

Super Typhoon Goni explodes into 2020's strongest storm on Earth, moves toward Philippines

In just a day's time, Super Typhoon Goni transformed from an ordinary Pacific cyclone into the year's most intense storm on the planet. The typhoon is on a beeline for the Philippines, where it is expected to roar ashore Sunday.



A satellite view of Super Typhoon Goni in the western Pacific Ocean on Friday evening local time. (NOAA)

Goni's explosive intensification occurred over the warm waters in the western Pacific Ocean. Its peak winds catapulted from just shy of 100 mph to nearly 180 mph between Thursday and Friday night local time.

Once its peak winds surpassed 150 mph, it qualified as a "super typhoon," which is equivalent to a strong Category 4 hurricane in the Atlantic. But it grew even more intense, comparable to a strong Category 5.

Its leap in strength occurred over waters about 2 to 3 degrees (1 to 1.5 Celsius) warmer than normal. Such rapid intensification is made more likely by human-caused climate change, which has raised ocean temperatures globally.

The Joint Typhoon Warning Center in Pearl Harbor described Goni as "a compact but very powerful system." On weather satellite, it displayed a sharply defined eye and near-perfect symmetry, characteristic of the most intense tropical cyclones.

Goni is predicted to track westward and make landfall in central Luzon, northeast of Manila, around 8 p.m. local time Sunday, weakening some before landfall.

In the short term, the Joint Typhoon Warning Center expects Goni to undergo an eyewall replacement cycle in which the most intense thunderstorms surrounding its center reorganize. Although this process usually decreases a storm's peak winds, it often results in a larger storm.



Track forecast for Super Typhoon Goni. (Joint Typhoon Warning Center)

The Joint Typhoon Warning Center predicts that Goni will make landfall in Luzon with peak winds of more than 140 mph, which is equivalent to a Category 4 hurricane.

Forecasters with the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical, and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), referring to this storm as Typhoon Rolly (the Philippines has a separate naming system for storms in its vicinity), have issued tropical cyclone warnings as the storm approaches. They are calling for “heavy to intense rains” starting as soon as Saturday evening, which might trigger flooding and landslides. PAGASA is also predicting damaging winds and a storm surge as high as 6½ to 8 feet (2 to 2.5 meters).

The Inquirer, an English-language newspaper in the Philippines, reported that tens of thousands of people are expected to shelter in government evacuation centers and that the country faced a “double whammy” from the storm and the novel coronavirus. Ricardo Jalad, executive director of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, encouraged wearing face masks and social distancing and said evacuation sites should not be filled to capacity, the newspaper reported.

Goni is predicted to weaken as it passes over Luzon before emerging over the South China Sea. Additional weakening is forecast as it heads west toward Vietnam, as a result of hostile high-altitude winds and dry air. Landfall in Vietnam as a tropical storm is forecast for around next Wednesday.

While the Philippines have been impacted by several tropical cyclones in 2020, overall storm activity in the western Pacific has been below normal. Storms have generated less than half the energy of an average season, according to Colorado State University. This is the opposite of the tropical Atlantic, which has seen record-setting storm activity.

While the Atlantic has raged with storminess, the Pacific has been strangely quiet

Source:

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/weather/topstories/super-typhoon-goni-explodes-into-2020-e2-80-99s-strongest-storm-on-earth-moves-toward-philippines/ar-BB1ay6sr>

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