

Makeshift houses nearly ready to accommodate Fangshan flood victims

By ZHENG JINRAN
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The last of the makeshift homes being built for residents who lost their houses in the July 21 floods will be completed by Monday, and 41 families have already moved in.

"The rains off and on after the storm on July 21 have jeopardized our construction process a little. But people have been working around the clock in recent days, making sure all the temporary houses are finished before Monday, as scheduled," said Liu Haiqi, a publicity official with Beijing Municipal Commission of Housing and Urban-Rural Development.

"The last site will be thoroughly checked on Sunday night and the construction will be finished on time," said Guo Haigang, an official from Beijing Construction Engineering Group, one of two construction companies working on the project.

Chen Lu, an official from Beijing Urban Construction Group, said that their work will be finished before Monday as well.

The July 21 storm, bringing the heaviest rainfall in the capital in 61 years, triggered flooding and landslides, and caused 78 deaths, of which 43 were in Fangshan district. More than 7,200 houses were washed away by floodwater, leaving thousands of residents living in temporary tents, especially in Fangshan district which was hard-hit because it is mountainous.

The construction compa-

nies started building 5,626 temporary houses five days after the storm in the 44 sites in Fangshan that were selected by experts for safety reasons.

"Supporting facilities such as electricity and drinking water have been set up in these sites. The last site will be equipped with them as soon as it passes the check at night," Guo said, adding that many residents have already moved in.

"I hope I can move in immediately," said Chen Li, 41, from Beicheying village, whose house was destroyed by the flood. "But I don't know how to apply for the housing, since no details about the application have been released from the authority of our village yet."

"I don't want to live in the hot, damp tents anymore," he said.

Shen Yinping, another resident at the village, had her shop flooded, forcing her whole family to live in a small room on the second floor.

"Though we have rooms to live in, better than the others, it's not enough for my family. Three of them are sleeping on the floor," she said. "If possible, I want to have one unit as well."

Gao Zhuang, an official of this village, said they are working out a plan to distribute these limited makeshift homes, but admitted: "There is no easy solution."

About 289 houses were destroyed in the village during the storm. "But we only have 300 temporary houses, accommodating 600 people at most, not enough for all our villagers whose houses were damaged," Gao said. "So the

families who suffered the most severe damage will get priority to have these units."

Zhai Ruisheng, Party chief of the village, said they planned to borrow several units from the neighboring village if they have extra makeshift housing.

The families eligible for the housing will be selected according to inspections of housing damage after the storm. "No application will be needed, and these families can move in before Thursday," Gao said.

People will live in the temporary housing for three months while they repair their houses or three years while they finish building new houses.

During the torrential rains, many areas, including downtown Beijing, witnessed traffic chaos in some low-lying areas. A driver drowned in deep water at an underpass at Guangqumen in downtown Dongcheng district.

To prevent such cases, monitors will be installed at underpasses and expressway sections that are below ground level to update data, such as depth of the water. Alarms and advice will be issued on traffic flow, said Zhang Shusen, deputy director of Beijing Municipal Commission of Transport.

The Beijing Traffic Management Bureau has marked warning labels to indicate water levels in case of rain on 133 underpasses and road sections that are prone to standing water.

Wang Xiaodong contributed to this story.



WU ZHANGJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY
A girl stands with her father on the muddy ground at Pianling township, Xiuyan county, Liaoning province, on Sunday after Typhoon Damrey tore through the region.

Brief relief, but more wild weather on the way

By JIN ZHU
and TAN ZONGYANG in Beijing,
and LIU CE in Shenyang

With many regions still reeling from torrential rain and floods caused by two typhoons, a new round of wild weather will lash parts of China's coastal areas in coming days, authorities said.

As of 9 am Sunday, typhoons Saola and Damrey had wreaked havoc across seven provinces.

The typhoons left at least eight people dead and eight missing in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Jiangxi, Shandong, Liaoning and Hebei provinces, according to the Ministry of Civil Affairs. More than 1 million people had been evacu-

ated, the ministry said.

