

TS Gabrielle downgraded to depression in Caribbean (Update)

September 5 2013, by Danica Coto

Tropical Storm Gabrielle quickly lost power and formation Thursday although it lashed the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico with rain and wind, causing a few mudslides and knocking down trees.

Meanwhile, Tropical Storm Lorena re-formed in the Pacific off Mexico, and authorities posted storm warnings for parts of the southern shores of the Baja California peninsula.

Forecasters said Lorena's center would approach the southern part of the Baja Peninsula Friday and be near or over land by Saturday. The storm was expected to bring 3-5 inches (7.5-13 centimeters) of rain to the southwest coast of Mexico and the southern portion of the peninsula.

The remnants of Gabrielle were about 30 miles (45 kilometers) north-northwest of Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, late Thursday and moving north-northwest at 9 mph (15 kph) with winds up to 30 mph (50 kph). The rainstorm was expected to continue a generally northwestward movement as it dissipates over the next two days.

Puerto Rico Gov. Alejandro Garcia Padilla had activated the National Guard, canceled classes at all public schools and closed central government agencies as a precaution.

Heavy rains were still a possibility in Puerto Rico and people should remain cautious about the chance of flooding, state meteorologist Ernesto Morales said.

"We should not lower our guard," he said.

Falling trees brought down a telephone post in the central town of Ciales, while officials said crews were clearing roads after small landslides in the central mountain town of Utuado and the southeastern town of Yabucoa. Minor flooding was reported in the Caribbean island's southeast.

Several residents in the northern municipality of Bayamon were relocated because a nearby mountain had already experienced landslides in recent weeks amid persistent wet weather.

The storm was expected to drop 2-4 inches (5-10 centimeters) of rain over Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, although isolated rains of up to 8 inches (20 centimeters) were possible in mountainous areas.

Officials in the U.S. Virgin Islands closed all schools in St. Croix.

The U.S. Hurricane Center in Miami said late Thursday that Lorena was 125 miles (201 kilometers) west of Cabo Corrientes, Mexico. It had maximum sustained winds of 40 mph (64 kph) and was moving northwestward at 13 mph (21 kph).

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