

Alabama swamped, 4 killed in floods from slow-moving front

October 7 2021, by Jay Reeves



Michael Halbert wades through his flooded neighborhood in Pelham, Ala., on Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. Parts of Alabama remain under a flash flood watch after a day of high water across the state, with as much as 6 inches of rain covering roads and trapping people. Credit: AP Photo/Jay Reeves

Terrified drivers climbed out of swamped cars and muddy floodwater

flowed through neighborhoods after a stalled weather front drenched Alabama for hours, leaving entire communities under water Thursday and killing at least four people, with still more drenching storms to come.

Dozens of people had to be rescued Wednesday night in central Alabama, where the National Weather Service said as much as 13 inches (33 centimeters) of rain fell, and a south Alabama town temporarily lost its main grocery store when a creek came through the doors of the Piggly Wiggly. Near the coast, heavy rains caused sewage to bubble out of underground pipes.

Metro Birmingham remained under a flash flood watch, and meteorologists predicted another wet day for most of Alabama and parts of Florida, Georgia and Tennessee. As much as 5 more inches (13 centimeters) of rain was possible through Thursday evening, the [weather service](#) said.

A 4-year-old girl and an 18-year-old woman died in separate incidents when floods carried away vehicles in northeast Alabama, said Marshall County Coroner Cody Nugent. Searchers found the bodies of a boyfriend and girlfriend, both 23, inside a car that was swept away by a fast-moving stream in the Birmingham suburb of Hoover, said Shelby County Coroner Lina Evans.

"Normally it's just a trickle. It was raging," she said. She identified the victims as Latin Marie Hill and Myles Jared Butler, both of Hoover.



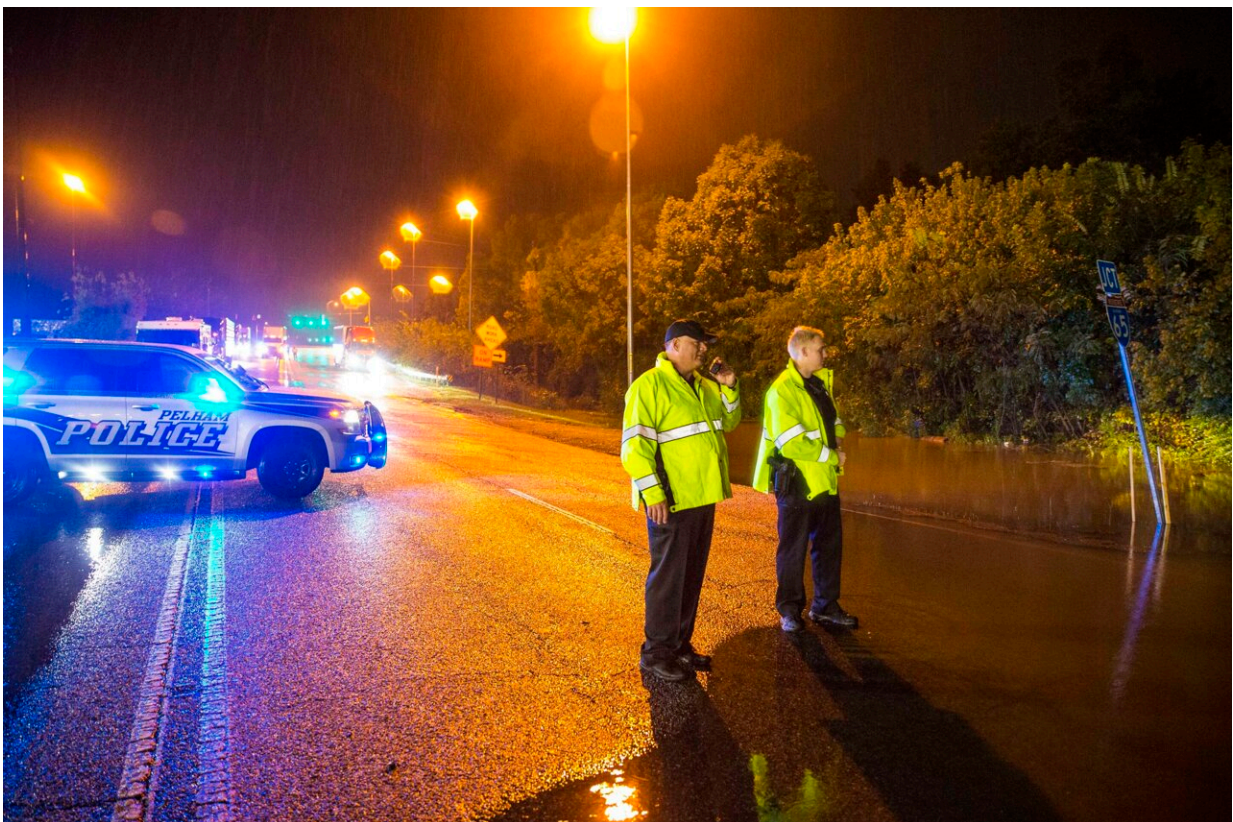
A flooded neighborhood is shown in Pelham, Ala., Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021. Parts of Alabama remain under a flash flood watch after a day of high water across the state, with as much as 6 inches of rain covering roads and trapping people.
Credit: AP Photo/Jay Reeves