"I never saw such heavy rain and didn't expect that the city would be flooded," said Qiao Tianguang, a 43-year-old villager in Gaizhou, one of the worst-hit cities in Northeast China's Liaoning.

Qiao drove a forklift for two days to save more than 20 people in danger. He said the water in streets was almost 2 meters deep. Small cars were submerged. There was no one in the streets except people trapped by the floods.

"We took seven pregnant women to hospital. It took about an hour because of the deep water and the debris such as TV sets and desks. Usually, it's only 15 minutes to get there," Qiao said.

Rainstorms caused by Typhoon Damrey eased on Saturday night in Liaoning. However, eight villages in Xiuyan county and Haicheng and Gaizhou cities still could not be accessed by vehicles because of washed-out roads.

"Some rescuers went there by boat, but communication has not yet been re-established," said Huang Dawei, a Gaizhou official.

Fifteen fire engines carried water to people in these areas, and authorities cut the power supply on Saturday to prevent people getting electrocuted. More than 2,500 kilograms of biscuits, 5,000 boxes of bottled water, 150,000 sausages and 1,000 boxes of bread were delivered to the temporary settlements in Gaizhou.

1
million people
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by Sunday morning

The flood also stopped or delayed more than 5,000 buses.

"Our train seems like a boat, running above the water," said Yan Fei, who took a train departing Gaizhou about 1 pm on Sunday. Some parts of the railway track were still under water, she added.

Beijing Railway Station, the capital's main rail hub that links the city with three provinces in Northeast China — Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang — experienced many delays and cancellations over the weekend.

Yu Xuejin, the station's publicity director, said on Sunday that despite disruption over the weekend, the damaged rail lines to the northeast gradually resumed services after urgent repairs had been made.

By 2 pm on Sunday, 10 trains leaving for the region from the station were canceled. The figure will be further reduced to three on Monday, compared with a cancellation of 25 trains on Saturday, Yu said.

"This was the most serious blockage of the region's railway network in the past five years," he said.

On Saturday more than 20,000 passengers returned train tickets at the station, as their travel plans

were affected by the suspension of rail services, especially on the prominent Beijing-Harbin line.

Passengers can return their tickets within three days from departure time of the canceled trains and get a full refund, Yu said.

More than 30,000 passengers were stranded at peak hours on Saturday morning and afternoon, Beijing Daily reported.

"Since the train schedule is under dynamic adjustment these days, we are now informing the public through electronic billboards at the station or on the Internet on a real-time basis," Yu said.

In the south, strong gales and heavy rainstorms brought by tropical storm Haikui, the 11th of the year, will hit Shanghai and Zhejiang, Anhui and Jiangsu provinces on Tuesday and Wednesday, according to the China Meteorological Administration.

The tropical storm was moving northwestward from Japan's Okinawa on early Sunday, the administration said.

Heavy rain will also sweep parts of Hubei, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan and Guangdong provinces and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region in the next three days, due to the combined impact of cold air and the previous double typhoons, it said.

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Wu Yong in Shenyang contributed to this story.

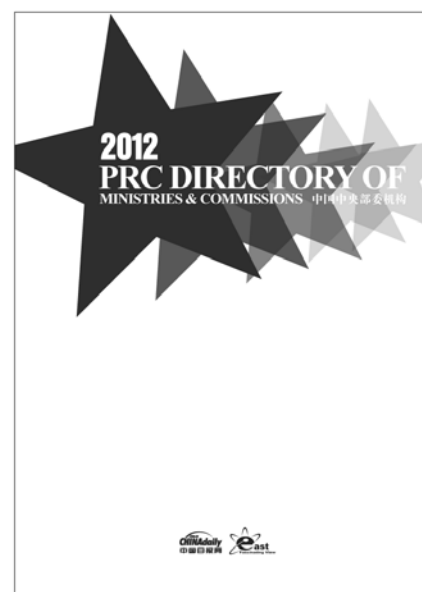
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