

Major damage to Alabama mobile home park amid tropical storm

June 19 2021, by Kevin McGill and Russ Bynum



Lamont Pepp, right, waves to a passing motorist to slow down after Pepp's car stalled in high water on Gause Boulevard in Slidell late Friday, June 18, 2021, as a tropical disturbance neared the Louisiana shore. Tropical Storm Claudette has formed Saturday morning along the U.S. Gulf Coast, bringing heavy rains and flooding to coastal states including Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Credit: Scott Threlkeld/The Advocate via AP

Authorities in Alabama say a suspected tornado spurred by Tropical Storm Claudette demolished or badly damaged at least 50 homes in a small town just north of the Florida border.

Sheriff Heath Jackson in Escambia County said a suspected tornado "pretty much leveled" a mobile home park, toppled trees onto houses and ripped the roof off of a high school gym. Most of the damage was done in or near the towns of Brewton and East Brewton, about 48 miles (77 kilometers) north of Pensacola, Florida.

"It kind of affected everybody," Jackson said. "But with those mobile homes being built so close together it can take a toll on them a lot more than it can on houses that are spread apart."

There were no immediate reports of serious injuries or deaths. Photos of the Brewton area shared on Facebook show toppled trees, including one that landed on a house, as well a long stretch of debris that a local news outlet said was from a badly damaged trailer park.

Damage from the storm was also felt in north Florida, where winds—in some cases reaching 85 mph (137 kph)—caused an 18-wheeler to flip on its side.

The National Hurricane Center declared Claudette organized enough to qualify as a named storm at 4 a.m. Saturday, well after the storm's center of circulation had come ashore southwest of New Orleans.



Motorists navigate a flooded Gause Boulevard in Slidell, La., late Friday, June 18, 2021, as a tropical disturbance neared the Louisiana shore. Tropical Storm Claudette has formed Saturday morning along the U.S. Gulf Coast, bringing heavy rains and flooding to coastal states including Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Credit: Scott Threlkeld/The Advocate via AP

By Saturday night, Claudette was a tropical depression located 45 miles (75 kilometers) west-northwest of Montgomery, Alabama, with sustained winds of 30 mph (45 kph). It was moving northeast at 14 mph (22 kph). Most of the heavy weather was happening far to the north and east of the center.

Early Saturday, the storm dumped flooding rains north of Lake Pontchartrain in Louisiana and along the Mississippi coast, inundating

streets and, in some areas, pushing water into homes. Later, the storm was drenching the Florida Panhandle and, well inland, a broad expanse of Alabama. The National Weather Service warned of possible tornadoes in north Florida and south Alabama.

Parts of inland Mississippi and Georgia were getting heavy rain from Claudette as well. And even though the storm was weakening, the National Hurricane Center issued a tropical storm watch for parts of the North Carolina coast, which could feel the effects by Sunday night. The storm was forecast to cross into the Atlantic Ocean on Monday, and regain tropical storm strength over open water Tuesday.



This GOES-16 GeoColor satellite image taken Friday, June 18, 2021, at 11 a.m. EDT, and provided by NOAA, shows a tropical weather system in the Gulf of Mexico. Officials ordered a floodgate and locks system closed in southeast

Louisiana and readied sandbags in Mississippi and Alabama as a broad, disorganized tropical weather system began spinning bands of rain and brisk wind across the northern Gulf of Mexico coast Friday. Credit: NOAA via AP

Residents of Pace, Florida, called 911 to report a possible twister that tore the roofs off two homes and damaged at least three others.

"Nobody's hurt," said Sarah Whitfield, spokesperson for Santa Rosa County, where the Florida homes were damaged. "We're just thankful it happened after sunrise," not overnight as people slept.

An 18-wheeler hit several utility poles and flipped on its side during the storm early Saturday. Debris from the accident, including a collapsed utility pole, turned into projectiles and struck a passing SUV, according to the Florida Highway Patrol.

