

Victims of China floods race to salvage property

April 24 2024, by Ludovic EHRET



Workers cleared debris from a flooded areas.

Victims of severe floods in southern China raced on Wednesday to salvage property from the muddy waters as authorities warned of more heavy rains to come.

Massive downpours have struck Guangdong province in recent days, triggering deluges that have claimed the lives of four people and forced the evacuation of more than 100,000.

The severe floods are virtually unheard of so early in the year even in lush, subtropical Guangdong, with one senior official linking them to worsening climate change.

AFP reporters in Shatang village on Wednesday saw staff and officials at a tourist resort taking advantage of a break in the rain to clear mud from the streets.

"The water has really risen over the last few days," said Liu Yongqi, 25, a general manager of a local homestay.

"The road was flooded and for five days we could only get to the rest of the village by small motorboat," she told AFP.

"Luckily we had enough supplies here anyway," she said, adding that the cleanup operation would take "another two or three days".

Chairs, toilet bowls and pieces of sheet metal lay strewn across a meadow nearby.

Some employees worked to fix a wooden yurt used for group meals, while others armed with brooms and wearing waterproof boots moved between holiday bungalows to clean up the mess.

Heavy rain affected areas in China



Map of southern China's Guangdong province, locating the areas most affected by heavy rainfall in recent days.

"The damage is extensive," said Liu Shaofei, 53, Liu Yongqi's father and the other general manager.

"We're still making an estimate. But fortunately, we're insured," he told AFP.

Stranded islanders

In Qingyuan, around 600 residents of an island in the river were stranded after high water levels prompted the temporary cancellation of a regular ferry route.

Sanitation workers made the most of receding floodwaters to spray mud and silt off the area around the ferry pier.

"We're clearing it up little by little, but there's still a risk of rain tonight and tomorrow, and we don't know what the situation is upstream, so the water level could still rise," a city official who wished to remain anonymous told AFP.

Nearby, islander Wang Zhi cut a dispirited figure as he clutched a bag of fresh lettuce.

"I saw that the water level had dropped. So I did some shopping," he told AFP ruefully.



Authorities have warned of more downpours across Guangdong.

"I'd like to go home."

The central government has earmarked 110 million yuan in emergency relief for flood-hit areas in Guangdong as well as the adjacent Jiangxi province and Guangxi region, state broadcaster CCTV reported Wednesday.

The funds will mainly go towards "properly rescuing and relocating affected people (and) emergency management such as eliminating hazards," CCTV said.

More rain forecast

Authorities have warned of more downpours across Guangdong from Wednesday evening until Friday.

Up to 240 millimeters (9.4 inches) of rain is expected in many areas, rising to as much as 300 millimeters in some places.

Officials also issued a warning over "rumors" that the deluges were causing supply shortages and price spikes for basic goods.

"In order to strengthen management of market prices during flood season... do not fabricate or spread information about price rises, tight supply lines or dramatic increases in market demand," Guangdong's market regulator said in a notice on Tuesday evening.



Guangdong is China's manufacturing heartland, home to around 127 million people.

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Parts of the province have not seen such severe flooding so early in the year since records began in 1954, according to state media reports.

"Intensifying climate change" raised the likelihood of the kind of heavy rains not typically seen until the summer months, Yin Zhijie, the chief hydrology forecaster at the Ministry of Water Resources, told state-run China National Radio on Tuesday.

China is the biggest emitter of the greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change but has pledged to reduce emissions to net zero by 2060.

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Citation: Victims of China floods race to salvage property (2024, April 24) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-04-victims-china-salvage-property.html>

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