

Storm Surges Cause Coastal Flooding in Havana



Havana, September 10 (RHC)-- Although Hurricane Irma has left Cuba and has made landfall on the U.S. state of Florida, storm surges and high waves Saturday night into Sunday morning have caused coastal flooding in Havana, to an extent never before seen in some areas.

Irma's effects are still being felt on the island, with flooding, storm surges and five to eight meter high waves affecting Havana since Saturday afternoon, just as forecasters had predicted. It may be Monday until the waters rescede entirely.

So far, one of the worst affected areas has been the municipality of Central Havana, in particular the neighborhood of Cayo Hueso, which has experienced record flooding, with storm surges affecting a greater area than forecast. "This is a low-lying zone which floods when it rains, but never like this before," explained Javier Martínez Díaz, a member of the Party Municipal Committee Bureau.

Emergency search and rescue teams were deployed to evacuate those at risk and living at street level, with the support of the fire department, coastguard, Red Cross staff, and comprehensive medical emergency system (SIUM).

"This is a joint effort, one group identifies the victims and then a rescue team comes. We all support one another and have now evacuated those affected in different parts, although it's still impossible to tell

exactly how many people are left,” stated Alexei Magné, head of the coastguard detachment.

“I was just there (in the affected zone). Most people are trapped in their homeHavana, September 10 (RHC)-- Although Hurricane Irma has left Cuba and has made landfall on the U.S. state of Florida, storm surges and high waves Saturday night into Sunday morning have caused coastal flooding in Havana, to an extent never before seen in some areas.s, safe, but unable to get out. The majority of people in houses that are still there have some level of deterioration... others were evacuated earlier by the government and Civil Defense Councils. We’re here for the dangerous part, as flooding surpassed expected levels,” according to first officer Emanuel Gámez.

Meanwhile, Mai-Lin Alberty Arozarena, first secretary of the Young Communist League (UJC) in the province, speaking to Granma, reiterated that storm surges penetrated further than predicted, with Central Havana’s Maceo Park completely flooded.

“Since we began search and rescue efforts in this area, at about 6pm (yesterday, September 9), we have managed to evacuate around 20 families, including children and elderly people,” added the first secretary.

No fatalities have been reported as of yet and provincial officials, who called on search and rescue teams, hope that this continues to be the case.

“The most important things is to remain calm,” according to Alberty. “We will remain as long as it take to ensure that all affected families are safe.”

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