Highway Patrol officials were to close both lanes of the Interstate 10 bridge between Escambia and Santa Rosa counties due to high winds.

The county received two calls about trees falling onto homes, but no one was home at the time.



Clouds from Tropical Storm Claudette form on Highway 90 Beaches in Pass Christian, Miss., Friday, June 18, 2021. City of Pass Christian has declared state of emergency for potential severe weather. Credit: Hunter Dawkins/The Gazebo Gazette via AP

The storm left tens of thousands without power and some flights were being canceled or delayed at Pensacola International Airport.

"We have a lot of visitors that are here vacationing," Escambia County spokesperson Laura Coale said. "Red flags flying out at the beaches so there's absolutely no swimming."

Forecasters said Claudette could dump 5 to 10 inches (12 to 25 centimeters) of rain in the region, with isolated accumulations of 15 inches (38 centimeters) possible.

Residents of Slidell, Louisiana, north of Lake Pontchartrain, reported flooded streets and water in some neighborhoods as the storm pushed onshore overnight. Slidell police said the flooding had largely receded by daybreak, after swamping as many as 50 cars and trucks with water.

Most people riding out the storm still had electricity when they woke up Saturday morning. The website poweroutage.us reported roughly 22,000 outages total across Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida.



Residents in low-lying areas of Hancock County move their vehicles, lawn mowers, ATVs and boats to higher ground in Waveland, Miss., as a tropical system approaches Friday, June 18, 2021. Forecasters predict a tropical system will bring heavy rain, storm surge and coastal flooding to the U.S. Gulf Coast. The poorly organized disturbance was located Friday morning about 255 miles south of Morgan City, Louisiana. Credit: Justin Mitchell/The Sun Herald via AP

The storm struck on a weekend when many on the Gulf Coast planned to celebrate Juneteenth and Father's Day.

Business owners across the Gulf Coast, from restaurateurs to swamp boat operators, had anticipated an influx of tourist cash after a year of lost revenue due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"My biggest concern is that it drives away a busy weekend, and may just end up being a lot of rain," Austin Sumrall, the owner and chef at the White Pillars Restaurant and Lounge in Biloxi, Mississippi, said Friday.

He had 170 reservations on his books for Sunday, but was concerned some patrons would cancel.

"We saw, especially last year, the rug can get jerked out from under you pretty quickly," he said.

In Louisiana, the threat came a month after spring storms and flooding that were blamed for five deaths, and as parts of the state continued a slow recovery from a brutal 2020 hurricane season.



Motorists navigate a flooded Gause Boulevard in Slidell, La., late Friday, June 18, 2021, as a tropical disturbance neared the Louisiana shore. Tropical Storm Claudette has formed Saturday morning along the U.S. Gulf Coast, bringing heavy rains and flooding to coastal states including Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Credit: Scott Threlkeld/The Advocate via AP



A man takes a photo of waves crashing into what once was a dock for a ferry that transported people from Bay St. Louis to Pass Christian, Miss., as a tropical system moves toward the Mississippi Coast on Friday, June 18, 2021. Forecasters predict a tropical system will bring heavy rain, storm surge and coastal flooding to the U.S. Gulf Coast. The poorly organized disturbance was located Friday morning about 255 miles south of Morgan City, Louisiana. Credit: Justin Mitchell/The Sun Herald via AP



Motorists navigate a flooded Gause Boulevard in Slidell, La., late Friday, June 18, 2021, as a tropical disturbance neared the Louisiana shore. Tropical Storm Claudette has formed Saturday morning along the U.S. Gulf Coast, bringing heavy rains and flooding to coastal states including Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Credit: Scott Threlkeld/The Advocate via AP



A flooded neighborhood is seen after Tropical Storm Claudette passed through in Slidell, La., Saturday, June 19, 2021. The National Hurricane Center declared Claudette organized enough to qualify as a named storm early Saturday, well after the storm's center of circulation had come ashore southwest of New Orleans. Credit: AP Photo/Gerald Herbert



