

Floods for miles: swathes of China underwater after historic rain

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Vast piles of floating garbage and debris was backed up by a bridge.

Swathes of northern China were submerged in filthy floodwater on Wednesday after days of historic rainfall battered the capital city of Beijing and surrounding areas.

Torrents of brown water swept tons of rubbish through a park in suburban Beijing, while normally bustling main streets in Hebei province to the southwest of the capital turned to rivers.

Aerial photographs taken by AFP of Hebei's Zhuozhou city showed inundated shopfronts and car roofs poking through the sludgy rainwater.

Farmland in the surrounding areas was left submerged stretching for miles, the photographs showed.

Rescue workers in one part of Zhuozhou visited by AFP reporters used inflatable boats to transport [instant noodles](#), bread and drinking water to besieged residents, who were also left without power or mobile phone signal.

A 34-year-old man surnamed Liu who declined to provide his full name told a harrowing tale of being trapped since Monday inside the Zhuozhou printworks where he is employed.

"First we tried to block the water, but then it was impossible," Liu told AFP.

"We couldn't get any of our plant's equipment or materials out to shelter. We were trapped inside until midday today before being rescued."



Normally bustling main streets in Hubei province turned to rivers.

Liu said that while they still needed to wait for the water to recede before assessing the damage inside the flooded factory, his employer's estimated losses were nearly 20 million yuan (\$2.79 million).

Zhou Libin, 41, had been serving as the head of a rescue team when the floods hit.

"We were the first team to arrive in Zhuozhou," said Zhou.

"Evacuation of people began at 3 pm yesterday because the water flow was relatively high. Around 1,000 people have been evacuated so far.

"Those who remain are some [elderly people](#) who aren't easy to transfer, and we're still coordinating that."

Beijing's [weather service](#) said on Wednesday the rains that pummel the Chinese capital in recent days were the heaviest since records began 140 years ago.

Scientists say such extreme weather events are being exacerbated by climate change.



China has been hit by historic rainfall.

'Extremely dangerous'

In the nearby border area between Beijing and Hebei, vast piles of floating garbage and debris backed up by a bridge were seen by AFP journalists.

A policeman told AFP that the place they were standing on Wednesday had been "extremely dangerous" the previous day.

Elsewhere, a local 71-year-old resident surnamed Li was with her husband looking at a park she is very familiar with, but which now resembled a lake.

"I have never seen anything like this in more than 40 years," Li told AFP.

Even during the worst rainfalls in Beijing's history, the area had never seen water flow in until now, said Li.

"We saw people online discussing that the bridge in Liuli River Park was flooded. As we often come here to have fun, we wanted to see it with our own eyes," she added.

"Usually there is a wooden bridge surrounded by meter-high grass, but now you can't see the grass anymore as it's completely flooded," said Li, pointing to the flooded zone.



Rescue workers in one part of Zhuozhou visited used boats to transport instant noodles, bread and drinking water to besieged residents.



Mountains of rubbish was swept away by the floodwater.

In Zhuozhou, rescuers in helmets and red and blue overalls came to the rescue of stranded residents in inflatable boats.

A furniture shop, which usually opens onto a now unrecognizable expressway, was surrounded by water.

In some sections of the road, [water levels](#) reached four meters, according to a rescue worker, making it entirely impassable.

Nearby, bare-chested onlookers were waiting for the [water](#) to recede so that they could return to their homes.

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