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# Greece, Bulgaria Battle Flooding; 8 Dead



By VESELIN TOSHKOV Associated Press  
SOFIA, Bulgaria February 7, 2012 (AP)

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A swollen river in Greece bursts its banks, flooding homes and forcing authorities to declare a state of emergency Tuesday, officials said, as rescuers scrambled to a Bulgarian village nearly washed away when a dam collapsed, killing eight people.

Bulgaria's civil defense agency warned that two other, bigger dams were also on the brink of overflowing after days of heavy rain and residents were urged to prepare for an evacuation. Authorities have started a controlled release of water from the dams to prevent overflow.

Europeans across the continent have been battling more than a week of extreme weather, with thousands still trapped by snow in remote, mountain villages in the Balkans; hundreds — most of them homeless — dead after temperatures hit as low as minus 33 Fahrenheit (minus 36 Celsius); and authorities now facing the prospect of flooding caused by melting snow.

A day after the dam burst, the Bulgarian government declared a day of mourning, and streets in the village of Bisser were covered with sticky mud as people returned to their water-logged homes. At least a dozen houses had collapsed, uprooted trees blocked roads and smashed cars sat abandoned along deserted streets. Veterinary officials were collecting the bodies of dead animals.

Bisser Mayor Zlatka Valkova said she received a phone call about the dam burst and tried to get out of her office in time to alert people of the eight-foot-high (2.5-meter) torrent.

"I rushed out on the street, but then I saw the wave," she said. "It was terrible, it came with such speed that I couldn't do anything."



AP

An abandoned car is seen in a flooded field... [View Full Caption](#)

The village's 800 residents have been provided with food, water and medicine while the recovery operations continue. The EU commissioner for humanitarian aid, Kristalina Georgieva arrived Tuesday to assess the extent of the damage.

District governor Irena Uzunova said that 58 people have been evacuated, eight have been confirmed dead, and the whereabouts of an elderly couple remain unknown.

In Greece, rescuers had to help five elderly people escape Tuesday from their flooded homes after the river Evros burst its banks near the country's northeastern border with Bulgaria. Several elderly residents were also evacuated overnight from another three villages in the area.

Greek civil protection authorities said a 40-year-old woman was drowned by a flash flood on the eastern Aegean Sea island of Symi late Monday, but no major damage was reported on the island. Heavy snowfall was reported across northern Greece, hampering road traffic and causing some power cuts in remote areas.

Snow also caused headaches further north. Serbian emergency officials said the army will use explosives to break up ice on the Danube and Ibar rivers to try to prevent the possibility of flooding.



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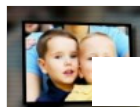
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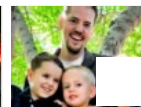
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