

= Hurricane Ignacio (2003) =

Hurricane Ignacio was the latest @-@ forming first hurricane of a Pacific hurricane season since reliable satellite observation began in 1966 . The ninth tropical storm of the 2003 Pacific hurricane season , Ignacio developed out of a tropical wave on August 22 a short distance off the coast of Mexico . It was initially predicted to track out to sea and remain a weak tropical storm , though it unexpectedly organized rapidly to attain peak winds of 105 mph (165 km / h) on August 24 while located a short distance southeast of southern Baja California . Land interaction weakened Ignacio to an 80 mph (130 km / h) hurricane by the time it made landfall near La Paz , and it dissipated on August 27 in the central region of the Baja California peninsula .

The hurricane produced heavy rainfall in southern Baja California , killing two rescue workers from floodwaters . Resort areas near the coast experienced minor effects , though further inland the damage was more severe . The impact of Ignacio was compounded by flooding from Hurricane Marty a month later , with damage from the two hurricanes totaling about \$ 1 billion (2003 USD , \$ 1 @. @ 1 billion 2006 USD) .

= = Meteorological history = =

A tropical wave exited the coast of Africa on August 6 . It moved westward across the Atlantic Ocean without development , and entered the eastern Pacific Ocean on August 16 after crossing Central America . Cloudiness and convection gradually increased along the wave axis and organized into a distinct area of disturbed weather on August 20 while located a short distance south of Manzanillo , Mexico . It slowly became better organized as it moved northwestward in an area favorable for continued development . With light vertical wind shear and warm water temperatures , the convection concentrated around a developing low @-@ level circulation , and on August 22 it organized enough for the National Hurricane Center to classify it as Tropical Depression Nine @-@ E while it was located about 115 miles (185 km) west of the Mexico mainland or about 220 miles (345 km) southeast of the southern tip of the Baja California Peninsula . With an anticyclone located over the southwestern United States and a ridge extending southward into northwestern Mexico , the National Hurricane Center initially predicted the depression to track generally west @-@ northwestward out to sea and reach peak winds of 50 mph (85 km / h) .

The tropical depression moved slowly northwestward , with the slow motion persisting for its entire lifetime due to the storm being embedded within the weakness of a mid @-@ level ridge to its north . Shortly after forming , the storm was located in a marginally favorable environment , with westerly wind shear and dry air approaching the depression and leaving the center of circulation exposed from the convection . However , the wind shear subsequently decreased , and early on August 23 the depression intensified into Tropical Storm Ignacio . The storm quickly organized and developed well @-@ defined banding features and very well @-@ organized upper @-@ level outflow , and by late on August 23 a warm spot formed in the center of the convection . The warm spot organized into an intermittent eye feature . Early on August 24 , Ignacio attained hurricane status , the latest formation of the first hurricane of a season recorded in the East Pacific since reliable satellite observation began in 1966 .

Hurricane Ignacio continued to quickly intensify after becoming a hurricane , and reached peak winds of 105 mph (165 km / h) later on August 24 while located within 30 miles (48 km / h) off the coast of Baja California Sur . Upon reaching peak strength , the hurricane possessed a 12 mile (19 km) wide eye surrounded by very deep convection . The National Hurricane Center predicted it to attain major hurricane status and potentially reach significantly higher winds if the center remained over open water . However , it turned to the northwest and paralleled the Baja California Peninsula a short distance offshore , resulting in a steady weakening trend due to its interaction with the high terrain . On August 25 Ignacio made landfall just east of La Paz with winds of 80 mph (130 km / h) . It rapidly weakened over land , first deteriorating to a tropical storm 12 hours after landfall and later to a tropical depression about a day after moving ashore . Ignacio continued northwestward across

the peninsula , and dissipated on August 28 while located in northwestern Baja California Sur .

== Preparations ==

Coinciding with the issuance of the first advisory on Ignacio , the government of Mexico issued a tropical storm watch from Santa Fe to La Paz , with the watch upgraded to a warning nine hours later . The warning was extended on both coasts from Bahia Magdalena to San Evaristo the next day . About 48 hours before Ignacio made landfall , a hurricane warning was issued from Santa Fe to La Paz , and 21 hours later extended to Bahia Magdalena and San Evaristo . The government of Mexico also issued a tropical storm warning for the mainland from Atlana to Topolobampo in the state of Sinaloa .

The Civil Protection agency for the state of Baja California Sur ordered for the evacuation for 10 @, @ 000 residents in flood @-@ prone areas near La Paz . Officials also moved 700 people in areas near rivers to shelters in Los Cabos . 32 emergency shelters were set up in and around La Paz . Residents near the coast placed sandbags to protect their houses from potential flooding , and also stocked up on hurricane supplies . Police authorities were stationed in areas around Los Cabos to guard against price gouging . Officials closed many schools and businesses throughout the area , and also shut down the area 's primary airport in La Paz . About 500 people in Sinaloa were evacuated , as well .

== Impact ==

Prior to developing , the precursor tropical disturbance dropped heavy rainfall and produced gusty winds , primarily from Zihuatanejo in the state of Guerrero to Manzanillo in the state of Colima . The slow motion of Ignacio produced heavy rainfall across the southern portion of the Baja California Peninsula , including a peak 24 ? hour total of 7 @. @ 25 inches (184 mm) in Ciudad Constitución . The National Hurricane Center warned of rainfall totals of up to 20 inches (500 mm) in some localized areas , which did verify in Los Cabos . Ignacio produced strong waves which hit the eastern Baja California coastline . Swells of 10 feet (3 m) in height in La Paz closed the city 's small port .

Hurricane @-@ force winds blew down trees , signs , and power lines in and around La Paz , while closer to the beach the hurricane destroyed multiple beach huts . Rough surf in the harbor of La Paz sunk one fishing vessel and grounded four others . Efforts by the Mexican Navy prevented an additional vessel and two cruise ships from being grounded . In Cabo San Lucas , effects were minimal , amounting to light winds and rain of less than 2 inches (50 mm) . The passage of the hurricane left citizens in Todos Santos without power for around 24 hours . Heavy rainfall caused severe inland flooding , destroying bridges and multiple mudslides , some of which blocked roads . Flash flooding in desert inland areas washed out roads , causing the Mexican government to restrict traffic through much of the peninsula for up to a week after the storm . Many roads remained impassable for a month after the hurricane . The closed roads and the airport in La Paz and southern Baja California left some tourists stranded . The rainfall was welcome in some desert areas , where the moderate precipitation filled reservoirs . Two rescue workers died when they were swept away by the floodwaters . Six municipalities in Baja California were declared disaster areas , and by four days after landfall , the Mexican government prepared emergency funds to meet the immediate needs of the affected citizens .

Heavy rainfall was also reported in Sinaloa on the Mexican mainland . The remnants of Ignacio produced thunderstorm activity in high terrain areas of central interior California . Over 300 lightning strikes from the remnant moisture was recorded in a one @-@ hour period . The lightning caused 14 forest fires in Merced County , resulting in a loss of power to over 3 @, @ 500 customers in and around the Atwater area .

Just a month after Ignacio , Hurricane Marty passed through the area , causing additional damage to areas hit by Ignacio . The combined damage from the two hurricanes totaled about \$ 1 billion (2003 USD , \$ 1 @. @ 1 billion 2006 USD) , and the effects from the two storms left at least 50 @, @

000 homeless .