

Record storms, flooding continue to ravage Texas and Oklahoma

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At least 35 are dead as a result of catastrophic flash flooding that ripped through areas of Texas, Oklahoma and northern Mexico this week. The death toll is expected to continue rising, as is the water level, with further severe rainstorms in the forecast.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott declared 70 Texas counties disaster areas this week as torrential downpours and flash flooding continued to inundate areas of Texas and Oklahoma, displacing thousands and leaving scores of casualties. Abbott has placed Texas National Guard units on standby in response to the flooding.

In Houston, hundreds have been extracted from inundated areas by rescue crews, and thousands of vehicles have been lost under water.

The Trinity River had surged a full 12 feet above its normal level Friday, displacing at least 4,000 residents. At least 20,000 acres have been flooded near the Red River.

As water levels continue to rise, levees across the region, most of them dating back at least to the 1950s, are under threat.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is still considering whether it will provide aid to individual counties that have suffered flooding. FEMA, in response to the emergency declaration, sent federal officials to Texas to help local officials assess damage and recovery operations.

Intense flooding may soon spread to central Louisiana, according to the National Weather Service.

President Barack Obama said that he expects Texas will submit “significant requests” to his administration for emergency aid. FEMA will conduct some search-and-rescue operations and hopes to wrap up its response to the flooding “quickly as possible,” Obama said, making clear that the federal government will

provide only the most minimal aid.

“I’m confident, obviously, that these communities will ultimately get back on their feet,” the president said. As in other disasters, the aim of the Obama administration is to make a show of concern, while leaving tens of thousands with little assistance once the storms recede from news headlines.

Record-breaking rainfall continued to pummel central Texas Friday, with Dallas receiving about seven inches. The Weather Channel said that the worst hit areas for rain were along a line from Laredo, on the Mexican border, up to Dallas, and then on to Oklahoma City.

Some 200 people were rescued after being stranded in their cars by flooding in Dallas Friday, although no deaths were reported. Roads and highways were clogged with cars and drivers trying to get to their jobs.

In Johnson County, about 50 miles south of Dallas, twelve people were caught in their homes and had to be rescued. By 3:30 AM local time, about 30 roads in Johnson County were closed due to high water.

In a suburb of Austin, sixteen people were rescued from a houseboat that floated away in the floodwaters.

The Colorado River is expected to surge well above its normal level over the weekend, prompting the evacuation of at least a thousand residents. Schools near the river canceled classes Friday because of the rising river levels.

In Texas, the Brazos River has also begun flooding, forcing hundreds of residents near Horseshoe Bend, Lazy Bend and Soda Springs to evacuate. In Blanco County, the body of 42-year-old Zachary Jones of Blanco, Texas was found inside his vehicle along the Blanco River early last Sunday.

The surging waters of the San Jacinto River are predicted to inundate residential areas west of Houston for nearly a week.

At least one tornado struck a gas-drilling rig north of the town of Canadian in the Texas Panhandle Wednesday afternoon, injuring three workers and damaging a work shack on the rig floor.

Flooding in Ellis County, Texas, has prompted concerns that a local dam might burst.

Local news reported that there are over 7,300 dams in Texas, and that many of them are privately owned and not subject to serious government oversight.

Thousands of the state's dams were built with federal aid during the 1950s, and some 250 are currently in very poor condition, according to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Almost all of those are now past or nearing their projected 50-year lifespan, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE).

According to the National Weather Service in Fort Worth, 35 trillion gallons of rain fell in Texas in the past month, enough to cover the entire state with nearly eight inches of water. The flooding comes after years of severe drought throughout the region.



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