

Hurricane Odile slams Mexico's Baja California

Luxury resorts, hotels among the damaged properties in tourist hotspot

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Hurricane Odile hammered Mexico's Baja California Peninsula overnight, 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 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 Melia Cabo Real. She said all the hotel's guests and employees were fine, but electricity and phone lines were cut and cell coverage was spotty. "There are parts of hotels that are completely collapsed. ... The damage is pretty extensive."

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.

People injured by glass

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 1: A family from San Jose, California, cover themselves with pillows as they sit on the concrete stairs in the service area of a resort after the designated area for shelter was destroyed by winds in Los Cabos, Mexico, Monday, Sept. 15, 2014. Hurricane Odile raked the Baja California Peninsula with strong winds and heavy rains early Monday as locals and tourists in the resort area of Los Cabos began to emerge from shelters and assess the damage. (AP Photo/Victor R. Caivano) Victor R. Caivano/Associated Press

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

The storm's maximum sustained winds were near 175 km/h as it moved over the peninsula as a Category 2 hurricane. It was centred about 60 kilometres west of La Paz and moving to the north-northwest at 26 km/h.

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 neighbourhoods 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.

Hotel guests crowd into basement storage area

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 centre warned of possible coastal flooding and rainfall of 13 to 25 centimetres, with isolated amounts up to 38 centimetres.

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

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Illustration 2: These tourists in Los Cabos crammed into a stairwell after their shelter was destroyed by the storm