Danny Gonzales, right, stands in front of his flooded house with his neighbor Bob Neal, upset with power company trucks driving though the flooded neighborhood pushing water back into his home, after Tropical Storm Claudette passed through, in Slidell, La., Saturday, June 19, 2021. The National Hurricane Center declared Claudette organized enough to qualify as a named storm early Saturday, well after the storm's center of circulation had come ashore southwest of New Orleans. Credit: AP Photo/Gerald Herbert



Marina Kingsmill and her brother Raylan play in the flooded street in front of their home after Tropical Storm Claudette passed through in Slidell, La., Saturday, June 19, 2021. The National Hurricane Center declared Claudette organized enough to qualify as a named storm early Saturday, well after the storm's center of circulation had come ashore southwest of New Orleans. Credit: AP Photo/Gerald Herbert



Marina Kingsmill and her brother Raylan play in the flooded street in front of their home after Tropical Storm Claudette passed through in Slidell, La., Saturday, June 19, 2021. The National Hurricane Center declared Claudette organized enough to qualify as a named storm early Saturday, well after the storm's center of circulation had come ashore southwest of New Orleans. Credit: AP Photo/Gerald Herbert



Cal Kingsmill, Jr., and his wife Jessie Kingsmill, point out crickets to their children Marina, 8, and Raylan, 8, in the receding floodwater in front of their home, after Tropical Storm Claudette passed through, in Slidell, La., Saturday, June 19, 2021. The National Hurricane Center declared Claudette organized enough to qualify as a named storm early Saturday, well after the storm's center of circulation had come ashore southwest of New Orleans. Credit: AP Photo/Gerald Herbert



Jessie Kingsmill points out crickets to her daughter Marina, 8, in the receding floodwater in front of their home, after Tropical Storm Claudette passed through, in Slidell, La., Saturday, June 19, 2021. The National Hurricane Center declared Claudette organized enough to qualify as a named storm early Saturday, well after the storm's center of circulation had come ashore southwest of New Orleans. Credit: AP Photo/Gerald Herbert



A car stops in front of neighborhood flooding after Tropical Storm Claudette passed through, in Slidell, La., Saturday, June 19, 2021. The National Hurricane Center declared Claudette organized enough to qualify as a named storm early Saturday, well after the storm's center of circulation had come ashore southwest of New Orleans. Credit: AP Photo/Gerald Herbert



Jessie Kingsmill stands in her driveway with her children Marina, 8, right, and Raylan, 8, as water recedes after Tropical Storm Claudette passed through, in Slidell, La., Saturday, June 19, 2021. The National Hurricane Center declared Claudette organized enough to qualify as a named storm early Saturday, well after the storm's center of circulation had come ashore southwest of New Orleans. Credit: AP Photo/Gerald Herbert



Marina Kingsmill and her brother Raylan play in the flooded street in front of their home after Tropical Storm Claudette passed through in Slidell, La., Saturday, June 19, 2021. The National Hurricane Center declared Claudette organized enough to qualify as a named storm early Saturday, well after the storm's center of circulation had come ashore southwest of New Orleans. Credit: AP Photo/Gerald Herbert



Danny Gonzales, walks in his flooded house as water recedes, after Tropical Storm Claudette passed through, in Slidell, La., Saturday, June 19, 2021. The National Hurricane Center declared Claudette organized enough to qualify as a named storm early Saturday, well after the storm's center of circulation had come ashore southwest of New Orleans. Credit: AP Photo/Gerald Herbert

Separately, Tropical Storm Dolores made landfall on Mexico's west coast with near-hurricane force. As of Saturday night, it was a depression located about 140 miles (225 kilometers) north-northwest of Guadalajara, Mexico. Its maximum sustained winds were clocked at 30 mph (45 kph), and it was moving north at 21 mph (33 kph).

Heavy rainfall of 6 to 10 inches (about 15 to 25 centimeters) was expected across the southwest and western coastal areas of Mexico

throughout the weekend. Forecasters were warning of the potential for flash flooding and mudslides.

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