

Cyclone lashes remote Australian coast with wind, rains

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In this image made from video taken on March 21, 2019, storm evacuees board an Australian Defence Force C-130 plane preparing to take off from Borroloola, Australia. (Australian Broadcasting Corporation via AP)

Sydney: A vast and powerful cyclone made landfall Saturday along with a remote stretch of the northern Australian coast, bringing fierce winds and heavy rains amid safety fears for a small number of residents whoâ€™ve stayed in the area.

A category 4 storm, with 5 being the strongest, Cyclone Trevor crossed the Gulf of Carpentaria coast at 9.50 am local time (2250 GMT) in the far east of the Northern Territory, near its border with Queensland state.

Most of the sparsely populated area has been evacuated, with more than 2,000 people put up in temporary accommodation in the Northern Territory capital Darwin, and the nearby town of Katherine.

But with the cyclone bringing wind gusts of up to 250 kilometers per hour (155 miles per hour), and with flash flooding expected as heavy rains meet hard-baked lands recently hit by drought, authorities have issued safety warnings for the small number of people who have stayed put.

Northern Territory Emergency Services spokesman Jason Collins said anyone remaining in Trevorâ€™s path needed to have supplies to last at least three days, to take shelter and stay away from waterways.

â€œTurn around, donâ€™t drown. We may not be there to save you,â€ he said. â€œEmergency services are stretched.â€

Those remaining in the area, mostly farm holders, mine workers and local residents who opted not to leave, are believed to number less than a couple of dozen.

Moving in a west-southwest direction, Cyclone Trevor was expected to weaken to category 2 by late Saturday.

Meanwhile, Cyclone Veronica, another category 4 system, was expected to cross the northwest Australian coast late Saturday night, bringing wind gusts of up to 230 kph (143 mph).

Residents of Western Australia stateâ€™s coastal Pilbara region, which is also only lightly populated, have been warned to take cover.

Cyclones are frequent in Australiaâ€™s tropical north and rarely claim lives. But two such large storms as Cyclones Trevor and Veronica crossing land on the same weekend is rare.

- AP
