

Eta brings heavy rains, deadly mudslides to Honduras

November 5 2020, by Marlon González



A woman works to recover the part of roof damaged by Hurricane Eta in Wawa, Nicaragua, Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020. Eta slammed into Nicaragua's Caribbean coast with potentially devastating winds Tuesday, while heavy rains thrown off by the Category 4 storm already were causing rivers to overflow across Central America. (AP Photo/Carlos Herrera)

Eta moved into Honduras on Wednesday as a weakened tropical depression but still bringing the heavy rains that have drenched and caused deadly landslides in the country's east and in northern Nicaragua.

The storm no longer carried the winds of the Category 4 hurricane that battered Nicaragua's coast Tuesday, but it was moving so slowly and dumping so much rain that much of Central America was on high alert. Eta had sustained winds of 35 mph (55 kph) and was moving west-northwest at 7 mph (11 kph) Wednesday night. It was 115 miles (185 kilometers) south-southeast of La Ceiba.

The long-term forecast shows Eta taking a turn over Central America and then reforming as a [tropical storm](#) in the Caribbean—possibly reaching Cuba on Sunday and southern Florida on Monday.

Heavy rain was forecast to continue across Honduras through at least Thursday as Eta moved northward toward the capital of Tegucigalpa and the northern city of San Pedro Sula.

Before the center of Eta had even reached Honduras, hundreds of people had been forced from their homes by floodwaters.

Early Tuesday, a 12-year-old girl died in a mudslide in San Pedro Sula, said Marvin Aparicio of Honduras' emergency management agency.

On Wednesday afternoon, confirmation came from Honduras' emergency management agency of the death of a 15-year-old boy in the central Honduras town of Sulaco. Mayor Edy Chacón said the boy drowned trying to cross a rain-swollen river. That brought the storm's death toll to at least four in Nicaragua and Honduras.



A man walks his bike through knee-deep floodwaters in a neighborhood of Jehova, Honduras, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020. Eta weakened from the Category 4 hurricane to a tropical storm after lashing Nicaragua's Caribbean coast for much of Tuesday, its floodwaters isolating already remote communities and setting off deadly landslides. (AP Photo/Delmer Martinez)

Aparicio said Wednesday that some 379 homes had been destroyed, mostly by floodwaters. There were 38 communities cut off by washed out roads and five bridges in the country were wiped out by swollen rivers.

Among those rescued from their flooded homes were Óscar Armando Martínez Flores, his wife and seven children. Their home near the Lancetilla river in northeast Honduras flooded. They made it out only

with the clothes they were wearing.

"The rains began Monday and the river overflowed," Martínez said Wednesday from a sports complex serving as a shelter in the city of Tela. "The firefighters and police arrived to take us out because the houses were flooded."

Martínez was already in dire straits before the storm. A construction worker, he hadn't been able to find work in eight months since the coronavirus pandemic began there. He has been selling tortillas to keep his family afloat.



A man walks through a flooded road in Okonwas, Nicaragua, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020. Eta weakened from the Category 4 hurricane to a tropical storm after lashing Nicaragua's Caribbean coast for much of Tuesday, its floodwaters

isolating already remote communities and setting off deadly landslides. (AP Photo/Carlos Herrera)

Francisco Argeñal chief of meteorology at Honduras' Center for Atmospheric, Oceanographic and Seismic Studies, said he expected more of the country's rivers to jump their banks.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center forecast that parts of Nicaragua and Honduras could receive 15 to 25 inches (380 to 635 millimeters) of rain, with 40 inches (1,000 millimeters) possible in some isolated parts.

Eta left a path of destruction across northern Nicaragua starting with the coastal city of Bilwi.

In Bilwi on Wednesday, civil defense brigades worked to clear streets of downed trees, power lines and sheets of metal roofing. Some neighborhoods were completely flooded. Vice President and first lady Rosario Murillo said more than 51,000 families remained without power in the affected areas.

"The debris teams are starting to work and we still can't give a sense of what happened," said Ivania Díaz, a local government official in Bilwi. "We have seen very humble homes completely destroyed."



Residents wade through a flooded road carrying some belongings, in Progreso Yoro, Honduras, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020. Eta weakened from the Category 4 hurricane to a tropical storm after lashing the Caribbean coast for much of Tuesday, its floodwaters isolating already remote communities and setting off deadly landslides. (AP Photo/Delmer Martinez)

South of Bilwi, closer to where Eta came ashore Tuesday, the seaside Miskito community of Wawa Bar was devastated. The military had evacuated the community before Eta hit, but what residents found Wednesday was distressing. Wind-twisted trees, shredded roofs and some structures damaged beyond recognition sat within view of the sea.

"There's nothing standing here," an unidentified resident told a local television station. "Wawa Bar is now a Miskito community where

destruction reigns."

Inland there was flooding in Sarawas and the Prinzapolka river had risen more than 10 feet (3.7 meters) and threatened communities along its banks. "We are watching the Prinzapolka because there could be risk of an overflow," Murillo said in a news conference Wednesday.

Murillo said the government was preparing a damage report that would be used to request international assistance.



