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New rain, flood advisories as storms pound region, prompting evacuation in Kern County [Updated]

December 20, 2010 | 1:48 pm



Heavy rains continued to pound the region on Monday as Kern County officials declared a local emergency and evacuated residents from the town of McFarland.

Meanwhile, the National Weather Service issued a new round of rain advisories, including a stream flood advisory for parts of L.A. County and a flood advisory for parts of Orange County.

Downtown Los Angeles has received 4.35 inches of rain since storms moved into the area Thursday, said meteorologist Jamie Meier. A little more than 6 inches of rain have fallen in the foothill communities near the Station fire burn area, and the San Gabriel Mountains have received as much as 10 inches.

[Updated at 2:49 p.m.: An urban-and-small-stream flood advisory is in place in downtown L.A. and foothill communities until 4 p.m. Rain has been falling steadily over the L.A. area since noon, causing minor street flooding, said L.A. County Fire Capt. Sam Padilla.



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No major damage has been reported so far. "We're waiting," he said.]

Pacific Coast Highway was closed in both directions Monday morning as workers removed boulders and rocks that had slid onto the roadway overnight near the Ventura-Los Angeles county line, according to the California Highway Patrol. It was later reopened. [Updated, 6:55 p.m.: The PCH remained closed in both directions Monday.]

Otherwise, there was relatively little damage over the wet weekend.

A northern cold front is expected to move into the Los Angeles Basin on Monday afternoon, mashing up with subtropical moisture that has been sitting off the Pacific coast for several days, Meier said. Periods of intense rainfall through Wednesday will bring another 5 inches to coastal plains and valleys and up to 10 inches in the mountains, she said.

Despite the heavy rain, rivers are not expected to flood. Ground saturation is climbing, but it is still far below the 15 inches or so that would trigger major mudslides, Meier said.

"We've had a relatively dry five years," she said. "The majority of debris flows we've seen in the past few years have been the result of isolated thunderstorm activity."

She cautioned that burn areas, such as La Cañada-Flintridge and Tujunga, will need to keep a closer eye on flooding because the ground is unable to hold as much water as other areas. Neighborhoods have been sandbagging threatened streets and homes for days.

The cold front sweeping down from Washington state is expected to cause temperatures to fall a few degrees and bring snow levels to 6,000 feet from 9,000. Forecasters say the Grapevine on Interstate 5 should not experience any flurries as a result of Monday's storm.

Showers are expected to intensify Monday night and continue throughout Tuesday before tapering off Wednesday.

The Associated Press reported flooding in McFarland, but it was unclear whether homes had been damaged.

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Photo: Brett McCalla, 6, left, and his sister Josie, 4, join their friend Nicolas McAree, 8, as they play in a flooded Poliwog Park in Manhattan Beach. Credit: Wally Skalij / Los Angeles TImes



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