

Noel claims 20 lives in Dominican Republic

by UPI

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic -- Tropical Storm Noel screamed across the Dominican Republic and Haiti late Monday, leaving behind a trail of death and destruction. Dominican Republic national emergency official Manuel Antonio Luna Paulino said least 20 people were reported killed and 20 more were missing as flooding and mudslides swept the Caribbean island nation, the Palm Beach Post reported. While there were no initial reports of fatalities in neighboring Haiti, that country's terrain heightened concern that there would be casualties, as well. Noel (pronounced knoll) was headed toward southern Florida, although it was not expected to hit the state head-on. Watches and warnings covered the Bahamas, as well as parts of Cuba. At 11 p.m. Monday, Noel was packing winds near 50 miles per hour and its center was about 300 miles south-southeast of Nassau and about 500 miles southeast of Palm Beach. Noel shorted the Dominican Republic's entire power system early Monday, leaving 9.4 million people without electricity for about two hours, the state-owned electric company said.

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