The rain caused havoc in places across north Alabama, submerging cars in metro Birmingham and parts of the Tennessee Valley. Rescue crews helped motorists escape as low visibility and standing [water](#) made travel life-threatening in some areas.

Some of the worst flooding happened in Pelham, outside Birmingham, where 82 people were rescued from homes and more than 15 were pulled from vehicles after up to 13 inches of rain sent creeks and streams overflowing their banks, the Pelham Fire Department said early

Thursday. More than 100 rescuers were involved in the effort, as were 16 boats, the statement said.

"Water was coming in the car so fast I had to bail out the window," said Jill Caskey, who watched Thursday morning as a tow truck hauled away her sport utility vehicle from a low-lying parking lot in Pelham. The car stalled as she was trying to navigate floodwaters during the deluge Wednesday night.



Pelham police check the levels of floodwaters on County Road 52 near the Colonial Pipeline station off of I-65 Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021, in Pelham, near Birmingham, Ala. Credit: AP Photo/Vasha Hunt

A police officer helped her to high ground, and Caskey's husband picked her up on a roadside. But it then took them three hours to travel a few miles home because of flooded roads.

Caskey has heard the weather safety mantra of "turn around, don't drown," but said "it really happened so fast I didn't have time to think about it."

The Alabama deluge comes about seven weeks after flooding killed more than a dozen people in Tennessee. These types of floods may be more common in the future because of global warming, scientists say.

Federal research has found that man-made [climate change](#) doubles the chances of the types of [heavy rains](#) that swamped Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with 26 inches (66 centimeters) of rain in 2016, killing a dozen people and damaging 150,000 homes.

In south Alabama near the Florida line, water covered streets in the flood-prone Escambia County towns of Brewton and East Brewton, inundating a shopping center and sending as much as 3 feet (1 meter) of water into the Piggly Wiggly. Two schools had to cancel classes, said Escambia Sheriff Heath Jackson.



A Pelham police vehicle is parked near floodwaters on County Road 52 Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021, in Pelham, near Birmingham, Ala. Credit: AP Photo/Vasha Hunt

"We're hoping that the rain is going to stop so we can get some of this water ... out of here," Jackson told WKRG-TV.

