

6 dead in West Virginia flooding, 2 still missing

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Six people have been killed, including a 3-year-old child, and two people are still missing after heavy rains and devastating flash flooding struck the northern part of West Virginia on Sunday.

Between 3 and 4 inches of rain fell in less than an hour, drenching the already saturated ground in parts of West Virginia, just west and south of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The rain caused massive flooding along creeks and into the city of Wheeling, West Virginia, where people were trapped in their cars and homes. Many people were rescued from trees that they had to climb to escape the floodwaters.

Homes were completely destroyed and water could be seen flowing over the tops of cars that were abandoned as people climbed trees or the sides of hills to get out of the water's way.

Farther south, another storm system devastated Fairmont and much of Marion, causing additional flooding. A three-story apartment building collapsed. Videos posted on Facebook show water gushing out of windows and air conditioning vents and finally pouring like a waterfall over the roof of the building before the wall collapses. Residents of the building have been taken to the nearby university for temporary shelter.

Roads and bridges have been damaged, some completely washed out. Power lines, telephone and gas lines have been knocked out and severely damaged.

West Virginia Governor Patrick Morrisey has declared a state of emergency for Ohio and Marion counties where the flooding occurred.

"As flash floods continue throughout North Central West Virginia, emergency officials are on the scene in Marion County at a partial apartment collapse," Morrisey said in his emergency declaration. He added, "State resources are being dispatched to the region

immediately. Please—stay off the roads. Do not underestimate the strength and speed of these floods."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has yet to provide assistance and the Trump administration has not yet declared the region a disaster area.

The National Weather Service is warning that widespread thunderstorms early this week may produce excessive rainfall across portions of the Ohio Valley and Mid-Atlantic, which could lead to more flooding in the region.

The flooding in West Virginia follows flash floods that hit the San Antonio, Texas, area this past Thursday, which killed 13 people and injured many, with homes and businesses destroyed.

The flooding took place following a record 6.11 inches of rain, including about 4 inches that fell in a single hour early Thursday morning.

Flash flooding is occurring more frequently as a direct consequence of global warming. Flooding occurs when rainfall overwhelms the capacity of natural or man-made drainage systems to absorb or channel water effectively. Flash floods develop suddenly, within minutes to hours of intense rainfall, leaving little time for preparation or evacuation if proper and timely warnings have not been issued.

As the planet warms, the atmosphere can hold more water vapor. This heightened moisture content fuels more intense and prolonged rainfall, leading to an increased likelihood of flash flooding.

2024 was the hottest year on record and the 10 hottest years since 1850 have all occurred in the past decade.

Prolonged rain in an area also saturates the ground and fills up rivers and streams making it harder for them to absorb or move water from sudden violent storms.

The impact of the flash floods has been exacerbated

by the chronically high levels of poverty in West Virginia and environmental devastation wrought by the coal and energy giants over more than a century of exploitation. West Virginia consistently ranks among the US states with the highest rates of poverty, with 16.7 percent of the state's population living below the official poverty line and far more living on the edge.

More than 500,000 West Virginians rely on Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program, and about 277,000—or one in six—residents rely on food stamps through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Both vital programs are being targeted by Trump's so-called "Big, Beautiful Bill."

Additional budget cuts and layoffs by the Trump administration at the National Weather Service and its parent agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), have meant that it has fewer resources to monitor and warn of severe weather.

Furthermore, Trump's anti-science agenda, which includes the denying of climate change, has canceled billions of dollars in research funding on climate change, how to mitigate it and how to prepare for it.

Further layoffs and budget cuts at the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) and the Army Corps of Engineers—which manages water levels on inland rivers—have made it harder to prevent these disasters and to provide aid when they happen.

Unfortunately, this path will ensure more flash flooding. The unavoidable death and destruction that comes with it will continue.



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