

= Hurricane Tara (1961) =

Hurricane Tara , also known as Cyclone Tara , was one of the deadliest Pacific hurricanes on record . The final tropical cyclone of the 1961 Pacific hurricane season , Tara formed on November 10 about 230 mi (365 km) off the coast of Mexico . It strengthened to reach maximum sustained winds of 85 mph (140 km / h) before making landfall in the Mexican state of Guerrero near Zihuatanejo . Hurricane Tara dissipated on November 12 , bringing heavy rainfall and strong winds to locations inundated by 10 days of precipitation . Damage was light in the major port city of Acapulco , though further west along the coast , the effects of Tara were much worse . The city of Nuxco in Tecpán de Galeana municipality received the most damage and deaths from the hurricane . Throughout Mexico , at least 436 fatalities were reported , and damage exceeded \$ 16 million (1961 USD , \$ 115 million 2009 USD) .

= = Meteorological history = =

On November 9 , a weak circulation remained nearly stationary off the coast of Acapulco , Mexico . It did not have significant convection , although it organized enough to be considered a tropical cyclone at 0000 UTC on November 10 , about 230 mi (365 km) off the coast of Mexico . By the afternoon of the 10th , it was a tropical depression moving northeastward toward the coastline . Tara intensified , reaching hurricane status and its peak intensity of 85 mph (140 km / h) late on November 11 . Early on November 12 , Hurricane Tara made landfall near Zihuatanejo , Guerrero , between Acapulco and Manzanillo , near where Hurricane Iva moved ashore five months earlier . Continuing inland , it was last observed at 1200 UTC on November 12 . At the time , it was known as Cyclone Tara , as the term cyclone was the more common equivalent for hurricane in the region .

= = Impact and aftermath = =

Hurricane Tara caused severe damage in southern Guerrero where it moved ashore , wrecking at least 10 communities . Heavy rainfall from Tara exacerbated flooding in the area , which was caused by ten days of precipitation preceding the hurricane ; the heavy rainfall contaminated drinking water . Strong waves killed a surfer in the Acapulco area . In the city , low @-@ lying areas were inundated with water , causing in excess of \$ 1 million in damage (1961 USD) . In nearby Tecpán de Galeana , the hurricane killed 116 people , and dozens more were killed in other close villages . Elsewhere in Guerrero , the coastal highway between Acapulco and Zihuatanejo received heavy damage , which later hampered relief efforts ; the highway was a priority for storm repairs , with crews working continuously for several days to restore the vital link . Many deaths were reported in coastal towns of Guerrero , although exact death tolls were initially unknown , with many of the towns covered in mud . People received little warning of the hurricane , and many people died while sleeping . In addition , thousands were left homeless by the storm . According to radio reports , a hurricane @-@ related waterspout wrecked the city of Nuxco , although the damage was later described as flooding from a lagoon ; 225 deaths were reported in Nuxco . Food supplies were depleted in some coastal communities , forcing residents to rely on coconuts that were downed during the hurricane . Overall crop damage in Mexico was unofficially estimated at \$ 16 million (1961 USD , \$ 115 million 2009 USD) . By two days after the storm , the government of Mexico sent two airplanes to Acapulco , where the food , clothing , and medicine were distributed by truck or helicopter to the affected areas . The Mexican government arranged plans to drop food and medical aid into isolated villages , although food supplies were initially insufficient for the great number of people affected by the storm . Five army units and three helicopters were sent to the region to assist in the aftermath , although planes encountered difficulties in landing due to flooded runways . Army soldiers were responsible for rescue operations , while paratroopers were sent to the most affected areas to distribute aid . Despite fears of the spread of disease in the aftermath , prompt work by medical officials prevented any epidemics due to the storm .

The exact death toll was unknown , but believed to be several hundred . About two days after the storm , the official death toll was more than 80 . By three days after the storm , the toll rose to 190 , and by four days after it made landfall , the official total was 290 deaths ; officials estimated the toll could have exceeded 500 . Due to downed communications , reports of storm fatalities were slow to spread , though news became more rapid as links were repaired . On November 19 , a week after the storm struck , the Mexican Army set the final death toll at 436 deaths , with 300 missing ; the death toll was later reported by the United States Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in 1993 . Overall , Hurricane Tara was the deadliest disaster in 1961 , as well as the third deadliest Mexico Pacific hurricane on record , after a hurricane in 1959 and Hurricane Liza in 1976 .