

Hurricane Odile, packing 125 mph winds, slams celebrity resort city in Mexico

The Category 3 storm, the strongest to hit the southern Baja California peninsula, raged through the resort city of Cabo San Lucas, which is reportedly popular with movie stars such as George Clooney and Jennifer Aniston.

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CABO SAN LUCAS, Mexico - Hurricane Odile hammered Mexico's Baja California Peninsula overnight, damaging homes and tearing away the facades of luxury resorts, shattering countless car and hotel windows and leaving lobbies swamped and full of debris on Monday.

The storm, which made landfall near Cabo San Lucas the previous night as a powerful Category 3 hurricane, toppled trees, power poles and road signs along the main highway, which at one point was swamped by rushing floodwaters. Room windows at the Hotel Westin were blown out, mud and rock blocked the entrance to the Club Regina and workers said the Hilton was seriously damaged.

"It's the entire corridor" between San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas, said Deneb Poli, a medical worker at the Hotel Melia Cabo Real. She said all the hotel's guests and employees were fine, but electricity and phone lines were cut and cellphone coverage was spotty. "There are parts of hotels that are completely collapsed. ... The damage is pretty extensive."



Illustration 1: A vehicle transits a flooded street due to the influence of hurricane Odile in Los Cabos, Mexico

Poli said the plan for now was to stay put. By morning the rains had stopped and winds had died down, and residents and tourists emerged from shelters to assess the damage.

The newspaper Tribuna de los Cabos reported people being injured by flying glass, power lines and traffic signals down throughout the city and a fire at the Cascadas resort on Medano Beach. No details about the blaze were immediately available.



Illustration 2: People salvage the useful remains from houses destroyed by hurricane Odile



All along the highway homes and businesses were heavily damaged, many reduced to shells with only the core structure intact. The walls of an OfficeMax collapsed into the parking lot. A convenience store was ripped apart with the contents of its shelves dumped to the ground. A Comex paint shop sign was missing its "x," ripped away from the building by the gale-force winds.

"From what we have seen around here, everything is pretty much destroyed," said Alejandro Tealdi, a 32-year-old resident of Cabo San Lucas. His home was damaged and suffered some flooding, but nobody was hurt. "In the seven years I've been here, I've never seen anything hit like this."



Illustration 3: Hurricane Odile approaches Los Cabos September 14, 2014

Odile continued to rake the state of Baja California Sur as it marched northward with strong winds and heavy rains.

The storm had weakened somewhat but was still a Category 2 hurricane with maximum sustained winds near 100 mph (155 kph). It was centered about 90 miles (145 kilometers) south of Loreto and moving to the north-northwest at 14 mph (22 kph).

Odile was forecast to slow down and lose intensity over the next day or so.

Besides the gleaming megaresorts, Baja California is home to tiny fishing communities and low-lying neighborhoods of flimsy homes.

Forecasters warned of a dangerous storm surge with large waves as well as drenching rains capable of causing landslides and flash floods.

Across the region, people hunkered inside overnight to ride out the storm's wrath. In one hotel near San Jose del Cabo, guests moved from a makeshift shelter into crowded basement storage areas after the boarded up windows failed.

The U.S. hurricane center warned of possible coastal flooding and rainfall of 5 to 10 inches, with isolated amounts up to 15 inches.

A hurricane warning was in effect from Punta Abreojos to Santa Rosalia.



Illustration 4: Tourists watch the ocean from inside a swimming pool at a resort in Los Cabos



Illustration 5: People watch the strong waves caused by Hurricane Odile in the town of Tecpan de Galeana, region of Costa Grande in Guerrero state, Mexico



Illustration 6: People watching the waves in Tecpan de Galeana



Illustration 7: The storm, which made landfall near Cabo San Lucas as a powerful Category 3 hurricane, toppled trees, power poles and road signs along the main highway, which at one point was swamped by rushing floodwaters