

Major storms deliver a double punch

Recent torrents in southern China have left at least five people dead and resulted in direct economic losses of about 37 million yuan (\$5.5 million), as some areas in the region were battered by two major storms in succession over two days.



A pedestrian braves heavy rain in Fuqing, Fujian province, on July 31, 2017. Tropical Storm Haitang made landfall in the city on Monday morning in the wake of Typhoon Nesat, which roared into the city on Sunday. The government has warned people about the potential of floods and landslides. [Photo/Xinhua]

Heavy rains since Friday, accompanied by high winds and hail in some areas, have affected 37,000 people in Hubei and Hunan provinces and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, inundating 2,200 hectares of farmland, the Ministry of Civil Affairs said on Monday.

The two storms, which landed on Sunday and Monday, may bring more losses to the southern part of the country, the meteorological observatory warned.

Tropical Storm Haitang, the 10th tropical cyclone this year, landed around 3 am on Monday in Fuqing, Fujian province. Packing winds up to 65 kilometers per hour, Haitang followed Typhoon Nesat, which swept into Fuqing at 6 am on Sunday, with winds of 119 km/h, according to the Fujian meteorological observatory.

Both a typhoon and a tropical storm are cyclones, but they fall in different meteorological classifications. A typhoon is more violent, with much higher wind speeds.

It was the third time since 1990 that two major storms have struck the

province almost simultaneously. Since July 21, there have been six major storms, though it's uncommon to see two make landfall in Fujian, the State meteorological observatory said.

The storms brought heavy rain to the province, with precipitation exceeding 50 millimeters in 64 counties, cities or districts over the past 24 hours as of 6 am on Monday. Precipitation reached 172.4 mm at Yunshan village in Yongtai county, the Fujian flood control and disaster relief headquarters said in a statement.

As of 5 pm Sunday, 216,000 people had been evacuated across the province, the headquarters said. The two storms have so far affected 26,200 people in Fujian, inundating 1,350 hectares of crops and causing direct economic losses estimated at 51 million yuan, the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters said on Monday.

It also said Fujian evacuated 216,000 people who work on the sea or who live and work in the affected areas. Also, 1,294 fishing vessels returned to port to take shelter from the storms.

In neighboring Zhejiang province, local authorities evacuated 135,000 people, while 22,000 fishing boats left the high-risk areas.

Earlier, the headquarters dispatched nine teams to guide preparations for the two storms and the resulting floods.

As they approached the Chinese mainland, the two storms raked Taiwan. Nesat hit on Saturday evening in Taiwan's Yilan county, and Haitang followed at 4:40 on Sunday in Pingtung. It was the first time in 50 years that dual tropical storms have struck the island almost simultaneously.