

Flash flood submerges southern French villages, fields

September 15 2021



A car is seen flooded in Bernis, southern France, Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2021. Emergency workers rescued or evacuated hundreds of people in southern France as flash flooding abruptly turned roads and fields into rivers and lakes. As new heavy rainfall threatened the area Wednesday, the emergency service for the Gard region said rescuers were searching for at least one person reported missing after the Tuesday evening flood. Credit: AP Photo/Daniel Cole

Emergency workers rescued or evacuated hundreds of people in southern France as flash flooding abruptly turned roads and fields into rivers and lakes.

No casualties have been reported, but new heavy rainfall threatened the area Wednesday. Local authorities said the rains caused significant damage to homes and infrastructure across towns and villages between Nimes and Montpellier.

A man who had been believed swept down the Rhony River was found safe after he had taken refuge nearby, the local administration for the Gard region tweeted Wednesday.

One person was hit by lightning but survived, and a supermarket roof collapsed under the pounding water, according to the regional emergency service.

People evacuated from a campground described on BFM television that they watched waters surge toward their campers. About 800 firefighters were mobilized to rescue people via helicopter and other means.

Schools across the region and a major highway and other roads were closed Wednesday as cleanup work started in some towns.

The flooding comes after a season of extreme weather that saw devastating wildfires near the French Riviera and around the Mediterranean, record-breaking flooding in Germany and Belgium and droughts or heat waves in other areas around the world. Scientists say such events are expected but happen more frequently now as the planet is warming because of human-caused climate change.



Laundry dries at a window in Bernis, southern France, Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2021. Emergency workers rescued or evacuated hundreds of people in southern France as flash flooding abruptly turned roads and fields into rivers and lakes. As new heavy rainfall threatened the area Wednesday, the emergency service for the Gard region said rescuers were searching for at least one person reported missing after the Tuesday evening flood. Credit: AP Photo/Daniel Cole

The government will declare the floods a natural catastrophe to free up aid and insurance payments, government spokesman Gabriel Attal said Wednesday. He promised help for residents and others who suffered damages "to heal the wounds of this flood."

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