# Midwestern flooding collapses a bridge, forces evacuations and kills at least 2

Flooding in the Midwestern U.S. killed at least two, collapsed a railroad bridge and sent water surging around a dam Monday after days of heavy rains that have forced hundreds of people to evacuate or be rescued from rising waters.

An Illinois man died Saturday while trying to go around a barricade in Spencer, Iowa, Sioux City's KTIV-TV reported Monday.



Heavy rains cause high water levels at the Rapidan Dam near Mankato, Minn., Monday, June 24, 2024. Officials say the dam is threatened with "imminent failure." (AP Photo/Mark Vancleave)ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Little Sioux River swept his truck away, according to a news release from the Clay County Sheriff's Office provided to the station. Officials found the vehicle in the treeline but weren't able to recover his body until Monday because of dangerous conditions.

At least one person died in South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem has said without providing details.

The flooding brought added misery to parts of Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota and Minnesota during a vast and stubborn heat wave. In some communities hit by flooding, the temperature Monday afternoon approached 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.7 Celsius).

More than 3 million people live in areas touched by flooding, from Omaha, Nebraska, to St. Paul, Minnesota. Storms dumped huge amounts of rain from Thursday through Saturday, with as much as 18 inches (46 centimeters) falling south of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, according to the National Weather Service.

Places that didn't get as much rain had to contend with the extra water moving downstream. More rain is forecast, and many streams may not crest until later this week as the floodwaters slowly drain down a web of rivers to the Missouri and Mississippi. The Missouri will crest at Omaha on Thursday, said Kevin Low, a weather service hydrologist.

Flooding in the Omaha area Monday was causing Amtrak to use buses to transport passengers temporarily, according to an Amtrak spokesperson.

"I've never had to evacuate my house," Hank Howley, a 71-year-old North Sioux City, South Dakota, resident said as she joined others on a levee of the swollen Big Sioux River, where the railroad bridge collapsed a day earlier. She did not have

to evacuate in recent days either, but said: “We’re on the highest spot in town. But what good is that when the rest of the town is flooded? It makes me nervous.”

The bridge connected North Sioux City, South Dakota, with Sioux City, Iowa, and fell into the Big Sioux River around 11 p.m. Sunday, officials said. Images on local media showed a large span of the steel bridge partially underwater as floodwaters rushed over it.

Many families embark on Falls Park in Sioux Falls, S.D., as water rose quickly Saturday, June 22, 2024, after days of heavy rain led to flooding in the area. (AP Photo/Josh Jurgens)

There were no reports of injuries from the collapse. The bridge’s owner, BNSF Railway, had stopped operating it as a precaution during the flooding, spokesperson Kendall Sloan said. The railroad said the bridge was used by only a few trains per day and did not expect rerouting to have a significant impact.

The Big Sioux River stabilized Monday morning at around 45 feet (13.7 meters), over 7 feet (2.1 meters) higher than the previous record, Sioux City Fire Marshal Mark Aesoph said.

In North Sioux City, the South Dakota Department of Transportation built a berm Sunday night across Interstate 29 to stem flooding, temporarily blocking the major route. In other areas where the interstate remained open, water crept toward the road. Howley, who has lived there for 33 years, said she has a growing concern over more frequent severe flooding around I-29.

The flooding has, over the course of days, damaged roads and bridges, shuttered or destroyed businesses, required hospitals and nursing homes to evacuate, and left cities without power or safe drinking water, the governors of Iowa and South Dakota said.

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AP correspondent Julie Walker reports Midwest flooding collapses a rail bridge, forces evacuations and kills at least one person.

“I just keep thinking about all this stuff I’ve lost and maybe the little things I could recover that we put up high,” said Aiden Engelkes in the northwestern Iowa community of Spencer, which imposed curfews during flooding that surpassed a record set in 1953. “And then I think about where my friends are, because their stuff is also gone.”

Over the weekend, teams from Iowa’s natural resources department evacuated families with children and a person using a wheelchair from flooded homes, director Kayla Lyon told reporters. Gov. Kim Reynolds said the department conducted 250 water rescues on Saturday.



A temporary levee helps diverge flooding from the Big Sioux River in North Sioux City, S.D., on Monday, June 24, 2024. (AP Photo/Josh Jurgens)ASSOCIATED PRESS

“At one point we had 22 conservation officers doing water rescues, navigating some pretty nasty current,” Lyon said.

The Rapidan Dam on the Blue Earth River in Mankato, Minnesota began to fail as it became plugged with debris and water began carving out land on its side.

Outside Mankato, Minnesota, the local sheriff’s office said there was a “partial failure” of the western support structure for the Rapidan Dam on the Blue Earth River after the dam became plugged with debris. Flowing water eroded the western bank.

Eric Weller, emergency management director for the Blue Earth County sheriff, said the bank would likely erode more, but he didn’t expect the concrete dam itself to fail. The two homes downstream have already evacuated.

A 2019 Associated Press investigation into dams across the country found that the Rapidan Dam was in fair condition and there likely would be loss of property if it failed. A pair of 2021 studies said repairs would cost upwards of $15 million, and removal more than $80 million.

In Spencer, Engelkes still wasn’t able Monday to get back into his apartment on the first floor of a building close to the Des Moines River, nor could he go to work at a flooded chicken hatchery.

He spent more than seven hours Saturday in a friend’s fourth-floor apartment, waiting to be rescued by a boat, his 2013 Chevy SUV under roiling waters except for a bit of its antenna. Rescuers broke a window in a second-floor stairwell, and almost 70 people crawled out, volunteers ferrying them away by boat in fours and fives.

Engelkes and his girlfriend left with a bag of clothes, three cats in a carrier, and a kitten his girlfriend carried in her shirt. Their apartment had about 4 feet (1.2 meters) of water,

but they hope to still reclaim electronics they placed higher. They’re now staying with his mother on higher ground.

About 65 miles (105 kilometers) west of Spencer, in Rock Valley, Deb Kempema lost her home decor store, First Impressions, after a river levee broke.

It was “7,000 square feet of very pretty, pretty things. And it’s all gone,” she told KELO-TV.

While power outages were minimal in the affected states Monday afternoon, according to PowerOutage.us, south of Rock Valley, water surrounded the power substation in Correctionville, causing an outage.

President Joe Biden has been briefed by his homeland security team about the Iowa flooding, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency had personnel on the ground there, the White House said.

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