

NESRA FloodWatch — Situation Brief #07

Rasuwa / Bhotekoshi–Trishuli Flood 2026

Situation data cutoff: 31 August 2026, 12:00 NPT **Published:** 31 August 2026, 13:30 NPT **Status:** Active
Response — Tunnel Search / Secondary-Hazard Monitoring / Early Recovery

Phase: sustained search & rescue → intensive hydropower-tunnel operations → evolving glacier / landslide secondary hazard → partial essential-services restoration → continued transport disruption → early recovery planning.

1. Executive / operational summary

Five days after the 26 August glacial-origin flash flood, the Rasuwa / Bhotekoshi–Trishuli response is dominated by intensive search operations at flood-hit hydropower projects. In NDRRMA's 31 August 09:00 NPT update, **903 bodies and human remains** had been recovered across affected Nepali districts, approximately **4,247 people** remained unaccounted for (including 592 foreign nationals as a subset), and **10,451** had been rescued; 267 people were injured (156 discharged) and 20,819 security personnel were deployed. Nepali authorities report that **933 workers** are unaccounted for at **11 flood-affected hydropower projects** in Rasuwa and Nuwakot, many believed to be inside blocked tunnels; the Nepal Army, with Indian and Chinese tunnel specialists, is using controlled blasts, excavators and search lights. The search of the Rasuwagadhi (111 MW) project tunnel concluded with no people found inside. One barrier lake near the border was reported fully drained, but glaciers and landslide deposits around the source zone remain a concern. Essential services are partly restored while the Prithvi Highway remains completely blocked at Krishnabhir. NESRA's Rapid EO Assessment v1 remains the latest NESRA EO product. Follow DHM, NDRRMA and local authorities for official warnings.

2. Current risk

Official / technical information reported by authorities and media — classification retained.

- **Barrier lake:** one barrier lake near the Nepal–China border was reported **fully drained** (Chinese technical statement via media, 30 August). Reduced lake pressure is not the same as an end to hazard.
- **Glacier / slope instability (technical assessment):** glaciers and multiple landslide deposits around the source and impact zone are reported to remain unstable, with a possibility that further collapse could create new impoundments. This is a technical / remote-sensing assessment, **not** an official warning.
- **DHM (official):** DHM has issued flood/rainfall-related warnings covering communities along rivers in Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dhading, Gorkha, Tanahun, Nawalparasi and Chitwan.

NESRA does not issue warnings and distinguishes an **official warning** from a **technical assessment** and from a **satellite/remote-sensing interpretation**. For official warnings, follow DHM, NDRRMA and relevant government authorities.

3. Authority-specific impact metrics — Nepal scope

Recovered bodies / remains 903 NDRRMA, 31 Aug 09:00 NPT. "Bodies, including human remains, recovered." Provisional; not a final confirmed death toll.	Missing / unaccounted ~4,247 NDRRMA, 31 Aug 09:00 NPT. Includes 592 foreign nationals as a subset; reconciliation ongoing.	Rescued 10,451 NDRRMA, 31 Aug 09:00 NPT · to date.
Injured / discharged 267 / 156 NDRRMA, 31 Aug 09:00 NPT.	Security personnel 20,819 NDRRMA, 31 Aug 09:00 NPT. Army 8,722 + Police 7,894 + APF 4,203 (subsets).	Aerial operations 411 flights Nepali Army via NDRRMA. 3,344 Nepalis + 252 foreign nationals airlifted.

Metric discipline. "903" is a recovered bodies/human-remains count, not a confirmed death toll. Nepal-scope figures only; separately, Tibet Autonomous Region authorities reported 16 dead and 546 missing — this cross-border figure is **not** added to Nepal totals.

4. Search & rescue

Search, rescue and relief continued across affected districts, with the Nepali Army, Nepal Police and Armed Police Force, helicopters and inter-agency coordination engaged. Aerial operations have airlifted 3,344 Nepalis and 252 foreign nationals. Seven Indian and fifteen Chinese nationals stranded at hydropower project sites were reported rescued on 30 August. Weather, unstable ground and access continue to constrain operations at points.