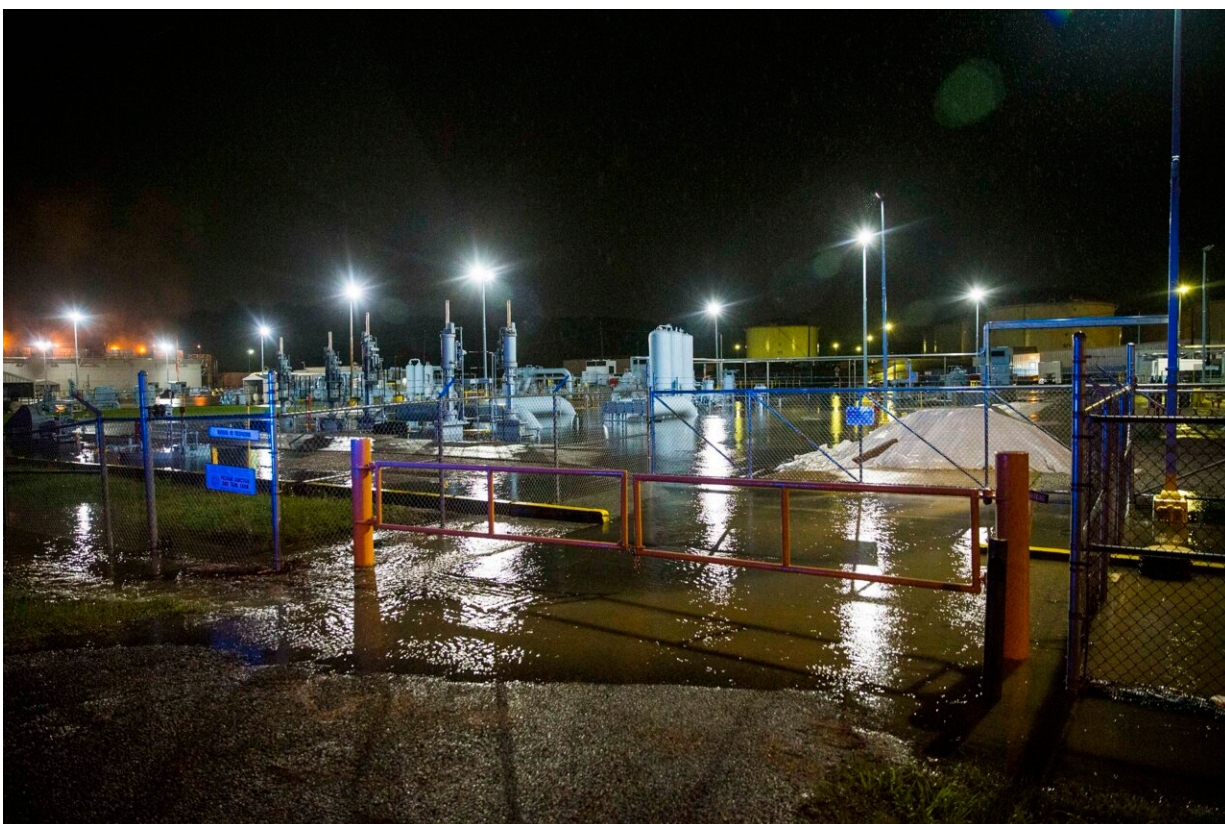
To the south, in Baldwin County, as much as 250,000 gallons (946,000 liters) of waste water overflowed from sewage systems along Mobile Bay, officials said.

With rainfall totals already ranging from 2 inches (5 centimeters) to as much 6 inches across the state this week, forecasters said another 3 inches (8 centimeters) of [rain](#) was possible, with the heaviest rains to the

north.

Severe storms and a few isolated tornadoes from a slow-moving low pressure system were a threat, mainly in the afternoon, forecasters said. The National Weather Service issued a tornado watch for northeastern Alabama, northwestern Georgia and southern Tennessee.

Rains should end in Alabama by late Thursday as storms move eastward. Flash flood warnings were in effect through Friday along the weather front, stretching from the Florida Panhandle through northern Georgia and mountainous regions of the eastern Tennessee and the western Carolinas.

