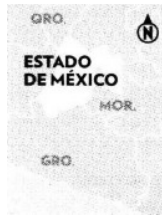


ESTADO DE MÉXICO

Flood relief arrives; key fixes 'urgent'



STATE OF MEXICO - Officials from both the National Water Commission (Conagua) and the local government found that 11 out of the 12 gabion-type retaining

walls - pre-fabricated wire mesh baskets filled with rocks - installed at higher-altitudes in the Guadalupe sierra to contain flood waters - were destroyed during Friday's downpour, causing major damages to the Mexico City suburbs of Ecatepec and Coacalco in the State of Mexico.

In response, Governor Enrique Peña Nieto announced on Wednesday a 50-million peso aid program for more than 4,000 families affected in those two municipalities, along with Tultitlán.

Critics complained of the federal government's delay in declaring the area a disaster zone, which didn't happen until Wednesday afternoon.

In a tour of the Los Reyes neighborhood in Tultitlán, Peña Nieto said that each family will receive 7,000 pesos in the form of a debit card.

"The truth is, we estimate that general aid will be 50 million pesos, depending on if we receive a larger budget," he said.

In Coacalco and Ecatepec, nearly 3,500 residences had some form of damage, and about 1,500 more were affected in Tultitlán. Hundreds were also affected in the capital's Miguel A. Hidalgo Borough.

Peña Nieto said that some of Ecatepec's communities were built in risky areas and will have to be relocated to avoid further damages.

On Monday, Conagua and Ecatepec officials inspected the Guadalupe mountains. Antonio Gutiérrez Marco, the director of Water and Sanitation, said that the infrastructure is in poor conditions and was unable to handle Friday's heavy rains. The flood control system in this area, he said, was built more than forty years ago.

"The main problem was that 80 mm of rain fell in this area in three hours. We're talking about one seventh of the entire year's rainfall."

After determining the gabion walls' damages, Gutiérrez said that Conagua will rebuild them, and will reinforce ravines around the area to prevent further flooding.

Speaking in León, Guanajuato, Conagua Director José Luis Luege Tamargo attributed flooding in Mexico City and its suburbs to a lack of maintenance of infrastructure. "The damages were provoked by bad runoff, bad drainage, trash in the streams and blockage of ravines, and those aren't exactly natural causes," Luege said.

Ecatepec Mayor Eruviel Ávila Villegas said that 15 of the 120 families who built houses or moved into high-risk areas will be relocated soon.

On Tuesday, the municipal treasury distributed vouchers worth between 5,000 and 10,000 pesos to buy appliances, as well as debit cards to buy food packages.



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CUARTOSCURO/JULIS CARRAYO

Ecatepec was one of several municipalities declared a federal disaster zone on Wed.