



Tropical storm forced the temporarily closure of ports due to strong winds in Acapulco, Zihuatanejo and Lázaro Cárdenas.

Pacific coast storm gains great strength

THE NEWS

Authorities are warning of possible hurricane conditions within the next 24 hours as the tropical storm Andrés continues to gain strength off the southwestern coast of Mexico.

Mexico's Navy put country's shores on orange alert on Monday, indicating a heightened threat across Pacific shores, including the port of Lázaro Cárdenas, north of Zihuatanejo, the Baja California peninsula and the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Colima, Nayarit and Jalisco.

While weather authorities say it is too soon to tell if the storm will reach land, the Mexican government is already taking measures to protect citizens and industries. Oil drilling op-

erations were called off on Mexico's Pacific coastline, and Acapulco city officials had prepared 120 shelters, canceled school for elementary students and recommended everyone stay at home. Officials at Lázaro Cárdenas and Zihuatanejo have temporarily closed down operations at the ports.

Andrés, predicted to become the first hurricane of this year's season, is likely to cause intense rainfall, strong winds and storm surges that will bring several inches of rain in 29 of the country's 32 states over the next few days.

The storm was expected to make its first land on Mexican shores be-

tween the afternoon and evening on Monday at Lázaro Cárdenas. The port had already reported damage to 200 homes caused by strong wind conditions. As Andrés traveled up Sinaloa's shores, it caused flooding and damage to homes, schools and shops in Mazatlán.

Andrés became on Sunday night the first named cyclone of the 2009 Eastern Pacific season, which runs May 15 to the end of November and is typically busiest between July and September.

Weather forecasters say Andre's marks the latest arrival of a tropical storm to form in 40 years on the Eastern Pacific coast.



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The U.S. National Hurricane Center advised that the system might reach Cabo San Lucas later this week and follow westward.

The storm is expected to weaken and ultimately dissipate into cooler waters northwest of Baja California's tip.

Mexico's National Weather Service said that as of 8:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, that the storm's center was about 180 kilometers (111 miles) south of Zihuatanejo and 375 kilometers (233 miles) south-southeast of Manzanillo.

The service says the storm is slowly moving northwest at a speed of 9 kilometers per hour. The storm's maximum sustained winds are around 95 kilometers (59 miles) with higher gusts up to 110 kilometers (68 miles).

The service says it expects Andrés to rapidly approach Jalisco and Colima shores throughout Tuesday.



Andrés has already caused flooding and damages at Mazatlán and Acapulco.