

HURRICANE FRANCES

WHAT TO DO NOW • IN LOCAL NEWS, 1B-9B
Shelters • Stores • Images of the storm

IN BUSINESS
Evacuees hit Naples
Hospitals see stress
FPL shutting down plant

The Palm Beach Post

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Category 3 storm has top winds of 115 mph

Slow movement raises possibility of flooding

Palm Beach County considering curfew

IT'S HERE



EMERGENCY CARE: Caretaker Bonnie Yonkowski kisses Lottie Harris, 80, after the two spent Thursday night at Jensen Beach Elementary School. Harris was being moved to Challenger School, a special-needs shelter. MEGHAN McCARTHY/Staff Photographer

Frances' slowing speed prolongs anxiety

Winds will pound the area throughout the day and into Sunday.

By ELIOT KLEINBERG, THOMAS R. COLLINS, JENNIFER SORENTREUE and MARY McLACHLIN
Palm Beach Post Staff Writers

WEST PALM BEACH — Streets and highways grew more deserted with every gust of wind Friday as residents of Palm Beach County and the Treasure Coast took cover from the first breaths of Hurricane Frances.

Frances, slowed but stubborn and still unpredictable, was expected to strike Palm Beach County and the Treasure Coast this morning as a minimal Category 3 storm, with top sustained winds of 115 mph.

Friday afternoon, the

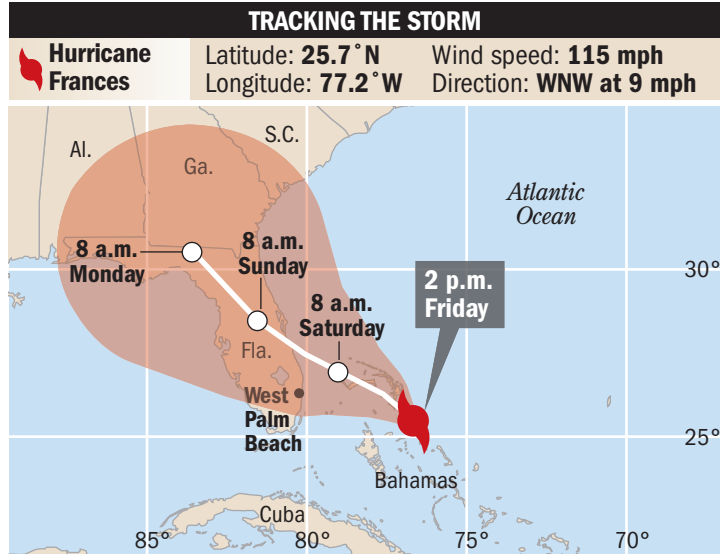
storm was about 200 miles east-southeast of Palm Beach and moving 9 mph on a west-northwest track.

It was expected to slow even more during the next 24 hours.

Curfews loomed throughout the coastal area as the last desperate searches for plywood, batteries and water scoured shelves of the few stores still open.

The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office was considering a countywide curfew, Paul Milelli, director of public safety for Palm Beach County, told emergency workers from government agencies and private companies assembled at the Palm Beach County Emergency Operations Center.

Sustained tropical-storm-force winds of 39 mph and higher were expected in Palm



Beach County late Friday, escalating to hurricane-force winds of 74 mph by midday today and lasting until 11 p.m. Winds of 55 mph were expected to continue until 5 a.m.

Sunday. People probably will be allowed to leave shelters by Sunday afternoon, Milelli said.

See FRANCES, 18A ▶

Weakened storm lifts hopes, but for many, fear remains

By TERESA LANE and PAT MOORE
Palm Beach Post Staff Writers

Treasure Coast residents dreading a catastrophic storm held their collective breath Friday as forecasters said winds had slowed to 115 mph, raising hopes that plywood and shutters might protect them from the beast called Frances.

Some residents who thought they had to go shelters now were thinking: I could ride out the storm at home.

Days earlier, they grew more anxious with each hurricane update, culminating in one Thursday that predicted Port St. Lucie would be leveled by sustained winds of 145 mph. They remembered how Hurricane Andrew wiped

'We weren't forced to evacuate, but I just didn't feel right.'

MARY JANE EMME
Port St. Lucie resident

out communities in Miami-Dade County.

Friday's forecast of a slower-moving storm with weakened winds brought hope. It also triggered a stay-or-flee debate for some residents, while officials warned residents not to get complacent.

"Even though the storm has weakened to 115 mph — and I don't know if you could really call that weak-

See RESIDENTS, 18A ▶

Weather: High 83, low 76.
FORECAST ON BACK OF SPORTS

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Note to readers

Hurricane Frances may affect delivery of *The Palm Beach Post* this weekend. Papers may be delivered earlier or later than usual, and blocked roads and evacuation areas may prevent delivery in some neighborhoods. Some newspaper racks were removed before the storm to prevent damage. The Weekend Stocks section is not available today; readers will find stock listings beginning on Page 12B in the Local section.

Russian forces storm school

Commandos battle separatist rebels who held 1,200 hostages. The death toll may top 150, an official said.
Story, 3A



Clinton hospitalized

The former president, 58, was suffering chest pains and will undergo bypass surgery in New York.
Story, 2A