

Texas halts flood catastrophe search efforts as new, life-threatening weather event approaches

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Less than ten days after the catastrophic flooding of the Guadalupe River over the July 4 holiday, Texas has suspended all ongoing search and rescue operations due to the arrival of new, life-threatening storms approaching the area.

On Sunday morning, the immediate suspension of all search and recovery missions along the Guadalupe River and surrounding areas in Central Texas was implemented. The decision was made in response to urgent warnings from meteorologists and local authorities about the imminent threat posed by renewed storms.

In a statement, Kerr County officials declared: “Rescue personnel, equipment, and vehicles must be removed from the river area immediately. Volunteer efforts are currently paused until further notice. All self-employed should heed this warning for their own safety. The safety of lives is our utmost priority.”

Fire Department spokesman Brian Lochte added, “We’re working with a few crews and airboats and SAR (search and rescue) boats just in case.” The suspension is expected to last at least until river conditions stabilize, with hopes of resuming operations as soon as Monday, when it is safe to do so.

The “pause” in recovery operations, as local officials termed it, comes as new reports provide information exposing the role played in the catastrophe by the criminal policies of the Trump administration, both in cutting back on emergency preparedness and effectively shutting down all efforts to mitigate the consequences of climate change.

The National Weather Service (NWS) issued a series of escalating warnings as the new storm system approached central Texas. Forecasters predicted an additional two to four inches of rainfall across the already saturated region, with isolated pockets potentially receiving as much as nine to twelve inches. These are the conditions ripe for

further flash flooding.

The NWS issued flash flood watches for multiple counties, warning of “considerable to catastrophic flash flood impacts” and urging residents to avoid all travel on flooded roads. The Guadalupe River was expected to rise to nearly fifteen feet, five feet above flood stage; high enough to submerge critical infrastructure such as the Highway 39 bridge near Hunt.

The Kerr County Sheriff’s Office released a “Code Red” alert, instructing residents to prepare for possible evacuation, though not ordering one at the time. “This is not an evacuation, but a notice to prepare,” the sheriff’s office emphasized.

Numerous secondary roads and bridges were already under water, and emergency officials warned that conditions could deteriorate rapidly.

The July 4 flooding has proven to be one of the deadliest natural disasters in recent Texas history. As of Sunday, the confirmed death toll stood at 129, with 103 of those fatalities occurring in Kerr County alone. The number of missing remains at a staggering 170 individuals still unaccounted for, with nearly all of them, 161, missing in Kerr County.

At least 30 children are confirmed dead, including 27 campers and counselors from the all-girls Camp Mystic, located directly in the path of the floodwaters. The camp, which housed over 750 children, was essentially destroyed with many families still awaiting word on their loved ones.

The search and rescue effort has been active around the clock, involving helicopters, boats, drones and hundreds of volunteers, but the renewed storms have now brought this effort to a halt.

The suspension of search and rescue efforts has also revealed the impact of recent federal cuts to national

emergency services. The Trump administration's ongoing reductions to the National Weather Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have come under intense scrutiny.

Reports indicate that the NWS had lost approximately 600 staff members due to voluntary buyouts, retirements and layoffs, with many local forecasting offices operating without lead meteorologists. Trump's "big beautiful bill," narrowly passed by Congress, will slash NWS funding by 6.7 percent in 2026, compounding earlier resource reductions.

These cuts, while not all yet in effect, have already led to diminished forecasting capacity and slower emergency response. Multiple urban search and rescue teams reported delays in their deployment to the flood zone by FEMA, raising questions about the agency's readiness and the consequences of chronic underfunding.

Some officials have asserted that the forecasts and warnings issued were as reliable as possible under the circumstances, reflecting that the loss of experienced personnel and the erosion of institutional capacity have undeniably strained the system at a moment of maximum need.

Meanwhile, the deaths of so many people in the Texas flood have exposed the fact that authorities approved the construction by the for-profit Christian Camp Mystic of new buildings in the river's "floodway." A report in the *New York Times* on Saturday said that, during a \$5 million construction plan to "overhaul and expand" the camp, "no effort was made to relocate the most at-risk cabins away from the river.

"Instead," the *Times* report went on, "local officials authorized the construction of new cabins in another part of the camp—including some that also lie in a designated flood-risk area." Meanwhile, the *Times* said, "The older ones along the river remained in use."

Additionally, neither the state nor the federal government have done anything to upgrade the early-warning systems with new technologies, and no plans were in place to evacuate large numbers of people from the area. This amounts to gross negligence under conditions where it was known that rapidly rising flood waters were inevitable due to the inability of the ground to absorb the increasing volumes of water from big storms hitting the area between long dry spells.

According to the *Times*, "The camp passed a state inspection just two days before the flood, with inspectors noting that the camp had emergency plans. Details about

evacuation plans were not detailed in their report."

There have also been widespread reports that FEMA call lines were dysfunctional during the critical hours following the July 4 flooding. According to multiple accounts from local officials and affected residents, attempts to reach FEMA's emergency assistance lines were met with long wait times, dropped calls, and in some cases, a complete inability to connect with an operator.

Several county emergency coordinators described the situation as "chaotic," with one stating, "We had families waiting for hours to get through, and some never did. This delayed vital rescue and evacuation efforts."

When pressed about these failures on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday morning, Trump's Secretary of Homeland Services Kristi Noem responded with evasion:

We are facing unprecedented demand and, yes, there were technical issues that slowed our response. Our teams are working around the clock to restore full capacity. I want to assure Texans that we are deploying every available resource, but the scale of this disaster has challenged every part of the system.

Noem did not directly address questions about whether recent budget cuts or staffing reductions contributed to the call line failures, instead emphasizing the "extraordinary nature" of the flooding and stating, "No system is perfect, especially when you have a historic event like this. We are learning from what happened and will make the necessary improvements."

Noem's comments are widely seen as an effort to cover up the fact that the failures at FEMA's call centers were caused by Trump administration funding and staff cuts and an increasing lack of preparedness for large-scale disasters.



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