

9 killed as China hit by strongest typhoon of year

At least nine people have been killed and one remains missing as the strongest typhoon of the year hit south China Wednesday.

A broken tree is seen in Zhuhai, south China's Guangdong Province, Aug. 23, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

Typhoon Hato made landfall in the city of Zhuhai in Guangdong Province at noon Wednesday, bringing winds of up to 160 kph to the mouth of the Pearl River and heavy rain to nearby regions, the local meteorological bureau said.

When the typhoon swept past Macao, a wall brought down by strong winds killed a man. Another person died after falling from the 11th floor of a building, and a third after being hit by a truck, according to Macao health authorities, which confirmed two more deaths and 153 injuries late Wednesday night.

There was a brief blackout in Macao but power resumed at 2 p.m.

In Guangdong, four people have died and one remains unaccounted for. The government has evacuated 26,817 people to temporary shelters. About 664 hectares of farmland has been damaged.

Power transmission facilities suffered heavy loss, disrupting electricity supply to 1.91 million households.

About half of the households had power back by late Wednesday.

In Zhuhai, a ship which lost control amid gales and high tides hit a pier of a major bridge, causing the bridge surface to tilt. The bridge, part of a coastal highway, remains cordoned off.

Alerts for landslides, flooding, and other geological disasters have been issued.

"Compared to other typhoons, Hato moved fast, quickly grew more powerful and caused massive amounts of rainfall," said Wu Zhifang, chief weather forecaster at Guangdong meteorological bureau.

Meteorologists had earlier warned of unusually high flooding as the typhoon came during high tides.

Hundreds of thousands of residents in low-lying areas, workers on coastal fish farms, and tourists have been transferred to safer places.

In one of the hardest-hit areas, 19 villages near the town of Guanghai, Taishan city, were flooded, according to local resident Xie Yongbin. Power was cut off. However, no casualties have been reported as the evacuation

started early.

In Zhuhai, trees and billboards have been blown down. At a wharf, boats were pushed onto shore while vehicles on the roads were floated.

But floodwater has begun to recede.

Huang Xin, an employee of a fishing gear shop at the wharf, said the shop's gate and windows were broken by huge tides. Boats, though being moored, were damaged.

Across the province, classes and work were suspended in many cities on Wednesday. Several expressways were closed and train services halted.

At least six ships on the mouth of the Pearl River have reported emergencies. Maritime rescue workers saved 118 crew members, according to the Ministry of Transportation.

Hato is forecast to move northwest and enter Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region by dawn Thursday. As the typhoon moves further inland its strength is expected to drop.

In Guangxi, more than 15,000 workers at the local power grid were put on standby while precautions have been taken to minimize the damage caused by potential flooding and landslides.

More than 11,860 fishing boats have been moored.