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Cascading Risks of COVID-19 Resurgence during an Active 2020 Atlantic Hurricane Season

Article in 2020

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active hurricane months, creating conditions conducive for hurricane development. Climate change has been increasing Atlantic hurricane activity over recent decades, producing storms that collectively are stronger, wetter, and slower moving over populated coastlines.¹⁷ Within a span of less than 3 years (ie, from October 2016-September 2019), 5 category 5 Atlantic hurricanes made landfall in the US and Puerto Rico (Dorian, Irma, Maria, Matthew, and Michael), and 2 category 4 storms (Florence and Harvey) produced torrential rains and extreme flooding.

Coastal populations at risk for climate-driven Atlantic storms are already straining to contain the escalating spread of COVID-19. The predicted above-average hurricane season suggests that these states must also prepare for layered hurricane and pandemic disaster scenarios. Hurricane Hanna just underscored the urgency. During the week in late July when Hanna made landfall, hospitals in the 8 hurricane coastal states were dealing with increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases. Some hospitals attempted to deal with the surge by rapidly discharging medi-