

Floods inundate Australia as the country battles extreme weather

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A tavern lies surrounded by floodwaters in the Melbourne suburb of Maribyrnong on October 15, 2022 [William West/AFP]

Sydney, October 15 (RHC)-- Australian authorities have announced the first death from days of widespread flash flooding on Saturday, despite flood levels topping out across much of the southeast. Hundreds of homeowners began a long clean-up after storm waters engulfed streets, houses and cars across three states, with Melbourne suburbs among the worst hit.

“It was frightening. I’ve been here for the other floods but I’ve never seen anything like that,” 61-year-old Antoinette Besalino told AFP news agency. Areas of three southeastern states – Victoria, New South Wales and the island state of Tasmania – are under emergency flood warnings after an intense weather system this week brought more than a month’s worth of rain to the southeast.

The crisis comes after flooding in March and April on the east coast resulted in A\$4.8 billion (\$3.3 billion) in insured damage, according to the Insurance Council of Australia.

The flooding victim was a 71-year-old man who was “found deceased in floodwaters in the back yard” of his property in the town of Rochester, a small town north of Melbourne. “Crews are on scene and police are attempting to get to the property, which is currently blocked off due to floodwater,” police said. “The exact circumstances surrounding the death are yet to be determined.”

As the waters subsided, residents were left wading through mud-caked streets, passing abandoned cars, tree branches festooned with debris and, in one instance, a marooned wheely bin. “The clean-up is going to be huge,” said 58-year-old Peter Dimauro according to AFP news agency. “Think about all of the branches and all of the garbage that has washed up.”

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