

*Deadly floods and mudslides  
bring southwestern Japan to a  
halt*

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**The swollen Chikugo river in the town of Tachiarai, Fukuoka prefecture, after heavy rains hit wide areas of Kyushu island. [Harumi Ozawa/AFP]**

Tokyo, July 10 (RHC)-- Torrential rain has been pounding southwestern Japan, triggering floods and mudslides and causing loss of lives. Two people died in rain-related incidents, while at least six others were reported missing on Monday.

Rains falling in the regions of Kyushu and Chugoku since the weekend also forced road closures, train disruptions and cuts to the water supply in some areas.

The Japan Meteorological Agency issued an emergency heavy rain warning for Fukuoka and Oita prefectures on the southern island of Kyushu, urging residents in riverside and hillside areas to take maximum caution. More than 1.7 million residents in vulnerable areas were urged to take shelter.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters the government has set up a task force and is doing its utmost for the search and rescue operation “as we put the people’s lives first”.

According to the Fire and Disaster Management Agency (FDMA) and prefectural officials, a man was found dead in a vehicle that had fallen into a swollen river in Yamaguchi prefecture. In Soeda town in Fukuoka prefecture, two people were buried underneath a mudslide. One of them was rescued, but the other was found without vital signs and later pronounced dead, according to prefectural officials.

In Karatsu city in Saga prefecture, rescue workers were searching for three people whose houses were hit by a mudslide, the FDMA said. Footage on NHK television showed one of the destroyed houses reduced to just a roof sitting on the muddy ground amid floodwater flowing down. At least three others were missing elsewhere in the region.

Footage on NHK showed muddy water from the swollen Yamakuni River gushing over a bridge in the town of Yabakei in Oita prefecture.

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