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MARCH 17, 2019

Jakarta. At least 61 people have died and thousands were displaced after a flash flood hit **Sentani** in Papua on Saturday night, in the latest and worst disaster Indonesia has seen so far this year.

The flood, which also injured at least 43 people, was the first to hit the town in Indonesia's easternmost province since 2007.

"Flash floods that occur in Indonesia are often preceded by landslides in upstream areas. This

blocks rivers, creating a natural dam and accumulating a body of water," National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said in a statement on Sunday.

He added that in this incident, as the rainfall continued to increase, the natural dam burst its banks and flooded low-lying areas, where most people live. The water also carried wood and other rubble, which caused most of the injuries and damage.

Sentani Airport, the main link to the outside world, was not affected by the flood and continues to operate as normal, the Ministry of Transportation said. However, the floodwaters passed through a small airport operated by Adventist Aviation, damaging a light aircraft and a helicopter, according to state-run news agency Antara.

Sentani is 24 kilometers west of the provincial capital, Jayapura. Several rivers pass through the town, carrying water from the Cyclops Mountains in the north, to Lake Sentani – the largest freshwater lake on the island – in the south. ÂÂ

The Papua Regional Police said at least 359 houses, 104 shophouses, eight schools, three bridges, two churches, a mosque and a market were damaged in the flood.

The number of victims is meanwhile also expected to rise, as there are several locations that the search and rescue teams have yet to reach, Papua Police spokesman Comr. A.M Kamal said.

"Several locations are still isolated," he added.

Indonesia has been experiencing heavy rainfall, which spread from west to east across the archipelago over the past two weeks, due to a weather anomaly known as the Madden-Julian Oscillation, according to the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysical Agency (BMKG).ÂÂ
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Flash Flood Sentani Kills at Least 61 in Papua

zondag 17 maart 2019 08:08

BNPB data shows that 189 floods occurred across Indonesia so far this year, killing 96 and displacing more than 177,000 people. Last year, 679 floods killed 119 people and displaced more than 1.5 million.