

Heavy rain causes flight cancellations and floods in Germany

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People gather at the airport as flights are cancelled or delayed due to floods, in Frankfurt, Germany [Igor Le Clerc via Reuters]

Berlin, August 17 (RHC)-- Heavy rain in parts of Germany has caused flooding that deluged streets and toppled trees, and led to dozens of flight cancellations at Frankfurt airport, the country's busiest and a key European hub. The storm swept over southwest Germany on Wednesday evening, dumping huge quantities of water and reportedly unleashing more than 25,000 bolts of lightning in about an hour.

Some passengers slept on camp beds while many spent the night at the airport hotel. "Today, the situation will probably stabilise again," a spokesman told the AFP news agency. "There are still passengers here who need to be booked onto new flights."

The fire service in Germany's financial capital said it launched more than 500 operations from Wednesday evening to Thursday morning related to the storm. There were more than 350 instances of water flooding into buildings and 17 fallen trees, it said, adding that off-duty personnel were called in to help.

The storm also affected other areas, with Gelsenkirchen, in the region North Rhine-Westphalia, hard hit. Streets, cellars and lower-lying residential areas were rapidly flooded, while trees toppled over, hitting vehicles, the fire service said.

Emergency service workers rescued people from vehicles at several highway underpasses. In one area, parked vehicles became submerged and some streets were only passable with inflatable boats.

Experts say that climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of floods. In 2021, Germany's western regions of Rhineland-Palatinate and North Rhine-Westphalia were hit by catastrophic floods that killed more than 180 people.

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