

Jared Kosin, the president and CEO of the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association, said hospitals are bracing.

"We don't think the wave has fully hit our doors yet, so we expect hospitalizations to increase into the foreseeable future," he said.

Dr. Tom Hennessy, a physician and infectious disease epidemiologist with the University of Alaska Anchorage, called the recent increase in COVID-19 cases "concerning."

"(They) could pose a threat to our healthcare system if rates increase further. The current rate of transmission could be reversed if Alaskans increased our use of facial masks, maintained physical distancing, avoided closed indoor spaces and increased handwashing. Public messages and/or public policies that promoted these basic steps could reverse the current upward trend and save lives," Hennessy said.

Medical overflow spaces including the Carlson Center in Fairbanks remain on standby in case of an overflow of cases, state health officials said Wednesday.

A total of 547,140 tests have been conducted statewide to date, with 12,149 tests conducted in the previous seven days. The average percentage of daily positive tests for the last week is 4.61%. The Fairbanks North Star Borough's 7-day test positivity percentage is 7.1% which is much lower than where the borough was at last week with an 11% test positive percentage.

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Anne Zink noted Wednesday evening that Fairbanks' test positivity rate has fallen over the last week which signaled a positive direction for the borough.

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## EMAIL

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adding that he planned to bring that up to the state Division of Elections when he reported the email, which he planned to do later on Wednesday.

"My concern is more systematically, for those people who are more susceptible to spam campaigns, this might confuse those voters or in some cases worry them into not voting," Friar told the Daily News-Miner.

According to a report from Alaska Public Media, a number of voters across the state had received the same email.

Separate news reports from NPR and the Washington Post indicated that Democratic voters in Florida, Arizona and Pennsylvania had also received the same email.

The Proud Boys are a far-right political group known for their often violent demonstrations and more recent support of President Donald Trump.

Proud Boys Chairman Enrique Tarrio denied involvement in the email barrage and told The Washington Post that the group operates two main websites but was shifting away from the domain used in the email — claims that are now supported by the Department of Homeland Security's findings.

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The Alaska Division of Elections told the Daily News-Miner on Tuesday afternoon that they were aware of the emails and had forwarded them to the "appropriate federal agency" for review.

According to FBI guidelines, the emails are considered voter intimidation, which is illegal in Alaska.

A spokesperson for the Anchorage FBI field office indicated the office was aware of the emails but would not comment further.

On the national level, Christopher Krebs, director of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and

Infrastructure Security Agency, wrote in a Tuesday post to his Twitter account that his office was aware of "threatening emails with misleading info about the secrecy of your vote."

"These emails are meant to intimidate and undermine American voters' confidence in our elections," he wrote.

The Department of Homeland Security issued findings of its investigation during a news conference Wednesday in which Iran was pointed to as the driving source behind the spam campaign.

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