

Beat: News

Thousands evacuate as Tropical Storm Boris bears down on Mexico

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USPA News - Tropical Storm Boris formed off Mexico's Pacific coast on Tuesday, prompting thousands of people to evacuate communities that are vulnerable to flooding and mudslides as the storm prepared to make landfall in southeastern Mexico, officials said. Forecasters at the U.S. National Hurricane Center (NHC) have been following the weather system since early Friday when it emerged south of southeastern Mexico as an area of low pressure.

It slowly became better organized and developed into a tropical depression on Monday afternoon before reaching tropical storm-strength on Tuesday morning. As of 8 p.m. PDT (0300 GMT Wednesday), the center of Tropical Storm Boris was located about 85 miles (140 kilometers) east-southeast of Salina Cruz, a city in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Tropical storm conditions such as heavy rainfall were already affecting parts of the region and were expected to worsen overnight as the storm makes landfall. Maximum sustained winds of Boris were near 40 miles (65 kilometers) per hour, with higher gusts, but forecasters said there was no risk that the storm would strengthen further. "The cyclone will weaken after crossing the coastline, presumably in a few hours," said NHC senior hurricane specialist Richard Pasch. In fact, Pasch said it was questionable whether Boris still qualified as a tropical storm by Tuesday evening, but he cautioned that the system still posed a serious threat. "As the weakening tropical cyclone moves inland, it is likely to continue to produce very heavy rainfall. These rains will cause life-threatening flash flooding and mud slides over the mountainous regions of the Mexican states of Oaxaca and Chiapas over the next couple of days," he said. The National Hurricane Center said Boris was expected to produce rainfall amounts of 3 to 6 inches (7.6 to 15.2 centimeters) with isolated amounts of up to 10 inches (25.4 centimeters) over Oaxaca and Chiapas. Higher terrain in the region could see as much as 20 inches (50.8 centimeters) in rainfall. A tropical storm warning remained in effect from Salina Cruz to the Mexico-Guatemala border. With Boris just hours away from making landfall in southeastern Mexico, Chiapas Governor Manuel Velasco said more than 16,000 people had already been evacuated from areas that are at the greatest risk to flooding and mudslides. He urged the public to stay alert and said shelters were open for anyone who requires it. No casualties had been reported as of Tuesday evening. Boris is the second tropical cyclone of the Eastern Pacific hurricane season, which officially began on May 15. The storm formed just days after Amanda dissipated far off Mexico's Pacific coast, having reached a major category four hurricane status that made it the strongest May hurricane on record in the eastern Pacific basin. According to figures released last month, NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is expecting an above-normal season in the Eastern Pacific basin this year. The outlook calls for 14 to 20 named storms, with 7 to 11 becoming hurricanes and 3 to 6 of them expected to become a major hurricane (category 3 or higher). An average Eastern Pacific hurricane season produces 15 to 16 named storms, with eight to nine becoming hurricanes and four becoming major hurricanes. The Eastern Pacific hurricane season runs from May 15 through November 30, with peak activity from July through September.

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