

Cristobal regains tropical storm force on track to US coast

June 5 2020



Rain clouds hover over mountains during tropical storm Amanda in Barberena, eastern Guatemala, Sunday, May 31, 2020. The first tropical storm of the Eastern Pacific season drenched parts of Central America on Sunday and officials in El Salvador said at least seven people had died in flooding. (AP Photo/Moises Castillo)

A storm that appears to be headed for the U.S. Gulf Coast regained tropical storm force Friday while drenching southern Mexico and Central America.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Tropical Storm Cristobal's maximum sustained winds had strengthened to 45 mph (75 kph) by late Friday and it was moving north at 14 mph (22 kph). It crossed the Yucatan Peninsula Friday and re-entered the Gulf of Mexico. It was expected to pass through the central Gulf Saturday and near the U.S. coast late Sunday, strengthening as it goes.

The storm was centered about 440 miles (705 kilometers) south of the mouth of the Mississippi River.

A tropical storm watch was issued for the northern Gulf of Mexico coast from Intracoastal City, Louisiana, to the Alabama-Florida border.

Cristobal made landfall in Mexico as a tropical storm Wednesday before weakening. It had formed this week in the Bay of Campeche from the remnants of Tropical Storm Amanda, which had formed last weekend in the eastern Pacific and hit Central America.

The two storms have combined to soak the region with as much as 35 inches (89 centimeters) of rain in some areas over the past week. At least 30 deaths have been attributed to the two storms and the flooding and landslides they unleashed.

The Hurricane Center's projected track showed the storm reaching the U.S. Gulf Coast by Sunday night, and it said Cristobal could bring heavy rains from East Texas to Florida this weekend and into early next week.

In Bacalar, in the south of Mexico's Quintana Roo state, 230 families were isolated by the rains and had to be airlifted out, David Leon,

Mexico's national civil defense coordinator, said Friday. Leon added there had been light damage in 75 municipalities in seven states.

In Louisiana, Gov. John Bel Edwards on Thursday declared a state of emergency to prepare for the storm's possible arrival there.

"Now is the time to make your plans, which should include the traditional emergency items along with masks and hand sanitizer as we continue to battle the coronavirus pandemic," Edward said in a statement.

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Citation: Cristobal regains tropical storm force on track to US coast (2020, June 5) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-06-tropical-depression-cristobal-coast.html>

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