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California cities issued evacuation orders after heavy storms brought threats of flooding and mudslides to drought-stricken areas.

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Storms Bring Relief and Worries to Parched California

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
On the West Coast tonight where they are counting down just in terms of hours until a huge weather system moves in that is going to bring for many people way too much of a good thing, if that’s possible, and cause a lot of problems. At this hour, mandatory evacuations are underway. NBC’s Miguel Almaguer is just east of L.A. tonight. Miguel, good evening.

MIGUEL ALMAGUER, reporting:
Brian, good evening. Here in the city of Azusa, we’re in a break between storms. But the concern remains high. The problem is that mountain behind me, a recent fire turned the soil into a concrete mix, that means when it rains all the water is going to rush into this community down slope, many fear when that happens the mud will begin to slide. On Ridge View Drive, the order to evacuate just before the next big storm rolls in. Sixty-five year-old Ed Highline, a retiree, has been working around the clock. But now he's out of time.

ED HIGHLINE: The water will come over first and it rains this whole thing will be full of mud.

ALMAGUER: He knows it won’t take much for this mountain to slide into his backyard. How worried are you?

HIGHLINE: It’s going to happen and we’re going to deal with it. We need the rain. We don’t want the mess. We can’t have both. So we’ll take the rain, we’ll clean up the mess.

ALMAGUER: Only four years ago, a winter storm buried a nearby neighborhood in mud after a wildfire torched the foothills. Today, all of Los Angeles is on high alert.

WOMAN: We have storm watch live team coverage for you.

ALMAGUER: The first round of heavy rain hammered the state this morning. It took only an inch to make freeways a mess. In Southern California, nearly 200 accidents. Hazmat teams shut down this highway for a fuel spill. On social media, tweets like this. "Nobody owns an umbrella and nobody knows how to drive in rain...." From police, "Buckle up, Put down your Cell phone and drive safe." The silver lining--California desperately needs water. But today they measured the snowpack, 75% below normal.

Ed Highline knows more rain, the main event is coming, Friday into Saturday, so tonight his family is
packed up and moved to safer ground. It could get hairy here after midnight. That’s when we expect steady rain to fall throughout the evening and into the early morning hours. Police say not everyone here is evacuating so they will be watching that hillside as well as the homes below.