

Mexico braces for 'potentially catastrophic' Hurricane Willa

October 22 2018, by Alfredo Estrella



Mazatlan, on Mexico's Pacific coast, is bracing for the arrival of Hurricane Willa

Mexico braced for the worst Monday as Hurricane Willa—upgraded to a maximum Category 5 storm—bore down on the Pacific coast, where it is

expected to produce life-threatening wind and flooding.

The [powerful hurricane](#) was on course to slam into Mexico somewhere around the resort town of Mazatlan on Tuesday afternoon or evening, the US National Hurricane Center, calling the [storm](#) "potentially catastrophic."

Willa now has maximum sustained winds of 260 kilometers (160 miles) per hour, the NHC said in its latest update, after earlier upgrading the hurricane to Category 5.

"Slight weakening is forecast to begin on Tuesday, but Willa is expected to be an extremely dangerous major hurricane when it reaches the coast of Mexico," it said.

Willa is expected to dump 15 to 30 centimeters (six to 12 inches) of rain on parts of Sinaloa, Nayarit and Jalisco states, with some areas getting up to 45 centimeters.

"This rainfall will cause life-threatening flash flooding and landslides," the NHC warned.

The center said large storm swells off the coast are also "likely to cause life-threatening surf and rip current conditions."

The hurricane was located about 190 kilometers southwest of Cabo Corrientes, churning north at 11 kilometers per hour.

It was on track to sweep past the Marias islands, where Mexico has a federal prison, on Tuesday morning.

The interior ministry did not immediately respond to questions on whether it planned to evacuate the inmates housed there.

State of alert

Sinaloa, Nayarit and Jalisco declared a state of alert and cancelled school state-wide Monday as rain and heavy waves began to set in.

In the resort town of Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco Governor Aristoteles Sandoval ordered the evacuation of hotels and coastal areas. Shelters were set up on higher ground to accommodate evacuees.

"This could become a phenomenon with very destructive consequences. We will probably have to start evacuating (other) communities," he said.

"We're already prepared with food and shelters, state and local emergency services are prepared, the health ministry is ready, the water authority is working on water and sanitation, the army and marines are ready to help with search and rescue."

In Mazatlan, top resort hotels were virtually empty, but a handful of hardy tourists were determined not to let the [hurricane](#) ruin their vacations.

Tour operators and fishermen raced to tie down their boats ahead of the storm.

Elsewhere, Tropical Storm Vicente—with maximum sustained winds of 75 kilometers per hour—was expected to bring "heavy rainfall and flooding" over Mexico's south and southwest.

Mexico's Pacific coast has already been hit by deadly storms and rains this [hurricane season](#).

In September, at least 15 people were killed when flash floods hit the states of Sinaloa and Michoacan. Last week, 11 more people died in

Oaxaca, including seven children.

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