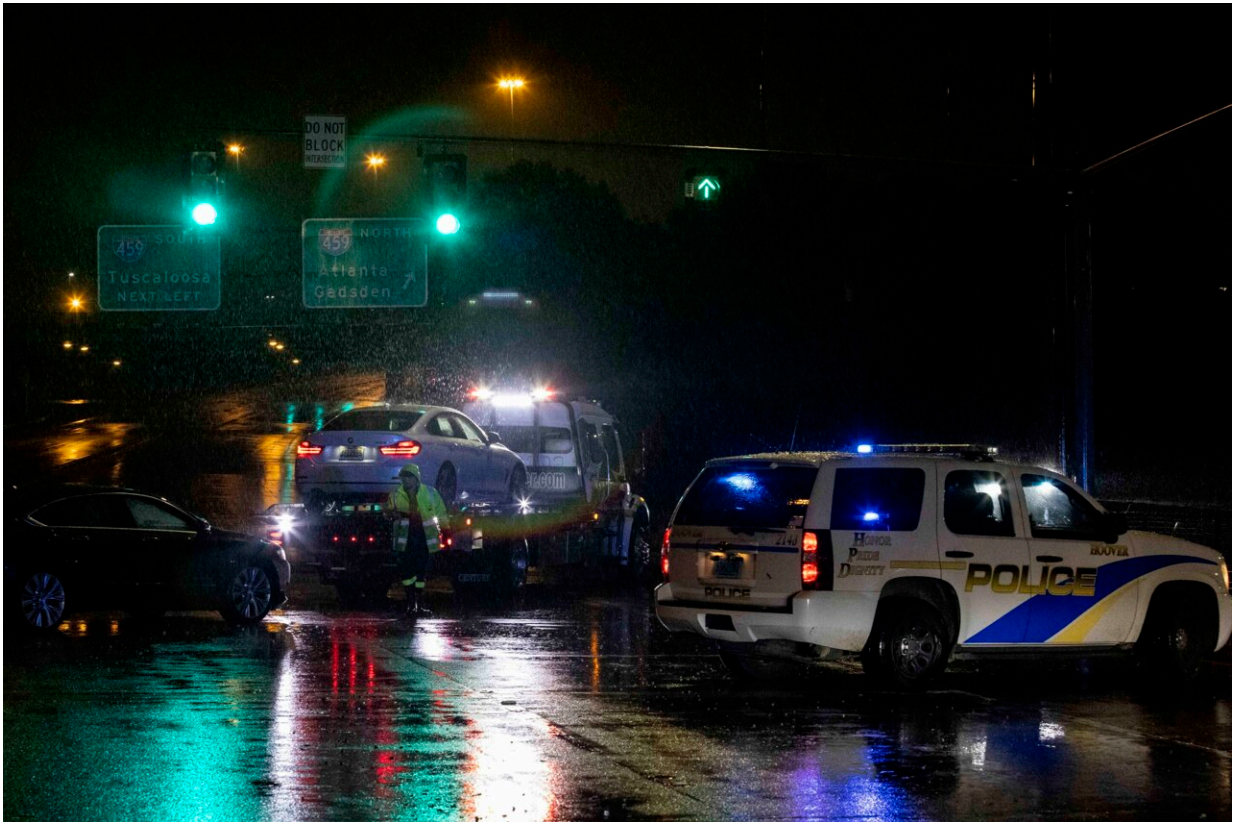


Flooding on County Road 52 spilled into a Colonial Pipeline station during Wednesday's flood emergency, in Pelham, Ala., near Birmingham, Thursday,

Oct. 7, 2021. Credit: AP Photo/Vasha Hunt



In this image taken from video, vehicles drive through floodwaters in Pelham, Alabama, late Oct. 6, 2021. As much as 6 inches (15 cm.) of rain fell in Alabama in about a day, unleashing flash floods that required some people to be rescued. Credit: ABC 33/40 via AP



A car that was flooded up to its hood earlier is towed away Wednesday, Oct. 6, 2021, on Montgomery Highway near the Riverchase Galleria complex in Birmingham, Ala. Credit: AP Photo/Vasha Hunt



Car travel through floodwaters on Montgomery highway Wednesday, Oct. 6, 2021, near the Riverchase Galleria complex in Birmingham, Ala. Credit: AP Photo/Vasha Hunt

Back in Pelham, Michael Halbert waded through his neighborhood to a townhome that filled with more than 40 inches (102 centimeters) of water. He tried to get items off the floor, but still lost some of his belongings, and his Jeep filled with water outside.

"Flood insurance is going to have fun," he said.

© 2021 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Alabama swamped, 4 killed in floods from slow-moving front (2021, October 7)
retrieved 17 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-10-alabama-swamped-slow-moving-front.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.