5. Hydropower tunnel operations

Nepali authorities report that approximately **933 workers remain unaccounted for at 11 flood-affected hydropower projects** across Rasuwa and Nuwakot, with many believed to be inside tunnels blocked by mud and debris. Trishuli 3A and 3B are among the key rescue sites. The Nepal Army is leading operations, using **controlled blasts, excavators and search lights**, supported by **Indian and Chinese tunnel specialists** at the Nepal government's request.

- **Rasuwagadhi (111 MW):** the project tunnel was searched to about 225 m (250 m tunnel) using drones; the Nepal Army and the Prime Minister's Secretariat reported **no people found inside**. Approximately 93 workers associated with this project remain missing.
- **Upper Trishuli-1:** project-level reporting indicates a large number of workers missing, with a portion believed to be inside the project tunnel. These project-level figures are provisional.
- **Recoveries:** three bodies were reported recovered after teams entered two tunnels; other sections remained blocked by mud.

Status wording. NESRA reports these workers as **unaccounted for / believed trapped**. NESRA does not publish survivor estimates and does not describe people as "trapped alive" unless an authority explicitly confirms it.

6. Access & transport

- **Prithvi Highway (Muglin–Kathmandu): completely blocked at Krishnabhir** (Dhading) following flood-induced road subsidence and river erosion; under technical assessment, reopening not expected to be immediate. Alternative routes carry diverted traffic.

- **Galchi–Malekhu bridges:** the Trishuli bridge at Phurke Khola (Malekhu) was washed away; two further bridges between Galchi and Malekhu were damaged.

- **Dhunche:** the alternative light-vehicle route via Kathmandu–Tokha–Kalikasthan remains open, with caution.

- **Primary Rasuwa corridor:** the Betrawati–Rasuwadadhi / Timure–Syabrubesi route remains severely damaged and not open end-to-end; the border road is not open.

- **Bridges (restoration):** the government has sought approximately **42 Bailey bridges** from India and China. These are requests/pledges — **not** bridges confirmed delivered or installed.

Physical condition is shown separately from passability. Confirm current status with Traffic Police before travel.

7. Utilities & connectivity

- **Electricity (NEA):** power restored across most of Kalika and Naukunda rural municipalities and at Dhunche, Bharkhu and Gosainkunda; repairs continue elsewhere. The flood affected roughly 10% of national generation capacity and damaged six major hydropower/transmission facilities (Rasuwadadhi, Chilime, Trishuli 3A, the Trishuli 3B Hub 220 kV substation, Trishuli Hydropower Station, Devighat). Partial restoration, not full restoration.

- **Telecommunications:** restoration of mobile network infrastructure is continuing; tower/base-station restoration is not the same as full population coverage or full service availability.

- **Fuel / logistics:** with the highway blocked, alternative fuel-supply routing has been reported to maintain supply continuity toward Kathmandu.

- **Victim identification:** Nepal Police has reportedly requested DNA samples from relatives of missing persons to assist identification.

8. Earth Observation — NESRA Rapid EO Assessment v1

NESRA Rapid EO Assessment v1 remains the latest NESRA EO product — no newer NESRA satellite analysis has been produced for this brief. It is a rapid, cloud-limited Sentinel-2 flood/debris-path and exposure assessment (imagery 27 August 2026).

- 101.6 km river corridor assessed (92 km measured; 4.1 km under solid cloud).

- 3,216 buildings, 11.5 km of major road and 62 bridges intersect the mapped flood/debris path.

- Exposure is not verified damage; areas under cloud must not be read as unaffected. Treat the mapped extent as an upper bound requiring field or official verification.

