

Rising floodwaters overwhelm Houston, other parts of southern Texas

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Two kayakers try to beat the current pushing them down an overflowing Brays Bayou from Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Texas, August 27, 2017. Photo by: Mark Mulligan/Houston Chronicle via AP

HOUSTON, Texas — Rising floods were left in the wake of Hurricane Harvey. The large hurricane hit southern Texas Friday night and continued to rain down on cities all weekend.

The flooding left from the hurricane chased thousands of people to rooftops or higher ground on Sunday in Houston, Texas. Rescuers were left trying to respond to countless desperate calls for help. Houston is the nation's fourth-largest city.

Rescues By Land, By Air And By Sea

A fleet of helicopters, airboats and high-water vehicles were sent out to rescue people. However, the fleet itself was in flooding so widespread that authorities had trouble figuring out which areas needed the most help. Rescuers got too many calls for help to respond to each one. They focused on saving the people who were in the most immediate danger.

The water rose high enough to begin filling the second floors of tall buildings. It was an unusual sight for Houston, a city built on nearly flat ground that does not normally see flooding. Authorities urged people to get on top of their homes to avoid becoming trapped in attics. They were told to wave sheets or towels to draw attention to their location.

People got on top of inflatable beach toys, rubber rafts and even air mattresses. They rode through the rising waters to safety. Others simply waded through the water on foot carrying plastic trash bags stuffed with their belongings.

"A Very, Very Serious And Unprecedented Storm"

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said emergency services had gotten more than 2,000 calls for help. To give people a place to go, he would turn the city's main convention center into a large shelter. He urged drivers to stay off the roads.

"I don't need to tell anyone this is a very, very serious and unprecedented storm," Turner told a news conference. "We have several hundred structural flooding reports. We expect that number to rise pretty dramatically."

Only days ago, the mayor had told Houston residents to not leave the city. On Sunday, he defended this decision after Harvey had turned roads and neighborhoods into swamps.

"If you think the situation right now is bad and you give an order to evacuate, you are creating a nightmare," Turner said. He spoke about the risks of sending the city's 2.3 million people to drive on the roads at the same time.

Government To Help Texas Cities

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, is a national government group that helps cities and states with emergencies. The leader of FEMA, Brock Long, said the government expected to conduct a "mass care mission." He predicted that the storm's damage would require FEMA's involvement for years.

"This disaster's going to be a landmark event," Long said.

President Donald Trump tweeted Sunday morning that he would visit Texas.

"I will be going to Texas as soon as that trip can be made without causing disruption," the president posted on Twitter. "The focus must be life and safety."

Some Damage Is Not Yet Discovered

The rescues unfolded a day after the hurricane settled over the Texas coastline. It was blamed for killing at least two people and injuring up to 14.

Many people were worried throughout the region between Corpus Christi and Houston. Some of the areas with the greatest hurricane damage were impossible for rescuers to reach.

In the island community of Port Aransas, population 3,800, officials were unable to fully survey the town because of "massive" damage. Police and heavy equipment had only made it into the northernmost street.

"I can tell you I have a very bad feeling and that's about it," said the mayor of Port Aransas, Charles Bujan. He had asked people to leave the area. He did know how many obeyed the order.

The Fiercest Hurricane In 10 Years

Some of the worst damage appeared to be in Rockport, Texas. The coastal city of about 10,000 people was directly in the storm's path. The mayor said his community took a blow that left "widespread devastation," including homes, businesses and schools that were heavily damaged.

Harvey was the fiercest hurricane to hit the U.S. in more than 10 years. It came to Texas late Friday about 30 miles northeast of Corpus Christi as a huge storm with winds moving at 130 miles per hour.

On Saturday Harvey weakened. The hurricane became a tropical storm. By Sunday morning the system was centered about 65 miles southeast of San Antonio, with maximum sustained winds of about 45 miles-per-hour, according to the National Hurricane Center, which described the flooding as "catastrophic."

Quiz

- 1 Read the section "Rescues By Land, By Air And By Sea."
- Select the sentence that explains how rescuers solved their MAIN problem.
- (A) A fleet of helicopters, airboats and high-water vehicles were sent out to rescue people.
 - (B) They focused on saving the people who were in the most immediate danger.
 - (C) Authorities urged people to get on top of their homes to avoid becoming trapped in attics
 - (D) People got on top of inflatable beach toys, rubber rafts and even air mattresses.
- 2 Select the sentence from the article that suggests there might still be people waiting for help.
- (A) The large hurricane hit southern Texas Friday night and continued to rain down on cities all weekend.
 - (B) On Sunday, he defended this decision after Harvey had turned roads and neighborhoods into swamps.
 - (C) He predicted that the storm's damage would require FEMA's involvement for years.
 - (D) Some of the areas with the greatest hurricane damage were impossible for rescuers to reach.

- 3 Read the sentence from the section "A Very, Very Serious And Unprecedented Storm."

"If you think the situation right now is bad and you give an order to evacuate, you are creating a nightmare," Turner said.

Which other phrase from that section helps the reader to understand the meaning of "evacuate"?

- (A) emergency services
- (B) a large shelter
- (C) leave the city
- (D) spoke about the risks

- 4 Read the following sentence from the section "The Fiercest Hurricane In 10 Years."

By Sunday morning the system was centered about 65 miles southeast of San Antonio, with maximum sustained winds of about 45 miles per hour, according to the National Hurricane Center, which described the flooding as "catastrophic."

Which word, if it replaced "catastrophic," would CHANGE the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) devastating
- (B) appalling
- (C) influential
- (D) tragic