

Residents use boats to retrieve people & items from flooded homes

Aug. 30, 2017 AT 5:30 AM in Moss Bluff, LA

(Rick Hickman / Associated Press)

Jenny Jarvie and Molly Hennessy

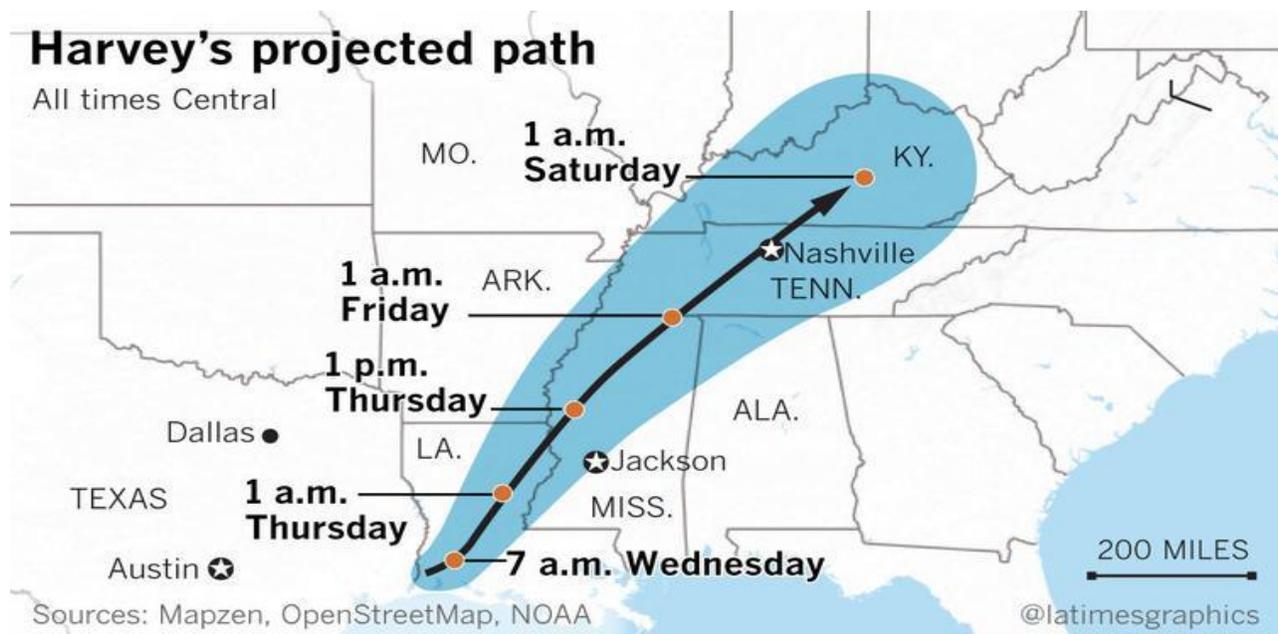
[As Harvey breaks rainfall record, Houston imposes a curfew and death toll climbs to 18](#)

The biggest rainstorm in the history of the U.S. mainland made a second landfall Wednesday on the Gulf Coast, slowly moving away from Houston and dousing southeast Texas and southwest Louisiana.

While [Tropical Storm Harvey](#) no longer has the power of the Category 4 hurricane that slammed the Gulf Coast late Friday — it is expected to weaken as it moves north toward Mississippi and Tennessee — the [National Hurricane Center](#) warned of continued “catastrophic and life-threatening” flooding. The Texas National Guard has made more than 8,500 rescues and 26,000 evacuations, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said at a news conference Wednesday.

After activating 14,000 members of the Texas National Guard, Abbott announced he was seeking an additional 10,000 National Guard members from other states.

“The worst is not yet over for southeast Texas,” he said.

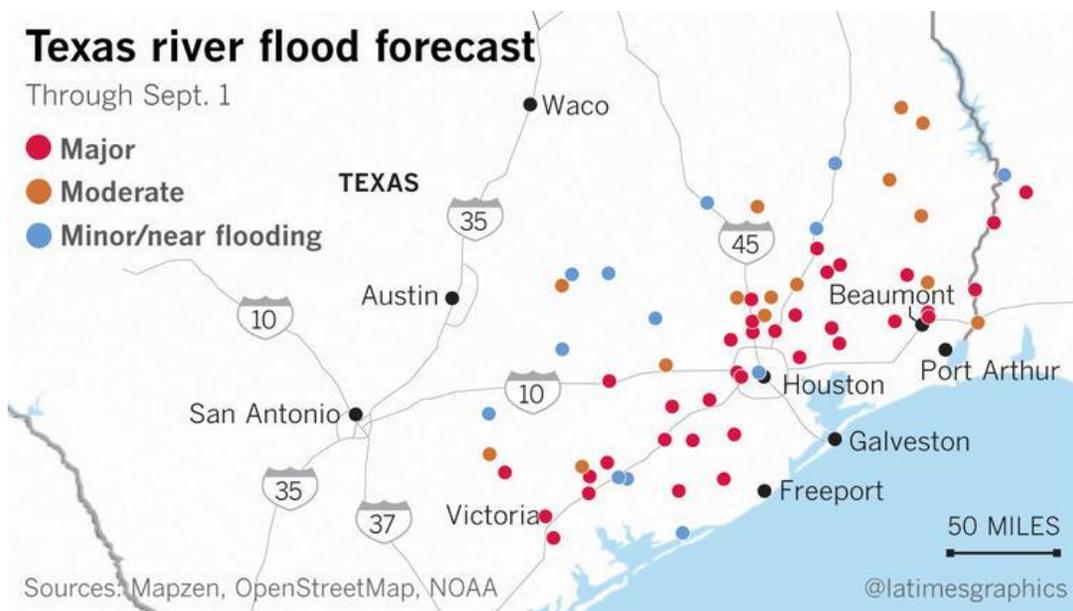


Already, tens of thousands of people in Houston and across southeast Louisiana have had to evacuate their homes, and the death toll has risen to more than 20, including a Houston police officer who drowned in his car while driving to work.

