

# FLORIDA EYES KATE WARILY

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People flocked out of the vulnerable Florida Keys on Monday and Governor Bob Graham declared a state of emergency in South Florida as Hurricane Kate churned across tiny Bahamian islands.

Boaters gathering to escape winter in the North were told to head for safe inland harbors, and residents of mobile homes and beachfront condominiums were urged to find more secure forms of shelter.

“Certainly we ought to be worried,” said Neil Frank, director of the National Hurricane Center. “This isn’t the big awesome kind of storm we see in September, but it’s a very respectable hurricane.

“Anyone who lives in Key West ought to be taking this hurricane seriously,” he added. “You can get killed in a hurricane like this if you totally ignore it.”

At 11:00PM, Kate’s highest sustained winds of 110 mph were centered near latitude 22.2 north and longitude 77.9 west, on the north coast of Cuba about 300 miles southeast of Miami in what local weather veterans call “Hurricane Alley.” The eye was being carried west at 20 mph by what Frank called “a fairly decent river of air.”

“If it should continue on this course, it should begin to produce hurricane conditions along north-central Cuba over the next few hours,” forecaster Miles Lawrence said.

“If this hurricane should turn a little bit north of its due-west course, then hurricane conditions could spread across South Florida” on today.

Five to 10 inches of rain were expected along its path the advisory said.

By late afternoon, hurricane warnings were posted for all of southern Florida, from Jupiter Inlet, north of Palm Beach, southward through the Keys to the Dry Tortugas and northward along the Gulf Coast to Fort Myers, Frank said.

The government of the Bahamas also issued hurricane warnings.

Graham declared the state of emergency for Palm Beach, Broward, Dade, Lee, Collier and Monroe counties, allowing him to activate the Florida National guard to help with evacuations if needed.

Although hurricane season officially runs from June 1 to November 30, only 15 hurricanes have formed in the last half of November since detailed records were first kept in the late 1800s. However, storms have formed in every month except January.

Only two November storms ever made landfall in the United States, one in 1916 and another in 1935.

The last hurricane to make a direct hit on South Florida was Cleo in 1964.