Tornado kills at least 5, injures 33, in Chinese metropolis

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CNN — normal

At least five people were killed and 33 injured in a tornado Saturday that struck Guangzhou, a city of 19 million people in southern China, according to Chinese state media.

Authorities say 141 factory buildings were damaged but no residential houses collapsed, according to the Xinhua news agency. It said a preliminary assessment put the tornado at level-three intensity, two below the highest level of five.

Guangzhou, about 80 miles (130 kilometers) from Hong Kong, is the capital

city of Guangdong province.

A weather station in Liangtian Village, Baiyun District, about 1.7 miles from where the tornado hit, registered a maximum wind gust of 20.6 meters per second, Xinhua reported.

As of 10 p.m. local time, search and rescue operations had ended.

The tornado follows multiple days of heavy rains that have lashed southern China, unleashing deadly floods and threatening to upend the lives of tens of millions of people as rescuers rush to evacuate residents trapped by rising waters.

Guangdong province, an economic powerhouse home to 127 million people, has seen widespread flooding that has forced more than 110,000 people to

be relocated, state media reported, citing the local government.

Earlier this week state media reported that floods had killed at least four people in Guangdong.

Since April 16, sustained torrential rains have pounded the Pearl River Delta, China's manufacturing heartland and one of the country's most populated regions, with four weather stations in Guangdong registering record rainfall for April.

The Pearl River basin is subject to annual flooding from April to September, but the region has faced more intense rainstorms and severe floods in recent years as scientists warn that the climate crisis will amplify extreme weather, making it deadlier and more frequent.

While tornadoes do not occur as frequently in China as they do in the US, they do happen. A peer-reviewed scientific article from 2015 found that China averages fewer than 100 tornadoes per year, and that at least 1,772 people had died from tornadoes in the country in the 50 years since 1961.

The China Meteorological Agency is warning heavy rain and strong storms are likely to continue until the end of the month.