A white van containing the bodies of four children and their great-grandparents was found Wednesday near Greens Bayou in east Houston.

Virginia Saldivar said her brother-in-law, Sam, was driving her grandchildren and her husband's parents to higher ground Sunday when the current swept up the van. Sam survived by climbing out of the front seat and grabbing onto a tree limb, but the van disappeared into the water.

About 85 miles east of Houston, in Beaumont, Texas, a 41-year-old mother, Colette Sulcer, and her 3-year-old daughter were swept away by high floodwaters Tuesday after getting out of their car near a flooded freeway. The child clung to its mother for half a mile before police officers and fire rescue divers spotted them in a canal and plucked them out of the water just before they went under a trestle. The mother died, but the child was in stable condition.



The Sheriff's Office in Harris County, which includes Houston, said Wednesday morning that the Coast Guard was leading a search in the northeast part of the city for two civilian rescuers still missing after a boat crash.

Since Harvey made landfall Friday night as a hurricane, some areas around Houston have seen more than of 50 inches of rain — about what they usually receive in a year.

As the rain let up Wednesday in the nation’s fourth-largest city, residents were cheered by clearing skies and a bit of sunshine. Restaurants and shops began to reopen.

In the Montrose neighborhood west of downtown, small groups of neighbors took to rain-slicked streets in boots and sneakers to survey the damage.

Even warnings from the National Weather Service in Houston and Galveston became less dire: “Improving weather conditions to come,” it announced after canceling its tropical storm warning and storm surge watch.

But many areas still remained impassable. Main highways and other roads were washed out, and more than 10,000 people were temporarily homeless at the main shelter in the city's downtown George R. Brown Convention Center.



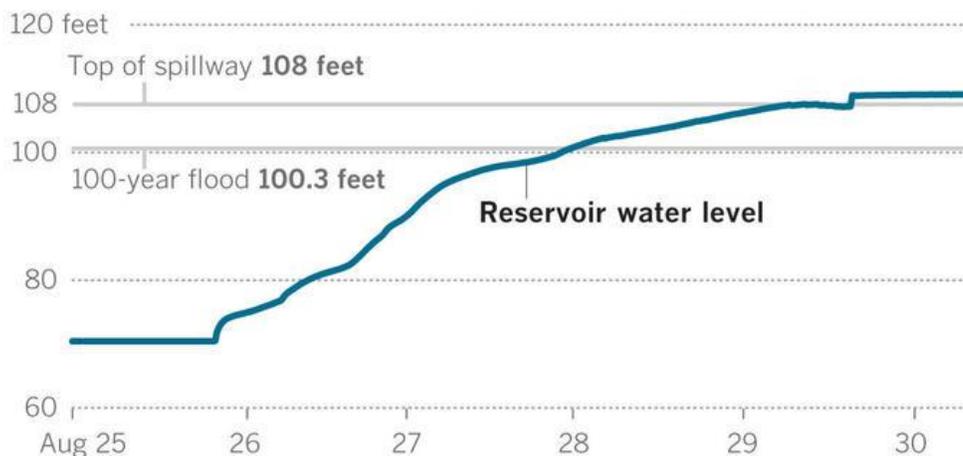
City officials have asked the Federal Emergency Management Agency for cots and food for an additional 10,000 people, and officials are set to open a shelter at the Toyota Center, a downtown Houston arena.

Early Wednesday, Harris County officials warned that a levee protecting the Inverness Forest subdivision in the north part of the county could fail after a portion of its base eroded. A mandatory evacuation of part of the area is in place until 6 p.m. CDT while crews attempt to shore up the levee, said Jeff Lindner, meteorologist for the Harris County Flood Control District.

Thousands of homes west of downtown, upstream from the Barker and Addicks reservoirs, flooded after dams backed up from heavy rainfall.



Addicks Reservoir water level since Aug. 25



Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District

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With some homes filled with up to 6 feet of water, residents would not be able to return for several weeks, Lindner said at a morning news conference. He was not sure if the homes would be rebuilt.

“When water sits in a house for weeks, the house begins to degrade and so we’re not sure what the condition of those homes will be when residents return in a few weeks,” Lindner said. “Will these homes be allowed to be rebuilt or will they be rebuilt? That’s a question that we’ll have to look at going forward.”

Lindner said he did not expect additional homes to flood.

“The watersheds are falling, and while most of them remain well over their banks and some of them remain at record levels, the water levels are going down,” he said. “And that’s for the first time in several days.”

In Port Arthur, Texas, a coastal city 90 miles east of Houston, Motiva Enterprises began a controlled shutdown of its massive plant, the nation’s largest oil refinery. Employees won’t go back to work until floodwaters recede.

Five miles across town, floodwater began to spill into a shelter for displaced residents. At the Robert A. “Bob” Bowers Civic Center, residents perched on cots standing in murky brown water.

And the death toll kept rising. On Wednesday, Beaumont officials said a second woman’s body was found on the north side at 7:25 a.m.

Tuesday night, the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences updated its storm-related deaths to include that of an 89-year-old woman, Agnes Stanley, who was found floating in 4 feet of floodwater in a home. Another woman, 76, was discovered floating in water near a vehicle. Her name was not released. A 45-year-old man, Travis Lynn Callihan, left his vehicle and fell into floodwater. He was taken to a hospital, where he died Monday.