

Tropical storm strengthens off Mexico

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ACAPULCO, Mexico --

Mexican officials closed schools, shut down ports to small fishing boats, and battled flooding in this Pacific resort city Friday as Tropical Storm Henriette dumped heavy rains and caused a minor landslide on a highway.

Henriette was expected to become a hurricane by early Sunday, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center in Miami. It was not expected to make landfall.

The Mexican government issued a hurricane watch Friday from the coastal resort of Manzanillo, in the state of Colima north of Acapulco, to Cabo Corrientes.

A tropical storm warning was in effect for a long stretch of Mexico's southern coast from Lagunas de Chacahua on the coast of Oaxaca state to Manzanillo. The warning area also included Acapulco.

At 2 a.m. EDT, the center of the storm was about 190 miles west of Acapulco and 160 miles southeast of Manzanillo, with maximum sustained winds near 50 mph, with higher gusts.

The storm was moving parallel to the coastline at about 13 mph, on a northwest path that would bring it close to western Baja California, the hurricane center said.

"Any deviation to the north of the track would bring stronger winds to the coast," it said in a statement.

Tropical storm-force winds extended up to 50 miles from the center.

About 4 inches of rain fell in Acapulco, where streets flooded and ports were closed to small boats. Waves up to 5 feet forced officials to shut down small fishing and ocean sports.

Up to 8 inches of rain are expected, with possible isolated maximum amounts of 15 inches, the hurricane center said.

A small landslide came down on the highway between Acapulco and the resort city of Zihuatanejo to the north, Federal Preventive Police officer Carlos Ramirez Zavala said. No injuries were reported.

Officials also closed more than 1,000 schools, according to Arturo de la Rosa Camacho, director of civil protection in Acapulco.

A tropical depression also formed Friday in the Caribbean, leading several island governments to issue advisories that a tropical storm could be near.

The depression was about 95 miles south-southwest of Barbados and 75 miles east of Grenada at 2 a.m. EDT, the hurricane center said. It was moving west at about 15 mph, and forecasters expected it to pass through the Windward Islands overnight.

Maximum sustained winds were near 35 mph. Forecasters said the depression could become a tropical storm Saturday. A tropical storm has sustained winds of at least 39 mph.

A tropical storm warning remained in effect for St. Vincent, the Grenadines, Tobago and Grenada. A tropical storm watch remained in effect for Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao and the northern coast of Venezuela from Cumana to Pedernales, including the island of Margarita.

Forecasters warned that tropical storm conditions could spread to St. Lucia overnight.