

Cuba: Storm Alberto Kills 4, Damages Infrastructure

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Four people have been killed, in Cuba, as a result of flooding from rainfall which accompanied Tropical Storm Alberto.

Interior Minister Julio Cesar Gandarilla confirmed the death toll at a meeting with officials headed by President Miguel Diaz-Canel. "We have four people dead so far, two in the province of Ciego de Avila, one in Sancti Spiritus and another in Villa Clara due to reckless behavior," the Interior Minister said, on Tuesday.

More than 51,000 Cubans have been evacuated in the area.

"We must work together and come out of this stronger," said the president. "Our experience tells us that with climate change these situations are going to occur frequently, therefore we must be prepared and be able to respond to each one of them."

Diaz-Canel also announced that focus is being placed on re-establishing essential services such as electricity and transportation. Over 43,000 people remain without electricity in several provinces.

According to state-run media, tens of thousands of people are facing evacuation due to the effects of the storm, which dumped more than 10 centimeters of rain on the country over a 24-hour period.

Bridges were washed away and roads damaged, by the force of the water, leaving about 60,000 people without electricity and causing several communities to be isolated. Some 1,384 homes have been affected, with 174 totally collapsed, according to the Diaz-Canel-cheered meeting.

An oil spill – which is now under control – was caused by heavy flooding at one of the nation's main oil refineries in Cienfuegos. It has been controlled by local authorities. There has also been substantial damage in the agricultural sector, with crops such as rice, beans, tobacco and bananas particularly affected.

Last year, Hurricane Irma lashed Cuba for three days and killed at least 10 people as well as left US\$ 13 billion worth of destruction in its path.

Alberto – which made landfall in the United States on Tuesday – is the first named storm of the 2018 Atlantic hurricane season, that officially starts on June 1.

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