# Mississippi River flooding pushes infrastructure in Iowa to its limits

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Over the weekend major flooding of the Mississippi River has caused roads and businesses to shut down in several cities along its banks including Dubuque and Bellevue in Iowa; Fulton, Illinois; and the Quad Cities on both sides of the border. In Dubuque and Bellevue which are further north the river crested on Sunday, meaning the river flooding had hit its highest point and has begun to recede.

In areas that sit further south on the Mississippi, like the Quad Cities, which include Davenport, Rock Island, Moline and Bettendorf, the river is not expected to crest until Wednesday, meaning flood waters will continue to rise throughout the week. Even after the river has crested, flood waters will remain high for several days continuing to create disruptions and dangerous conditions.

The floodwaters are among the highest ever recorded. Measurements recorded in Dubuque of twenty-four feet fell only about one foot shy of the record highs seen during a similar flood in 2001. The highest-ever flood of the Mississippi River, known as the Great Flood of 1993, saw the river crest at nearly 50 feet in St. Louis, Missouri, and is the most destructive river flood ever in US history. That flood killed 32 people and did $15 billion in damage from North Dakota to Missouri.

Images from flood-struck cities show entire streets, like Davenport's busy River Drive, totally underwater. Many cars and even some small buildings became totally submerged.

Residents in the area have attempted to protect their homes by building sandbag walls and using pumps to keep the water out. Some homes became so surrounded by water that residents were forced to use small fishing boats to travel for supplies.

Spring flooding of the Mississippi is a normal occurrence when both rainstorms and warmer temperatures that melt snow push the river beyond its normal banks. In recent years, however, the frequency of intense and near-record-breaking floods has increased, one of the many examples of the growing impact of man-made global climate change.

Exactly four years ago, during flooding in 2019, sandbag barriers in Davenport were overwhelmed and burst, causing water to rush into the downtown area. The flooding caused major damage, including of several businesses, at least one of which would never reopen.

Thirty people who were not able to escape before the flood barriers broke needed to be rescued by firefighters. This year the city of Davenport strengthened its barriers and increased the height of its temporary flood walls in an attempt to prevent a repeat of the 2019 disaster.

The river is forecast to crest at noon on Tuesday, May 2, in Davenport. While expected to be lower than the record high of 22.7 feet in 2019, tomorrow's flooding will still rank among the top-5 highest in recent history.

The increasing intensity of the flooding presents a serious danger to the lives of those living in Mississippi river towns. Not only can floodwaters be deadly, but the damage caused to buildings, roads and homes can devastate families and create refugees.

Disasters like these highlight the need to allocate billions of dollars to both build new infrastructure that can handle the dramatic changes to the climate and to implement solutions to stop the further destruction of the environment.

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