

## Tropical storm 'Sendong' slams Surigao del Sur

Written by Philstar

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MANILA, Philippines - Tropical storm "Sendong" (international name Washi) slammed into Surigao del Sur yesterday afternoon, bringing strong winds and heavy rains, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said.

Storm warning signal no. 2 remained hoisted over Surigao del Norte, Siargao Island, Surigao del Sur, Dinagat province, Agusan provinces, Bukidnon, Davao del Norte, Davao Oriental, Compostela Valley and Camiguin as of 5 p.m. yesterday.

PAGASA said areas under signal no. 2 may experience winds of 61 to 100 kilometers per hour (kph) within the next 24 hours.

It said winds of such intensity could cause moderate damage to agriculture, adversely affect rice and corn farms, uproot large trees, and damage nipa and cogon houses.

"Travel by all types of sea vessels is risky in areas under signal no. 2," it said.

Signal no. 1 remained up in Palawan, Negros, Cebu, Bohol, Southern Leyte, Siquijor, Misamis Occidental, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, North Cotabato, Samal Island, Maguindanao, Davao del Sur and Zamboanga provinces.

PAGASA said winds of 45 to 60 kph are expected to affect these areas within the next 36 hours.

As of 4 p.m. yesterday, the eye of the storm was spotted in the vicinity of Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur, packing winds of 65 kph near the center and gustiness of up to 80 kph, while moving west northwest at 22 kph.

PAGASA said Sendong slightly weakened after making landfall over Hinatuan at around 2:30 p.m. yesterday.

The weather bureau said Sendong will continue to bring rains over the eastern section of Mindanao and Central Visayas this weekend and rains would also affect Southern Luzon, particularly Bicol, and Visayas.

PAGASA senior weather forecaster Rene Paciente said Metro Manila could experience light rains tomorrow as the storm crosses Palawan.

PAGASA warned residents in low lying and mountainous areas against possible flashfloods and landslides.

Likewise, those living in coastal areas are alerted against big waves or storm surges generated by the tropical cyclone.

PAGASA said the storm is expected to bring 10 to 25 millimeters per hour (heavy) of rain within its 400-km diameter.

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The weather bureau also advised mining operators and small-scale miners to take necessary precautionary measures against possible flashfloods and landslides.

Fishing boats and other small sea craft were likewise advised not to venture out to sea due to strong winds and big waves generated by the storm.

### **Three dead**

National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) executive director Benito Ramos has confirmed that three persons have died due to heavy flooding in parts of Zamboanga peninsula.

Ramos said a certain Mrs. Damuag, 60, who drowned in Polanco, Zamboanga del Norte last Thursday, was among the first casualties to be confirmed.

He said the flood in Polanco town affected 20 families or 100 persons.

"They (affected families) are temporarily evacuated to higher ground for safety," Ramos said, adding that floodwaters in the area have subsided.

Ramos said flooding also occurred in barangays Turno and Dicayas in Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte.

He said six houses and a day care center in Sitio Wakwak in Barangay Turno were destroyed by raging floodwaters.

About 60 families or 300 persons were evacuated in Turno Elementary School. The flood also affected five other villages, but there were no reported displacement incidents.

Ramos said residents in Barangay Dicayas chose to stay in their houses despite the rising floodwaters.

"Barangay officials will execute forced evacuation if the situation warrants," he said, adding that residents in low-lying and mountainous areas have been alerted against possible flashfloods and landslides.

The NDRRMC has asked regional disaster management officials to undertake precautionary measures in their respective areas.

Local disaster management centers were also advised to initiate preemptive evacuation of families in low-lying areas when needed.

Ramos said they have declared a red alert to ensure that enough personnel would monitor the situation. A red alert entails the cancellation of all leaves.

Ramos said the NDRRMC Operation Center has been activated since Thursday morning to

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monitor developments and undertake the necessary actions.

He said weather bulletins have been disseminated to partner agencies and local governments to allow them to craft preparedness plans.

### **Stranded**

Meanwhile, the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) prevented close to 8,000 people from traveling because of the strong winds and high waves.

At around 10 a.m. yesterday, the PCG said 7,755 people were already waiting at sea terminals in 13 seaports where storm signal had been declared by the weather bureau.

A majority of the stranded passengers were in Cebu with 2,438, while 2,195 were stranded in Sorsogon.

At least 650 were stuck in Dumaguete, 458 in Maasin, and 251 in Tagbilaran. In Southern Tagalog, 73 were stranded in Puerto Real and 32 in Lucena.

At least 481 were stranded in Albay and five in Masbate, 365 people in Surigao, 200 in Butuan, and hundreds more in Albay.

PCG commandant Admiral Ramon Liwag yesterday issued a warning to the sea-going public, particularly fishermen, officers and crewmembers as well as owners and operators of sea vessels.

"The public is advised to plan or postpone trips if the intended routes and destination will be affected by Sendong so as to avoid being stranded in areas where vessel movements are suspended. The public is also encouraged to continuously monitor the regular announcements of PAGASA and PCG," the PCG said in a statement.

The PCG is also coordinating with the local government units, Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary (PCGA) and other rescue units in their respective areas for possible deployment. They have been directed to coordinate with the tri-media to disseminate the latest development on the tropical cyclone.

Sendong is the 19th tropical cyclone to enter the country this year and the first weather disturbance this month. – Evelyn Macairan, Alexis Romero