

Flood-borne disease leaves 89 dead in Philippines

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MANILA — Massive floods brought by powerful storms have caused an outbreak of the deadly disease leptospirosis that has claimed 89 lives in the Philippine capital alone, the health secretary said Saturday.

The incidence of the disease in the Philippine capital and surrounding areas rose to 1,027 with 89 fatalities from October 1-15 this year compared to 769 cases and only 39 deaths in the same period last year, Secretary Francis Duque said.

"It is largely attributable to the floods," Duque told AFP.

Huge floods covered parts of Manila and its surrounding areas after tropical storm Ketsana hit the country on September 26.

This was compounded by typhoon Parma which hit a few days later, again bringing heavy rains. In some areas, the floodwaters have not receded.

This has caused many people to fall ill of leptospirosis, an infectious disease caused by exposure to dirty, stagnant water.

To lessen the incidence of the disease, Duque said authorities had declared an outbreak of the disease in three districts of the capital and were administering antibiotics to some 1.3 million people.

"It will provide substantial protection," he said. However he warned that people should still avoid exposure to dirty water.

The government has said that at least 773 people have already died from storms Ketsana and Parma, mostly from drowning and landslides.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gwt2cAvfUDIS2hYixOJZ25HdmBng>