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Texas tragedy foretells future for warming climate, scientists say

Madalyn Mendoza, Astrid Galván, Ben Geman



Trees emerge from flood waters along the Guadalupe River on Friday in Kerrville, Texas. Photo: Eric Vryn/Getty Images

While the story of the [Texas flooding tragedy](#) and what went wrong is still unspooling, scientists said it provides another reminder that climate change can make extreme rainfall events even worse.

What they're saying: "[T]his kind of record-shattering rain (caused by slow-moving torrential thunderstorms) event is "precisely" that which is increasing the fastest in warming climate," UCLA climate scientist Daniel Swain said in a [longer social media thread](#).

Threat level: Andrew Dessler, director of the Texas Center for Extreme Weather at Texas A&M, says the floods are "exactly what the future is going to hold."

- Dessler added that Kerr County was unprepared and local governments should be ready for "more, bigger, extreme events."
- And UC-Davis earth and planetary sciences professor Nicholas Pinter said that in general, climate change "can and is shifting those probabilities — sometimes bringing us floods that are more severe and more frequent than in the past."

Friction point: The fatal flooding is prompting questions about whether vacant positions at the National Weather Service "made it harder for the forecasting agency to coordinate with local emergency managers as floodwaters rose," [the NYT reports](#).

What we're watching: Whether the tragedy will alter Trump administration efforts to downsize NOAA — and Congress' willingness to go along.



- [CNN reports](#) the proposed cuts would hinder R&D into new forecasting technologies — including flash flood forecasting.
- "The NOAA research cuts would come just as human-caused climate change is resulting in more frequent and intense downpours like the ones that led to this tragedy in Texas," it reports.

Go deeper: [Trump says NWS staffing didn't affect Texas storm preparedness](#)



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Madalyn Mendoza, Astrid Galván
18 hours ago - Energy & Climate

How the deadly Fourth of July floods unfolded in Central Texas



Search and rescue workers dig through debris on Sunday looking for any survivors or remains of people swept up in the flash flooding in Hunt, Texas. Photo: Jim Vondruska/Getty Images

Forecasting models that failed to predict the severity of rainfall, a lack of an adequate warning system and bad timing in part led to the disaster that left at least [dozens dead](#) and more missing in [Kerr County](#), Texas.

The big picture: Meteorology and climate experts tell Axios that storms like the one that surged the Guadalupe River more than 30 feet in a short time are likely to happen again, partially due to climate change.

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Rebecca Falconer
11 hours ago - Energy & Climate

Trump says NWS staffing levels didn't affect Texas storm preparedness

Vehicles sit submerged as a search and rescue worker looks through debris for any survivors or remains of people swept up in the flash flooding in Hunt, Texas, on Sunday. Photo: Jim Vondruska/Getty Images

The [Trump](#) administration pushed back Sunday on criticism of the National Weather Service's initial forecasting and its staffing levels ahead of Central Texas' [catastrophic flooding](#).

The big picture: The storm that's killed at least 80 people has brought renewed scrutiny to [federal cuts at NOAA's NWS](#) after it emerged that two Texas NWS offices were [missing](#) key staff at the time — including San Antonio, where a veteran warning coordination meteorologist has taken an early retirement buyout in April.

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