

Hold on! Winds pick up in metro Detroit

Niraj Warikoo and Daniel Bethencourt, Detroit Free Press 8:56 a.m. EST November 12, 2015

Wind gusts in southeastern Michigan may reach 50 to 60 m.p.h., according to the National Weather Service.

Michigan drivers will have to grip their steering wheels tight, and others will have to hold onto their hats.

A low-pressure system and cold front are sweeping in from the Central Plains on Thursday, bringing winds at speeds up to 60 m.p.h. that will likely peak through Thursday afternoon and last through Friday, according to the National Weather Service.

The gusts may damage trees and power lines, and even damage the coastline and cause flooding along parts of the Great Lakes. On Lake Michigan, waves are expected to peak Thursday night as high as 15 feet, while Lake Huron could also see dangerous conditions.

Boaters should not try to venture out.

"It's not going to be a relaxing weekend on the water," said Lt. Ben Chamberlain with Coast Guard Sector Detroit.

DTE Energy spokesman Scott Simons said Thursday morning there are scattered power outages across metro Detroit. He didn't have a specific number. DTE put out an alert urging people to keep at least 20 feet away from any downed power lines or anything the lines are in contact with. Don't drive across downed power lines, the alert said.

Driving should be avoided if possible, and high-profile vehicles are even more at risk, especially along north-south roadways.

But those who have to drive need to watch out for debris like rolling trash cans, and also be ready for sudden, strong gusts of wind, said Rachel Kulik, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. While winds throughout the day will consistently blow at around 30 m.p.h., there may be intermittent spikes at close to double that speed, Kulik said.

As the winds die down, a mix of rain, snow and cooler temperatures may follow, as Friday and Saturday bring highs in the mid-40s, Kulik said.

But a drop into winter temperatures won't begin just yet. On Sunday and Monday, the highs are expected to climb back into the mid-50s.

"We definitely still have some warmer temperatures on the way," Kulik added.

In Muskegon, Beach Street has been closed from Beachwood Park to Lakeshore Drive for the impending storm. The city is worried big waves will crash ashore and cause erosion.

Coast Guard staff at the Muskegon station are especially concerned about small ships, surfers and kite-boarders who will likely come to this beach to challenge the big waves.

"It does not take much to capsize a vessel," said Petty Officer Christine Wolk.

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On land, DTE Energy will be monitoring the storm closely. Crews will work 16-hour shifts if necessary to "restore power as quickly and safely as possible," said DTE spokeswoman Erica Donerson.

Residents should be careful before stepping into their back yards, especially in the dark, since power lines could be down. Pets should be kept away, as well.

