

Historic flash flooding batters Southern California

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This past Monday heavy rains hit Southern California, triggering dangerous flash flooding and mudslides across the region. Hundreds of people were in need of emergency rescue due to the intensity of the flooding, with many people losing all their belongings.

Thousands of residents were unaware of the immense danger until the floodwaters entered their homes. Miraculously, no deaths have been reported as of this writing.

Due to the large storm originating in the Western Pacific, San Diego County experienced historic levels of flash flooding. An alarming one inch an hour or more of water was falling in many places across the county, including National City, Point Loma and San Diego.

The airport in San Diego recorded 2.73 inches of rain, breaking the record for the wettest January day in San Diego County ever recorded and the fourth wettest day ever recorded, according to the National Weather Service. The catastrophic flooding provoked multiple emergency declarations by Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom in San Diego and Ventura counties.

The San Diego River and the Tijuana River overflowed, flooding the nearby communities of Mountain View, Southcrest and Shelltown, as well as multiple highways, which were inundated with several feet of water. In Southcrest, hundreds of families were rescued after a creek overflowed threatening their lives. According to San Diego's fire department, at least 24 people had been rescued from overrunning rivers, and hundreds more were rescued from flash floods across the county, as well as 30 animals. Even more San Diegans were displaced by the floods, while 1,000 residents were still without power into Tuesday.

Southern California boasts some of the highest rates

of homelessness in the country. In San Diego alone, more than 10,000 homeless people are especially vulnerable to intense storms. Normally, the city experiences two inches of rain a month during the winter season.

However, in National City, the storm produced three inches of rain in the span of three hours. The water drainage system in the city failed due to the high volume of water over such a short period of time and inadequate maintenance of drainage systems. Images and videos on social media show cars floating away at the mercy of the floods and entire neighborhoods severely flooded.

According to San Diego County Sheriff's Lt. Zee Sanchez, water flooded into homes in the Spring Valley and Casa de Oro neighborhoods, prompting rescue efforts. Other residents were forced to escape by walking through waist-high water carrying their children and pets to safety.

Insultingly, insurance corporations are refusing to cover or assist families who lost their homes to floods. In a region that historically has had very little rainfall, very few residents have flood insurance.

According to the mayor of San Diego, Todd Gloria (Democrat), early conservative estimates of damages from the floods and mudslides are \$6 million, but that is likely to rise. The devastation by unpredictably heavy rainfall that coastal cities are prone to, particularly with the oceans warming due to climate change, coupled with the sheer scale of damage to infrastructure and homes, calls into question San Diego's current building codes.

The devastating storm and floods came with little warning to residents, who had to flee for their lives completely unprepared. While doing a tour of the immense damage left by the storm Tuesday morning,

Mayor Gloria attempted to block any political blame for the devastation, telling Fox 5, “We knew it was going to rain, but no one told us that we were going to get four inches of rain right here in Point Loma. ... What that did was overwhelm our city’s stormwater drainage system to the point where we see an extraordinary amount of flooding all across the city, but particularly impacted our southeastern communities that today are now cleaning out and cleaning out for many days to come.”

While it may be true that unprecedented weather events, particularly in a coastal city, can be difficult to anticipate, this does not explain why there is not adequate infrastructure being built to deal with more intense storms as they are expected to increase in Southern California.

It is no secret that one of the trends of climate change is an increased intensity of storms in the Southwest of the United States. Last August, Hurricane Hilary swept through Southern California and devastated much of the state’s southeastern desert regions. Hurricane Hilary started as a tropical storm but quickly strengthened to a Category 4 on the Saffir-Simpson scale.

As the latest catastrophe demonstrates, San Diego’s severely outdated water drainage system is in urgent need of repair and maintenance that have not been allocated by the city’s budget. While the city neglects infrastructure maintenance, over half a billion dollars was appropriated to the police department last year.

Other parts of California also suffered from the extreme weather. In the town of Guerneville, north of San Francisco, four inches of rain within 24 hours caused a creek to overflow, forcing the closure of schools Monday. In the mountains around Lake Tahoe in Northern California, the storm is expected to bring up to a foot of snow, as well as 60 mph winds, prompting an avalanche warning through Tuesday morning.

These events are part of an international trend of chaotic and dangerous weather patterns, which are increasing in frequency due to climate change. Last month, there was record-breaking torrential rain in northwestern Queensland, Australia which provoked mass flooding and landslides. Earlier this month, an arctic blast which affected almost every state in the US

and exposed 231 million Americans to dangerously cold conditions, resulted in numerous deaths. The tragic consequences of these weather disasters expose the ruling class’s criminal failure to make and maintain safe public infrastructure.



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