

Massive flooding in St. Louis, Missouri, leaves one dead, 20,000 without power

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Early Tuesday morning, the city of St. Louis, Missouri, issued a severe flash flood warning to its residents in response to a record shattering torrential rain downpour. The previous record for most rainfall in a single day in the city, a bit over six inches, was in 1915 when the city was hit by residual effects of the Galveston Hurricane which left over 400 people dead. It took 24 hours for the rainfall to reach that record high. This week it took less than six hours for St. Louis to break that record.

The National Weather Service reported several alarming facts regarding Tuesday's downpour. First, the total daily rainfall reached 9.04 inches, the highest ever recorded (although some stations have reported the number being closer to 10 inches). Second, 7.68 inches fell in the first six hours, a development that has less than a 1 in 1,000 chance of occurring in a given year. The storm also accounts for about 25 percent of the average yearly rainfall total in the city. Finally, the normal amount of rain for July and August combined, on average, is 7.31 inches, once again broken in a single 24-hour span.

There has been one reported fatality—an unidentified man in his 60s was found drowned in his submerged car. Meanwhile, over 400 people were in need of rescue on Tuesday because of the massive flooding. Some reportedly were forced to swim out of the windows of their own homes to avoid death.

The flooding came on extraordinarily fast. In one example, Dardenne Creek in the St. Louis suburb of St. Peters rose over 21 feet in just over seven hours on Tuesday morning. The creek is usually only one to two feet deep.

The effects on the city infrastructure have been nothing short of apocalyptic. The flooding submerged portions of Interstate 70—a major thoroughfare for

morning commuters—forcing the highway to close in both directions. Highways I-64, I-270, and US Route 61 reported closures as well.

Approximately 18 households needed to be assisted by the St. Louis Fire Department because of occupants trapped in their homes by rising water. Power outages eclipsed 20,000 on Tuesday morning before being partially restored later in the day.

Significant damage has been reported to numerous substations and electrical equipment around the city as well. A pedestrian bridge was reported to have collapsed due to erosion brought on by the heavy rain in nearby Saint Charles, Missouri.

The threat of more destruction and even death from this weather pattern is not over. According to AccuWeather, meteorologists are predicting more rounds of intense rainfall and flash flood dangers in Missouri along with Kansas and Virginia through the rest of the week. Tuesday also marked the first ever Flash Flood Emergency in the city of St. Louis as Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe declared a state of emergency for the state of Missouri. The meteorological situation remains in flux as well as the state of the dozens of evacuees forced out of their homes and requiring shelter.

The powerful storm in St. Louis is not an isolated event. The effects of climate change are being felt worldwide and at a lethal scale. Europe recently experienced record heat waves which forced bus drivers to work in temperatures that border on 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) while scores of families were forced to evacuate their homes. The southern and southwestern United States is also in a massive heatwave which imperils the lives of workers and families.

As the WSWs reported on Monday, a shocking video showed a UPS driver delivering a package in Phoenix,

Arizona while collapsing from heat exhaustion. Wildfires have engulfed regions near Yosemite National Park, as more than 5.5 million acres in the United States have been burned by wildfires this year alone. In winter 2021, Texas and northern Mexico experienced record low temperatures, including a snow storm which killed dozens of people. Many homes were without power for days as the electrical grid across the state of Texas suffered a catastrophic collapse due to the lack of proper infrastructure maintenance.

The response by capitalist leaders around the world to the enormous consequences of extreme weather fueled by man-made climate change has been to all but ignore it. In the United States, President Joe Biden and Congress have passed and proposed budgets of tens of billions of dollars of funding for the most backward initiatives. Biden's military budget passed by the House is a record \$840 billion. The House's proposed budget for police funding is \$37 billion. The official tally for US-backed funding for Ukraine's war against Russia is \$40 billion. Biden's climate change plan meanwhile has a budget of \$2.3 billion.

The capitalist class, and the elected officials who represent their interests in Congress, have established priorities which involve the sacrificing of millions for the enrichment of an infinitesimal minority. The funding of the military, endless and reckless wars, and a militarized police force show unquestioningly that it is the priority of the ruling class to defend its wealth at all costs, no matter how many workers and families will become sick or die. The COVID-19 epidemic represents this drive most blatantly with the bipartisan "let it rip" strategy, which has resulted in more than 1 million deaths in the United States.

It is abundantly clear the capitalist system cannot and will not protect the lives of billions against anything that would risk the profits of the billionaire class or slow down military operations. Only the overthrow of capitalism at large on an international scale and its replacement with socialism can deal with climate change by putting the world's resources under the democratic control of the working class.



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