

Sixteen dead as Storm Ciaran batters Western Europe

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At least five people died in Tuscany, Italian authorities announced on Friday.

The death toll from Storm Ciaran rose to at least 16 across Western Europe on Friday, as heavy downpours and record winds brought travel chaos.

At least six people died in the central Tuscany region, Italian authorities announced on Friday, declaring a state of emergency as weather specialists reported record rainfall.

Another three people were killed off the coast of Portugal on Friday when a yacht ran aground north of Lisbon in strong swells.

In Italy, the rescue services were called out to dozens of incidents across Tuscany to help motorists stranded in flooded tunnels or hemmed in by trees brought down by the winds.

Tuscany governor Eugenio Giani said the dead in the Italy storms included an 85-year-old man found drowned on the ground floor of his house in Montemurlo, northwest of Florence.

"What happened tonight in Tuscany has a name: climate change," Giani wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Residents were busy mucking out homes, garages and cellars swamped by the floodwaters, throwing damaged furniture and appliances onto the street, said an AFP photographer on the scene.

Florence mayor Dario Nardella described the situation as "critical" in the city, as the level of the Arno River continued to rise.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni announced an initial state aid package of five million euros (around \$5.4 million) for the region as she confirmed a state of emergency to fast-track funding and resources.



Falling trees caused some of the storm's deaths.

Record winds in France

Three people aboard the Danish-flagged sailboat that capsized off a beach at Santa Cruz north of Lisbon were found dead on the shore near the boat's wreckage on Friday, a navy spokesman told AFP.

Trees felled by gale-force winds caused several of the other deaths in Europe. In the Belgian city of Ghent, falling branches killed a five-year-old Ukrainian boy and a 64-year-old woman on Thursday.

Falling trees had earlier killed a lorry driver in his vehicle in northern

France's Aisne region.

French officials also reported the death of a man who fell from his balcony in the port city of Le Havre.

A man in the Dutch town of Venray, a woman in Madrid and a person in Germany were also killed.

By 1700 GMT, 325,000 French households were still without power, mainly in Brittany and Normandy, according to Enedis power networks.



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The wind gusts in Brittany were "exceptional" and "many absolute records have been broken", national weather service Meteo-France said on X.

On the French Mediterranean island of Corsica, shipowner Francois-Xavier Bacchidu said the damage was "totally unheard of" as he surveyed the scene of overturned boats and damaged buildings.

"The boats here have always been safe. At least, we thought so, but we're going to have to rethink things in the future," he told AFP.

Travel disruption

In southern England, hundreds of schools were closed Thursday as large waves powered by winds of 135 km/h crashed along the coastline.

On the Channel Island of Jersey, residents had to be evacuated to hotels overnight as gusts of up to 164 km/h damaged homes, according to local media.

Air, rail and ferry services saw cancellations and long delays across several countries.



Some 1.2 million French homes lost electricity as the storm lashed the northwest coast.



The effects of the storm were felt as far south as Spain and Portugal.

More than 200 flights were cancelled at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, a major European hub.

In Spain, more than 80 flights were cancelled at 11 airports and rail services were suspended in the northwest on Thursday.

Belgium's port of Antwerp was closed and flights from Brussels were disrupted.

Scientists have warned the world will experience more extreme weather events because of the global warming caused by greenhouse gases.

"The links between climate change and winter storms in Europe are complex," said Hannah Cloke, professor of hydrology at England's Reading University.

"But as seas and air temperatures get warmer, we expect some winter storms to bring more rain, and potentially cause more flooding."

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