

Tropical depression forms in Gulf

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A tropical depression formed Tuesday evening in the southwestern Gulf of Mexico and was expected to edge toward the Mexican coast, forecasters said.

Earlier Tuesday, Tropical Storm Karen developed in the open Atlantic Ocean, where it was expected to remain.

Neither system was of any concern to South Floridians, but unrelated showers and thunderstorms swept the soggy region again Tuesday and were expected to continue through at least Wednesday.

Local forecasters warned drivers to be alert for flooded roads.

Forecasters at the National Hurricane Center in West Miami-Dade County said the crew of a hurricane hunter aircraft determined that a mass of thunderstorms in the Gulf coalesced into a tropical depression.

The initial forecast predicted that the system would grow into Tropical Storm Lorenzo as it crawled through the Gulf, reaching the Mexican coast Saturday between Tuxpan and Veracruz.

Karen, meanwhile, was located about 1,400 miles from the outer Caribbean islands and 2,800 miles from South Florida.

Its winds were expected to strengthen to near-hurricane force, but the five-day forecast suggested a path through the distant Atlantic toward the northwest and then curving north, keeping Karen far from land.

Another disturbance will bring squalls to the Leeward Islands, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands but conditions did not favor strengthening, according to hurricane specialist Lixion Avila.