Good News For Coast: Nor'easter To Weaken

Malcolm Ritter, AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Weather experts had good news for beleaguered northeast coastal residents Tuesday: A new storm that threatened to complicate Hurricane Sandy cleanup efforts on Wednesday now looks like it will be weaker than expected.

As the storm moves up the Atlantic coast from Florida it now is expected to veer farther offshore than earlier projections had indicated. Jeff Masters of the private weather service Weather Underground says that means less wind and rainfall on land.

Even so, he said winds could still gust to 50 mph in New York and New Jersey Wednesday afternoon and evening.

And Lauren Nash, a meteorologist from the National Weather Service, said wind gusts might blow down tree limbs weakened from Sandy and cause more power outages. On Wednesday night, gusts may occasionally reach 60 mph in coastal Connecticut and Long Island, she said.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie warned Tuesday that high winds may mean some residents who regained power will lose it again, and the wind could also slow efforts to restore power. There is "nothing we can do to stop the storms," he said.

Storm surges along the coasts of New Jersey and New York are expected to reach perhaps 3 feet, only half to a third of what Hurricane Sandy caused last week, Masters said. While that should produce only minor flooding, he said it will still cause some erosion problems along the New Jersey coast and the shores of Long Island, where Sandy destroyed some protective dunes.

Coastal Virginia could also get a surge of 2 or 3 feet, causing minor flooding on the east side of Chesapeake Bay during high tides Wednesday morning and evening, he said.

However, most of the storm's rain will stay offshore, with maybe an inch or two expected in Massachusetts and less than an inch elsewhere along the coast, he said.

Up to an inch of snow may fall in northeastern New Jersey and the lower Hudson River valley, weather service meteorologist Mike Layer said. Central Massachusetts and western Connecticut also could get an inch or two of snow, according to Masters.

Along the Jersey shore, which was devastated by last week's superstorm, there was some relief that damage projections from the nor'easter have been scaled back. But there was still concern about the ocean barreling past beaches and dunes that were

largely washed away.

High winds might be "pushing that water right back across flat dunes and flooding the town again," said Dan Friendly, who lives on Ocean Avenue in Point Pleasant Beach in a neighborhood hard-hit by Sandy.

In neighboring Bay Head, heavy machinery was used to hastily push sand piles back into where well-rooted dune systems once stood.

"We no longer have a dune system; there are just piles of sand back on the beach," said Councilwoman D'Arcy Rohan Green. "Hopefully, they will hold."

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