Earth Observation analysis led by **Michael Hylind, NESRA Earth Observation Lead**. Dashboard: npl-flood-dash-356251209726.europe-west1.run.app

9. External emergency mapping

International Charter (activation 1052): eight external products are listed, spanning Rasuwa pre/post mapping and mudflow/rockflow extent, Nuwakot pre/post damage imagery and a Timure–Syabrubesi impact map. External products, not NESRA-generated analysis.

Copernicus EMS (EMSR927): within its mapped Syapru Besi area, Copernicus EMS reported **more than 240 buildings destroyed and 32 damaged** (WorldView-3, 27 August 2026). **Sentinel Asia:** value-added mapping products (Planet-based mapping and an EOS-RS Sentinel-1 damage-proxy map) shared.

Do not conflate datasets. External emergency-mapping figures are findings for specific mapped areas and are **not** NESRA findings; the Copernicus destroyed-building figure is not comparable with NESRA's 3,216 exposed-building figure (exposure is not verified damage).

10. What we know / 11. What remains uncertain

Known: NDRRMA reported 903 recovered bodies/remains, ~4,247 unaccounted (incl. 592 foreign nationals) and 10,451 rescued at 31 Aug 09:00 NPT; 267 injured (156 discharged); 20,819 personnel; 411 helicopter flights. Approximately 933 workers are unaccounted at 11 hydropower projects; the Rasuwagadhi tunnel was searched with no people found inside (~93 of its workers still missing). One barrier lake was reported fully drained; the Prithvi Highway remains blocked at Krishnabhir; the NEA reports partial power restoration.

Uncertain: the exact number missing is not settled; different government reporting pipelines circulated during 31 August, and some later, higher recovered-body and lower missing figures attributed to a government/Prime Minister statement could not be independently reconciled at this cutoff — NESRA retained the verified NDRRMA 09:00 snapshot and did not merge unverified later totals. Tunnel outcomes, secondary-hazard stability, precise grid/telecom-restoration percentages, and the composition and installation status of pledged Bailey bridges remain unconfirmed. A validated final NESRA flood extent and final YIL geospatial products are pending.

12. Sources

- NDRRMA 31 August 09:00 NPT update — impact, missing, rescued, injured, personnel, aerial operations (via The Kathmandu Post, OnlineKhabar, Radio Nepal, RSS).
- Reuters / Associated Press and Al Jazeera — hydropower-tunnel operations, 933 workers unaccounted, Indian/Chinese specialists.
- Nepal Army / Prime Minister's Secretariat via The Week / RSS — Rasuwagadhi tunnel search concluded, ~93 workers missing.
- The Kathmandu Post — barrier lake fully drained (Chinese statement); Prithvi Highway at Krishnabhir; Galchi–Malekhu bridges.
- Nepal Electricity Authority via Radio Nepal / Nepal News — power restoration and damage. DHM — current warnings (dhm.gov.np).
- International Charter 1052; Copernicus EMS EMSR927; Sentinel Asia. NESRA Rapid EO Assessment v1 — NESRA EO dashboard.

13. NESRA methodological caveat

FloodWatch provides Earth Observation and geospatial situational analysis. NESRA distinguishes Earth Observation-derived **exposure** from **verified damage**, and distinguishes an **official warning** from a **technical assessment** and from a **satellite/remote-sensing interpretation**. Impact figures are provisional and attributed to their originating authorities; recovered bodies/human remains are not equated with a final confirmed death toll. NESRA does not maintain an independent missing-person registry and does not issue warnings. FloodWatch supports situational awareness and does not replace official warnings, emergency instructions or authoritative government assessments.

Governance. NESRA owns, operates and publishes FloodWatch and remains its scientific and geospatial lead. FloodWatch Programme Lead — Anamol Mittal, Founder & President, NESRA. NESRA Earth Observation Lead — Michael Hyind. Technology & Innovation Partner — Infinity Innovation Center (IIC), programme-wide. Drone Field Assessment Contributor — Youth Innovation Lab (YIL), Rasuwa 2026. Impact figures are provisional and attributed to their originating authorities. Briefs #01–#06 remain immutable archived snapshots.