A man walks through a flooded road with a ladder in San Manuel, Honduras, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020. Eta weakened from the Category 4 hurricane to a tropical storm after lashing the Caribbean coast for much of Tuesday, its floodwaters isolating already remote communities and setting off deadly landslides. (AP Photo/Delmer Martinez)

Nicaragua's meteorology director Marcio Baca said the storm was saturating the north and Pacific coast of the country with heavy rain. He compared it to Hurricane Joan in 1988.

Two gold miners were killed in a landslide Tuesday in Bonanza, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) west of where Eta made landfall, said Lt. Cesar Malespin of the Bonanza Fire Department.

In the northern province of Jinotega, communities were already flooded. Floodwaters took down a suspension bridge over the Wamblan river and some 30 people were evacuated early Wednesday from Wiwili, according to local radio.

Northern Nicaragua is home to most of the country's production of coffee, a critical export. Lila Sevilla, president of the National Alliance of Nicaraguan Coffee Producers, said they were concerned about landslides that could affect coffee plants and block roads needed to bring the harvest to market.



A man walks through a flooded road in Okonwas, Nicaragua, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020. Eta weakened from the Category 4 hurricane to a tropical storm after lashing Nicaragua's Caribbean coast for much of Tuesday, its floodwaters isolating already remote communities and setting off deadly landslides. (AP Photo/Carlos Herrera)



A man standing on a bridge looks out at the Uluá River in Progreso Yoro, Honduras, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020. Eta weakened from the Category 4 hurricane to a tropical storm after lashing the Caribbean coast for much of Tuesday, its floodwaters isolating already remote communities and setting off deadly landslides. (AP Photo/Delmer Martinez)



A man fixes the roof of a home surrounded by floodwaters brought on by Hurricane Eta in Wawa, Nicaragua, Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020. Eta slammed into Nicaragua's Caribbean coast with potentially devastating winds Tuesday, while heavy rains thrown off by the Category 4 storm already were causing rivers to overflow across Central America. (AP Photo/Carlos Herrera)



A boy looks over at the the river inundated with flood waters brought on by Hurricane Eta in Wawa, Nicaragua, Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020. Eta slammed into Nicaragua's Caribbean coast with potentially devastating winds Tuesday, while heavy rains thrown off by the Category 4 storm already were causing rivers to overflow across Central America. (AP Photo/Carlos Herrera)



Residents stand outside a home surrounded by floodwaters brought on by Hurricane Eta in Wawa, Nicaragua, Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020. Eta slammed into Nicaragua's Caribbean coast with potentially devastating winds Tuesday, while heavy rains thrown off by the Category 4 storm already were causing rivers to overflow across Central America. (AP Photo/Carlos Herrera)



Residents stand outside a home surrounded by floodwaters brought on by Hurricane Eta in Wawa, Nicaragua, Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020. Eta slammed into Nicaragua's Caribbean coast with potentially devastating winds Tuesday, while heavy rains thrown off by the Category 4 storm already were causing rivers to overflow across Central America. (AP Photo/Carlos Herrera)



Residents ride out Hurricane Eta in a shelter in the Nazareth community of El Naranjal, Nicaragua, Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020. Eta weakened from the Category 4 hurricane to a tropical storm after lashing Nicaragua's Caribbean coast for much of Tuesday, its floodwaters isolating already remote communities and setting off deadly landslides. (AP Photo/Carlos Herrera)



People rest in a makeshift shelter after Hurricane Eta made landfall, in Wawa, Nicaragua, Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020. Eta slammed into Nicaragua's Caribbean coast with potentially devastating winds Tuesday, while heavy rains thrown off by the Category 4 storm already were causing rivers to overflow across Central America. (AP Photo/Carlos Herrera)



People arrive in a boat to Wawa in Wawa, Nicaragua, Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020. Hurricane Eta slammed into Nicaragua's Caribbean coast with potentially devastating winds Tuesday, while heavy rains thrown off by the Category 4 storm already were causing rivers to overflow across Central America. (AP Photo/Carlos Herrera)



Angel Zavala, 72, carries a few belongings he was able to salvage from his home in a flooded neighborhood of Jehova, Honduras, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020. Eta weakened from the Category 4 hurricane to a tropical storm after lashing the Caribbean coast for much of Tuesday, its floodwaters isolating already remote communities and setting off deadly landslides. (AP Photo/Delmer Martinez)



A residents repairs a gate while standing in knee-deep floodwaters outside his home in Jehova, Honduras, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2020. Eta weakened from the Category 4 hurricane to a tropical storm after lashing the Caribbean coast for much of Tuesday, its floodwaters isolating already remote communities and setting off deadly landslides. (AP Photo/Delmer Martinez)

"It's still early to evaluate the impact of the rain, but we can expect damage to the road network in the northern towns," Sevilla said. The harvest hadn't started yet, but extended rain could cause the coffee to mature too quickly and affect its quality, she said.

In the Pacific, Tropical Storm Odalys continued to move across the open ocean and posed no threat to land.

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Citation: Eta brings heavy rains, deadly mudslides to Honduras (2020, November 5) retrieved 21 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-11-eta-heavy-deadly-mudslides-honduras.html>

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